

# The 1<sup>st</sup> World Humanities Forum Proceedings

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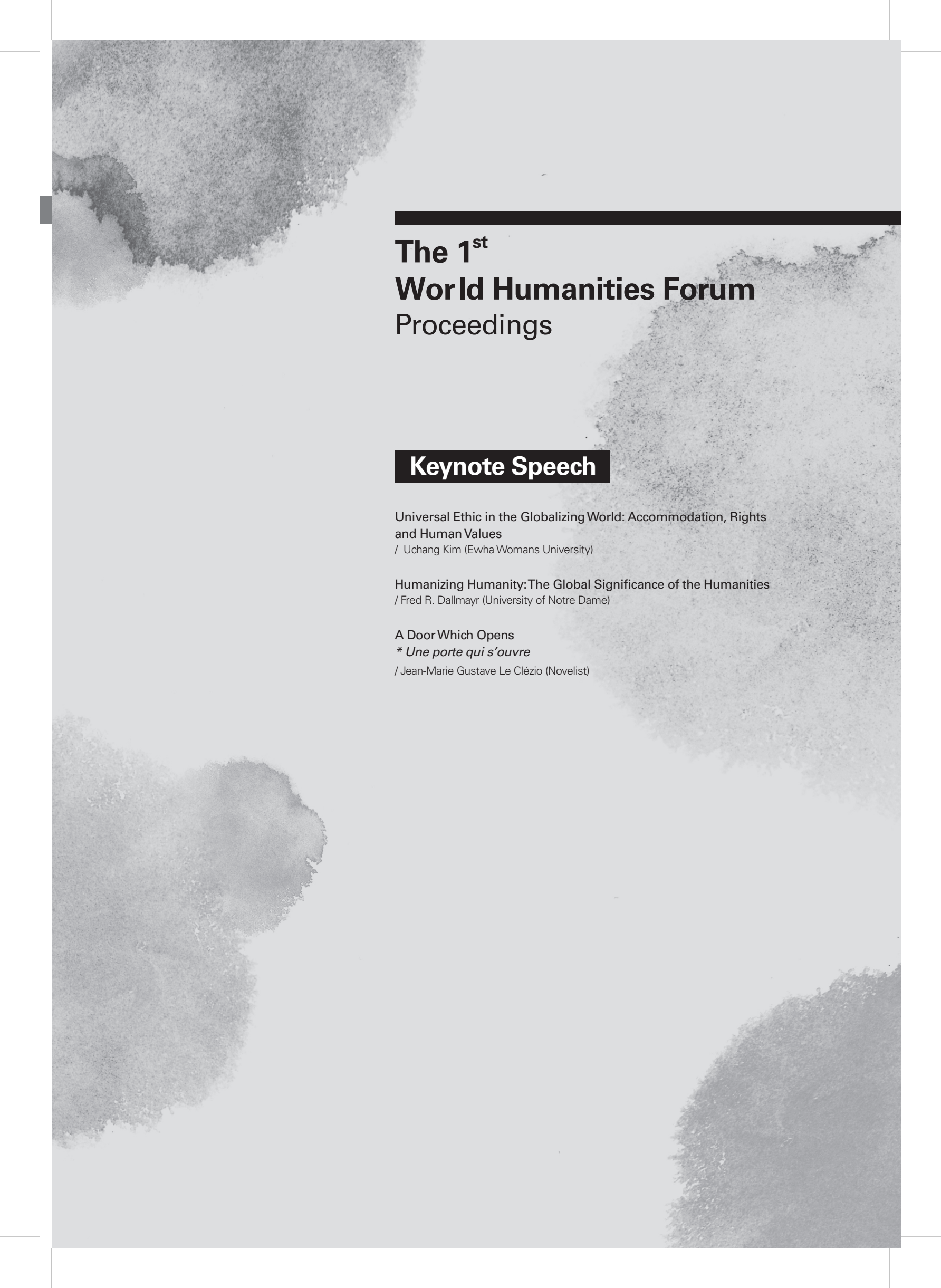
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## Universal Ethic in the Globalizing World: Accommodation, Rights and Human Values

**Uchang Kim**

Ewha Womans University

### 1.

**Globalization and need for a global ethic.** Though plurality of cultures have always been a recognizable fact in human history, the present state of the world makes it a subject for reflection, and calls for meaningful pragmatics for solving problems it raised.

The globalization is one of the most notable characteristics of this later modern age. The present moment in human history is without doubt marked by the ever-accelerating movement across the world of materials, peoples and information under the dominance of capitalist economy. Inevitably the diverse elements of life that constituted local unities spread over the wide surface of earth have come or are coming together in confluence making the globe a single Lebensraum for entire humanity, creating confusion and conflict and, of course, opportunities as well. What is worrisome is, needless to say, confusion and conflict, and the accompanying degradation of life in these multiple confluences-to the constant state of struggle for survival, if not by the use of tooth and claw, at least by ruse and manipulation demeaning human dignity on the whole.

In this process of globalization, there should ways of avoiding these negative consequences-at least, occurrences of large scale conflict; urgent is some regime of peace and coexistence. This would be particularly the case when the globalization brings out the movement of peoples beyond existing social, political and cultural boundaries, but there must be also ways of transcending potential discrepancies and contradictions arising in the intermixing of institutions and ideas mutually incompatible, for a sense of the orderly wholeness of the world is an indispensable condition of a happy human life.

What we can hope for eventually is a new world order which will reconcile the diverse elements now coming together, setting, on the one hand, limits to the dangers of dehumanization and promising, on the other, better flourishing of human life-and life in general. This order could be established through as something like a world government, with appropriate political and legal tools, though it could be by



no means a replica of a nation-state with its program of a unitary national culture. However, a world government or legal order has a remote chance of realization for a long time to come, and even it is not certain whether it is desirable or not. In the meantime, single political units, usually nation-states, would be responsible actors for carrying out policies to guard the rights of people with different cultural values living within their borders. Yet it would not be easy to work a reliable program in politics, the scene of power struggle among politicians with their own interests and convictions-often of nationalistic kind. What could be more easily done would be developing a co-operative program of a universal ethic at the level of ideas, setting down what to do and what not to do, and then promote an international awareness of the need for peaceful coexistence of peoples and cultures. It may result in a framing of an international charter laying down minimal guidelines for multicultural coexistence-perhaps not so ineffective as it looks, in this age of rapid international communication.

There are, however, doubts, apart from its practical feasibility, about the possibility of a universal ethic independent from the cultural context formed by historical development in a particular society with its unique tradition. But a universal ethic suitable to the new condition of the world is itself an ethical imperative of urgency at this particular juncture of world history. If the entire globe is becoming a Lebensraum to be shared by all humanity or for some part of humanity, it must be constituted as a livable space fenced in with the protection of human rights. In spite of the assertion that ethical codes are diverse from society to society, and from culture to culture, it is also inconceivable that there are no basic ethical rules derivable from different ethical practices in different cultures. An effect of cultural interaction over time, confirmable at this particular moment in history, is the acknowledgement of the common humanity of humans, in whatever way the standards of this commonality may be defined; at least, seeing non-human monsters in strangers is a habit that has become defunct and become historic or pre-historic curiosity. If this is the case, a peaceful co-existence of differences can be acknowledged as a minimal condition of human dwelling on earth. On this basis, a universal ethic could be normatively defined, and effort could be directed to exploring its possibility. One form of the effort could be international cooperation of humanities scholars for developing systematic programs to explore this possibility.

## 2.

**The possibility of a global culture.** It had better be admitted, however, that ethic is part of a culture. We can see it even from the fact that it can be postulated as categorically normative but it cannot be enforced like law and order within a state. Ethic can be considered a cluster of normative rules thematized from the general ethos of a society. It is more than an external scaffold structure of a community, local or global; ethic exists only as one of the nuclei in the self-organizing process of culture of a society. And this culture, in its idealized conception, would exist as a general context of life, made more congenial and inclusive as a culture than regulated by law or ethics, as if it were so by nature. One of the East Asian social and political ideals was an order effected by munhwa, wenhua, 'transformation by culture,'



or dukhwa, tehua, ‘transformation by virtue,’ rather than rule of law (bupchi, fachi), though the idea of cultural transformation did not go as far as de-emphasizing ethical rules. The point is creation of a non-coercive life environment, a self-sustaining life-world, from which, only under the pressure of circumstances, arose the necessity, first, of ethic imperative, and then legal enforcement. In any case, regardless of civilizational boundaries, East or West, we can think of, as mediating agents in interpersonal encounters, culturally evolved modes of behavior, such as manners, courtesy, civility, or hospitality, which were all enveloped, to revert to the East Asian tradition, in the idea of ye, li, ritual; and these diverse forms of civil behavior can be also applied in intercultural encounters-hospitality above all. Of course, ethic would be a more distinctively developed nucleus in these cultural habits and concepts, and then could serve as a resource in making necessary legal provisions.

A particular culture overlaps with a life-world of a historical people, but this life-world is, when assumed as a culture, figuratively transformed into a totality. It is this totality that helps build a sense of identity for a historical people. It could then be understood, in many societies, as a more conscious formative project- a cohesive totality configuring expressive needs of humanity, a particular part of humanity, but, in most cases, generalized as humanity (often cause of conflict). In such a totality, there would have to be on the one hand, a center as a constantly ongoing process of subjectivity, which would be strengthened, on the other, by its opening ever-expansively to the objective world, therein included the social world intersubjectively incorporated. On the basis of constant interaction with this cultural subjectivity, the individual person would achieve his or her status as a subject. The thrust, both for collectivity or the individual, would be to a universal inclusiveness as its essence consists precisely in its rising above the limited condition of life’s facticity towards a wider horizon-to universality. If we may risk a reductive formulation, the ideal of humanistic education both in the East and West is often explained in terms of the self-reflective spiralling movement of the self towards universality-as in the Hegelian ideal of Bildung, “Erhebung zur Allgemeinheit” or in Chu Shi’s expression of the aim of self-cultivation, often quoted by Korean Confucian scholars, “dwelling on the single principle and moving along with ten thousand changes (主一無適酬酢萬變).” This applies to the individual’s endeavor at enlightenment, but it could be said to exist already in the process of a living culture, even if it remain not articulated into a program of education. And the individual can achieve his or her subjectivity only through the interactive involvement in the collective process of subjectivity going on in his or her culture. This movement of subjectivity, personal and collective, transforms practical needs, arising from material and social conditions of existence, into active expressions, discursively communicated and culturally and artistically shaped, of human aspirations for fulfillment. When ethic issues from this totality of culture, it would cease to be merely measure of restraint required for common survival; it is an achievement in the process of aspiring human perfection.

We can think of a global ethic in similar multiple connections. The ethic we have tried to propose above as an urgent need for the globalizing world is, as observed, the minimal kind that would meet the

requirements of times. But such a minimal ethic could also be a catalyzer in the construction of a global culture. For a truly universal ethic would be part of a universal culture—a culture of humanity enlarged and elevated. If this ethic remains part of the ongoing cultural process, it would stay a simplified and homogenizing set of abstract concepts, impoverishing practices and habits historically accumulated in a tradition. It would therefore have to be an outgrowth from historically sedimented cultural soils. Within this cultural framework, ethic would be more than simple commandments. Also, the legal or political order, a touch mechanisms of control, for that matter, would not also be mere devices of restraint for encroachment and protection of rights but an expression of the achieved common good by a like-minded community of humans. What is ultimately in question is a possibility of universal culture, of which ethic would form a part. In this respect, the globalization can be regarded as a challenge and an opportunity for the development of a global culture.

### 3.

**A complex global culture.** But can a global culture develop, not as an artificial and ideological construct, but as an ultimate flowering of crossing of cultures out of the spiritual and practical resources of different cultures of the world? If a culture involves process of subjectivity, the global culture cannot help but be a contradictory process, for component local cultures being sublated into the global culture must also go through an expansive movement of the subject to become more inclusive and global, and this inclusiveness would be customarily defined from the local centers. (The idea of “mission civilisatrice” expressed for the colonizing West this local-centered universalism.) If we are to avoid the collisional course of the globalization of culture, the emerging culture needs to be conceived, to borrow ideas from complex system studies, as a system of complexity; that is, it could be a system built out of federated multiple subsystems of local cultures, each subsystem having a separate dynamics of expansive cohesiveness and yet with interactive relations to other systems and to the expanding global system as a whole. This global system of culture in the complex form may not be easily imagined as a totality with a clearly recognizable linear order, and yet it could constitute a cohering whole, a totality constantly in the process of reshaping itself.

This totality would cohere as a process of subjectivity, achieved by multiple subjectivities, incompatible with each other on account of the nature of subjectivity. In the Hegelian dialectic, becoming a subject would entail a life-and-death struggle for supremacy over all subjectivities, but we may note that this is only a theoretical reduction, which is not always the case in reality. In the Hegelian progress of self-consciousness as well, reconciliation of multiple subjectivities would constitute its last stage. In any case, we would like to imagine that this subjective wholeness of the global culture would be attained simply as an emergent property, on the basis of the groundwork of other subsystems of subjectivities. There would be first the subjectivity of the individual, and then the subjectivities of the constituent subsystems to which individuals belong, from which will emerge a global subjectivity. This encompassing subjectivity,

in reverse, would have to be meaningful part of the individual's life as well, and the individual would be an interactive participant in the constitution of this subjectivity. Given the need of the human individual to be rooted in a concrete locality, the personal subjectivity involved would be multi-layered, complexly connected with various social groups in which he or she has a membership. For human subjectivity, as we experience in everyday life, expresses itself in a complex society, in different phases and forms, diminutively or expansively, depending upon the nature and occasions of groups in which it interacts-family, kinship relations, friends, communities, nations etc. We can, in a similar way, think of a global culture developing as a multi-layered totality of cultures with their own subjective centers.

**Historical evolution of culture.** To speak thus of the complex system of cultures as emerging from the process of the globalization may sound unreal and fanciful, but it is in a way just an abstract formulation of what has happened in human history. Culture or civilization-the latter understood more broadly as covering larger space and time span, and value-loaded, as in such an expression as 'civilized,' than 'culture' anthropologically understood-was, in fact, oftener than not, a product of contact and exchange of different societies and their ways of life, or, in its more creative result, of the cross-fertilization and hybridization of ideas and artifacts of diverse provenance. In this sense, globalization has been going on for a long time and it has been one of the agencies for historical evolution of human civilizations ever since their beginning, and the latest is only an enormously accelerated phase of the same process. Human beings are no doubt creatures deeply attached to their habitats through personal connections and memories, but they are also instinctive explorers beyond these habitats, which has made human history a narrative of a constant expansion of physical and mental reach. In many parts of the world, trade was the main channel for distribution of merchandize beyond the boundaries of particular societies. It had transformative effect on the cultures of the parties involved in trade, not only because it was easily accompanied by cultural exchange, but also because no artifact exists in the condition of Ding-an-sich in the human mind, without being transformed into a figure in the totality of the objective world culturally comprehended and symbolically constructed-a sign in the system of signification that is culture. But even without the mediation of things traded, people were sensitive to possibilities of different ways of understanding the world coming from abroad, and allowed themselves to be proselytized by systems of philosophical thought and religious beliefs coming from outside. In Korea, the coming of Buddhism in the sixth century can be cited as an example, though the coming of Confucianism and Chinese civilization in general, and in the recent centuries, of the modern civilization and the West, to Korea, may be more mixed examples in which more than ideas are involved.

**Cultural clashes in compressed time and space.** As observed, the speed of cultural contact and intermixture came to be enormously accelerated in modern times. Movement of goods, people and ideas occurred on a massive scale-with the development of the means of transportation and information, imperialism and then of global capitalism. Ideas penetrating cultural barriers also subverted any effort for autistic self-integration, as they arrived often as these ideas were transmitted as presenting models of

social and economic dynamics validated by the display of goods and power. Even without the back of military power, trade became, instead of simple exchange of goods a global network of manufactured goods and services, intertwining itself into alien social structures. It then stimulated the emulation of societies considered less developed. Importation of the system of industrial economy, and science and technology required movement of young people for training in these fields, and then their return after training to transform their native lands. This of course caused fragmentation and abolition of traditional cultures in many societies, disorienting, demoralizing and de-ethicalizing life in the societies politically or culturally invaded-if we take culture as closely tied with persistence of a holistic ethos.

Since the last years of the twentieth century, the speed of the global movement increased exponentially so that, along with the same clashes as occurred in the imperialistic age, ('clashes of civilizations' graphically illustrated at the moment in the Middle Eastern conflict), there began to descend uniformity, or mutual simulation and assimilation, in merchandise, architectural designs, life-styles, ideologies and ideas throughout the world, though it is difficult to see this as signs of an authentic global culture emerging-that is, a culture organically growing out of the process of integration among cultures historically developed in diverse parts of the world. (Hence, the sense many people have of the virtual or hyperreal nature of this globalizing consumer culture.) Behind the conformism of culture, what happened is rather the weakening or hollowing out of the mechanism of interactive filtering and fusion: that is, the process of subjective integration. The compression of time and space would not allow such integrative processes to take place.

**Multiculturalism.** Multiculturalism is a concept that seems to have come to use as attempts are made to grasp the latest phase of problems of cultural change resulting from this globalization, characterized by clashes and homogenization. It is natural that there arose a need to sort out consequences of increased contact and intermixture of cultures, but what motivated the problematic of multiculturalism seems to have been, more than anything, the movement of people-in most cases, from less developed to more developed countries. As the economy expanded, many advanced nations come to need labor recruited from outside these nations. Also, the discrepancy in economic wealth and employment opportunity motivated migration of people from less developed countries. The question of cultural adaptation or adjustment also became acute as these migrant workers began to settle down in the countries where they had been first considered temporary sojourners, or Gastarbeiter as they were called in Germany. With the migrant workers settling down, the question arises: How could they be integrated into the receiving society? One answer is to grant them appropriate legal status. It could be considered that this status would suffice for accommodating migrant workers in the larger society they have moved to, though even this presupposes a degree of cultural understanding as the legal status would require free consent and acceptance of rights and obligations the status entails. But what if they do not learn the language and the culture of the society where they reside, not only a single generation but continuously for generations, as the Turkish immigrants were supposed to have not done? What is needed is a cultural negotiation or even assimilation on the part of the immigrants. Earlier this year German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British

Prime Minister David Cameron were reported to have publically stated that multiculturalism in their society was a failure, and they blamed for it the failure of the immigrants to assimilate themselves into the main culture of their adopted country. Though their conservative party allegiance might have made it easier for Merkel and Cameron to say it openly, a natural assumption, if not consciously abandoned or revised from a more critical liberal point of view, would be that the cultural identity forms the basis of the political or communal identity.

**Politics of recognition.** Granting this, we may raise for the sake of argument an awkward question: if assimilation, that is, assimilation and absorption of A into B, is the proposal in question, why not assimilation of B into A, for instance, German assimilation to Turkish culture? Besides the question of the need for cultural harmony, there is obviously a struggle of master and slave involved in the demand for assimilation, with the subjective consciousness defining the German identity demanding subordination of the Turkish subjectivity to it. This demand could be confined to the minimal requirement of legal obedience or, going a little further, broadened to the readiness to take steps for assimilation over time, at least, such a step as learning the language. But if a culture is regarded a more full-bodied expression of a person belonging to a historical community, what is at issue is a complicated struggle between master and slave whose identity and pride are defined by different cultures.

To try viewing the cultural conflict at issue from this angle, but this time adding a sociological and political and yet factual overlap, the conflict is not simply an effect of the assertion of the subjective dominance of the host nation. The immigrants themselves are resistant to the attempt to assimilate them if they constitute a minority with large enough numbers to assert its own identity. I am not quite sure about the German situation, but we can easily see the rising sense of assertive identity among the societies and minorities that have been put in the subaltern positions in the hegemonic power structure of colonialism or in the nationalist culture expecting allegiance of unity from plural groups, including diverse minorities considered inferior, as in South East Asia or in the United States. Politics of recognition, equal recognition of different identity, is now a world-historical trend. The assertion of a separate identity and its supportive culture by the blacks in the United States is a typical case. The insistence of the Quebeckers on their right to give priority to the emphatic preservation of their French-speaking culture is another case, though the factors going into the demand are of different nature. There are diverse solutions for problems raised by the politics of differential identity. As we have noted, the legal and institutional devices would be the most practical responses, considering the urgency of the problems. Raising of ethical consciousness could broaden resources even for real-political measure. But if we hope for a flowering of a flourishing community for humanity, there would have to evolve a global culture. It would offer an ultimate solution, hopefully, by enlarging multiple subjectivities to a fuller maturity and sublating them into a universal inclusive subjectivity or into a complex system of cultures as we have suggested in the above. In the meantime, there would be policies for conflict solution differently implemented in different countries.

4.

**Multicultural Problems in Korea.** The terms, “multicultural,” or “multiculturalism” have been in use in Korea for quite a while. As in the Western countries, it came forward only when foreign contact came to involve demographic movement. With this movement, contact with foreign culture has become an everyday experience for many Koreans, making them aware of problems it could become. Of course, foreign culture was part of Korean experience for a long time and in multiple ways, but it was immigrants who made it “multicultural” issues.

There has been an enormous increase in travel for purposes of business or tourism, either by Korean nationals, going abroad or foreign nationals visiting Korea. According to the government statistics, the Korean travelling abroad increased from 1981 to 2010 from less than half a million a year to more than twelve million; foreign visitors increased from one million to almost 9 million. More importantly, there has been ever-increasing number, approaching at the moment 1.3 million, of foreign nationals residing in Korea for business or other reasons more permanently than in the case of tourism. But from the viewpoint of multiculturalism, the most significant are migrant workers coming to seek work on the labor market. As observed above, the term, “multinational” or “multinationalism,” “damunhwa” or “damunhwachui,” entered the common vocabulary for conceptualizing this demographic phenomenon, though its easy entry is also evidence for the openness of Korean society to the academic discourse and ideas coming from the West.

**Loss of sovereignty and multiculturalism.** It will be also important to note, in this connection, the fact that the recognition of the issue involved signifies the self-confidence of the nation that has grown out of the economic development and modernization achieved in the recent decades-after the historical turmoil it has gone through in the past hundred and a half years in its transition from the pre-modern to the modern world, of which it now feels part. No historical society completely loses its practical habitus or habits of the heart even when it loses its political sovereignty, but, without a sense of conscious self-creation and self-authentication backed up political independence, these habituses get reduced indeed to mere habits. A nation under foreign occupation suffers loss of control over its destiny, and its culture endures without a center. The Japanese created a multicultural situation, but the situation was not perceived as multicultural. The sense of the situation Koreans had must have been rather a complete destruction or a paralysis of the centripetal force of its culture. In contrast, as it recovered the sense of an autonomously functioning culture, it came to have the room to deliberate upon the question of how to meet and deal with different cultures coming to the host culture.

**Social justice and multicultural personal relations.** In the Korean approach to multiculturalism, what is interesting to note is the fact that the issue is placed more in the context of personal relationships than in the program of collective action in national politics, unlike in North America and Europe. Of course, the issue cannot help straddling over the two spheres, personal and public. There is conflict of public nature with the migrant workers in Korea, but it is more often conflict that could be classified as



conflict between labor and its employers, as the latter try their best to exploit the disadvantageous status of the migrant workers, who stand outside the full protection of their legal rights given to the Korean citizens or of that of labor unions. There is also attempt for these migrant workers to organize themselves. Also, when there is intervention by the non-governmental organizations it also becomes the issues of humanitarian aid and legal empowerment. The issue of multiculturalism is thus related to modernization and democratization of Korea. Yet it remains on the whole at the level of interpersonal adjustment on the part of the immigrants and the natives.

Frequency of international marriage is an important cause for this personalization. Statistics shows that there were about 35, 000 cases of international marriage last year alone, the total number from 2002 to last year coming almost up 300, 000. A typical marriage is contracted between a Korean male and a female from East or South East Asia, in large part in the lower stratum of society, as it became harder for rural youth and low-income working youth to find suitable spouses even at or past marriageable age, and they make use of the service of the match-making agencies to find nubile young women for brides, most often from China, Vietnam or the Philippines. It is said that one out of ten marriages taking place now is international. In these marriages, there are bound to be problems in personal relations-in the relation between man and wife, wife and the husband's family, and in the socialization of children from these marriages with their school mates. The international couples often have difficulty even in simple communication, not comprehending even each other's languages. One factor in the problems of cultural adjustment appears to be the patriarchal and male-dominant culture of Korea with complex code of behavior to which foreign brides must submit themselves. Part of the recommendations in the report published in 2005 concerns plans for multicultural understanding to be developed in order to make the family and communal relationship of the new arrivals more harmonious: the foreign wives may be encouraged to form associations among those who are in a similar situation in Korean society, as it were, to therapeutic effects it may have. On the whole, they too must learn more about their own native culture and live in Korean society with pride in their native culture.

**The code of hospitality.** To review the situation, again, the influx of migrant workers, foreign residents and international marriage caused problems-problems of mutual adjustment. General responses have been directed to taking measures for accommodating them within the existing social space. Public opinion has been favorable to the idea that measures must be taken to correct instances of unfairness and discomfort suffered by the incoming visitors, sojourners, and settlers, and mutual adjustment must be made. There are many reasons for the general open-minded attitude of the public. One is obviously practical need. All the new comers come to Korea meeting the need for low-wage labor. There is then a sense of fairness and justice in the democratic ideas Korea had embraced. But the traditional Confucian culture had already ideals of social fairness and justice, in spite of the fact that it also worked as an ideological legitimization of a patriarchal class society. There were attempts to theorize that Confucianism already contained seeds for stimulating economic development that we have observed in the past several decades in several East



Asian societies. Extending this view of Confucianism, it would be possible to say that its secularism made it easy to embrace modernity all around, not only for economic development but also for political and cultural ideas.

However, what I would like to note is a hidden cultural capital Korean multicultural solutions have drawn upon. Confucianism is often named a kind of humanism, which made room for humanistic concern for the plight of human beings beyond the more narrowly conceived national boundaries. Culturally, what is still binding is especially the ethical code of hospitality: the Confucian program of cultivation, starting in childhood and perfected in maturity, emphasized courteous behavior in personal encounters, to elders, guests and strangers, which culminates in the perfection of ritual behavior, also a high point of self-perfection. Hospitality is an ethical precept, but it is of course it goes, in mature form, along with cultivation of other virtues, such as magnanimity and tolerance. The personal turn in the Korean multicultural measures may be ascribed, as observed, to the cultural capital still operative in the Korean psyche, including the ethic of hospitality.

This would require more evidence to be proven for sure. However, we may say that even if it cannot be quite proven, it would be desirable, not only in Korea but other societies as well, if the ethic of hospitality could be resorted to in dealing with the problems of migrant foreigners. Then, meeting the guest, the visitor, and the entrant into the site of his or home, the host would respect the human dignity of the other coming to the site. Respect would be mutual, for the guest can expect only on the condition that he has to respect the host.

**Dialectic of host and guest.** There are problems, needless to say, complicating the relationship starting from hospitality. There is, to begin with, imbalance in the exchange between the host and the guest, as there would be an unspoken territorial claim on the part of the host on the site of the meeting, which must be admitted as justifiable at first. But when the visitor's intention for permanent residence is found out, conflict may break out, which would aggravate when the guest's reciprocally courteous manner turns into claim. And the claim becomes legitimate as duration of time establishes the residence of the guest as a historical fact, and as the number of guests arriving turns them into a serious challenge to the established territorial dominance of the host's homestead. Now the ethical rule of mutuality becomes a strident command, and eventually legal and institutional arrangements would become imperative, though softer virtues of hospitality would still mitigate the hard struggle for recognition. In any case, to many accustomed to the political way of thinking, collective problems require collective solutions, that is, by political mobilization and institutional rearrangements.

## 5.

**Habermas: multicultural issues in democratic politics.** It is the strength of democracy that there is in its constitutional system a legal provision for embracing within a single political order individuals with claims for different values and identity. It is possible to say it could also be expediently relied upon in

dealing with multicultural problems-or at least for political and legal solution. I discussed it at a conference on Asian Humanities referring to Juergen Habermas's view on the subject. In illustrating different ways of meeting multicultural problems, I will have to sum up the argument presented on the occasion.

Habermas presents his view in his essay entitled "Struggles for Recognition in the Constitutional State," which was written as a comment on Charles Taylor's speech defending the attempt by the Province of Quebec in Canada to legislate various measures for preservation of its French-speaking cultural heritage within the federal state of Canada dominated by the English speakers. Habermas thinks it goes against the basic democratic principles to grant a privileged priority to a particular set of values held by a particular group of people, often a minority, within a democratic society. Democracy presupposes equality of rights for individuals regardless of race, status, gender or different views of values and ethical rules they might hold; there cannot be exception for the Quebecers with their special tradition. As a general rule, it is inevitable that values individuals hold dear need to be disregarded in the constitution of a polity, except for the values enabling democracy possible. If they are publically upheld, they would become cause of conflict in the constitution of a common political order. This exclusion of values is also required to protect the autonomy of the individual-an essential premise of democratic freedom. Value neutrality and, going a step further, ethical neutrality are a necessary condition of a democratic regime as has been argued by Dworkin, Rawls and other liberal theorists. As a result, all the substantive elements of individual differences must be subtracted in such a way that only the formal terms could be brought in to facilitate the procedure for negotiating peaceful coexistence of differences. It is possible to say that the same procedure would be appropriate for accommodation of multicultural claims within a democratic state.

**Democracy and cultural values.** This means cultural values must be discounted as much as possible if the immigrants with different cultures are to be accommodated in the existing democratic order. One test case in which how cultural differences can be negotiated would be that of immigrants in a West European country. There are two requirements for an immigrant at the threshold of entry to a Western democracy, North American and European: one, acceptance of the democratic principles of the state, and two, cultural assimilation, that is, acculturation. Habermas upholds the first requirement but rejects the second. A democracy must exclude persons of non-democratic fundamentalist faiths of all kinds; it is self-contradictory for a democracy to embrace persons who reject the founding principle of democracy, no dogmatism of faith in the state. Acknowledging it is one basic condition of their admittance into a democratic country. But in regard to the second requirement demanding complete cultural assimilation is unacceptable, he thinks, as it also contradicts the autonomy of the individual in the realm of ethics and culture, as stipulated in democratic principles. The immigrant is, in other words, required to demonstrate his or her political good faith, but not ethical or cultural conformity.

**Democracy as active process.** But this value neutrality does not mean that democracy is a rigid unchangeable system free from all engagement with values. Value neutrality itself is an ethical choice-from a certain understanding of individual autonomy. For Habermas, a democratic order maintains its

vitality as an on-going process. This is in evidence in the way democratic rights are secured. Democracy is not realized once for all by legislation alone. It must be turned into an active process by “the consistent actualization of the system of rights,” through social movements and political struggles. Part of the effort for the actualization lies in the problematization of the situations of the disadvantaged in the sphere of public debate. This is in part because various strategies of circumvention may turn de jure equal rights into de facto discrimination (as in the case of the welfare consideration of women for the requirements of pregnancy and motherhood resulting in increased employment risks). There is also need for constant revision of the patterns of understanding for various needs and requirements implicitly assumed in any interpretation and implementation of rights so that a fuller understanding of the situation of a disadvantaged group may be available for public action. The struggle for new understanding essentially draws upon cultural and ethical resources available in the society, in the past and at present.

**Ethics and politics.** Habermas admits that democracy is, in the final analysis, a product of ethical tradition—a special kind with its historical origin in the West. As he says, “... every legal community and very democratic process for actualizing basic rights is inevitably permeated by ethics.” More broadly, this ethics may be made part of a definite awareness of its presence. An “assent to the principles of the constitution [of a democratic state] within the scope of interpretation [is] determined by the ethical political self-understanding of the citizens and the political culture of the country.” The “understanding” or “interpretation” may be taken as a historical product. As such the democratic principles interpreted may lie beyond the possibility of agreement or disagreement of contemporary citizens, but in another connection, it suggests the possibility of change. The change includes the cultural world as well. Habermas presents a formula for effecting change: cultural heritages can be preserved by methods of persuasion, that is, by a “hermeneutic achievement of the cultural reproduction of life-worlds,” which we assume would include, besides politics, pedagogy and other ways of cultural nurturing, and it is in any case wrong, he says, “to deny in advance the freedom to say yes or no.”

**The disadvantaged, immigrants and the world.** In the first place, we can ask: would Habermas’s argument for ensuring the rights of the disadvantaged apply to minorities with cultural differences to the Turkish immigrants in Germany—for that matter, to blacks in America, the Kurds in Turkey or migrant workers in many industrial societies, including Korea? Our question here concerns not simply cultural differences or different cultural communities within a society but the more drastic case of a larger community of nations: the European Union, a regional community or a globalized world. How should cultural and political differences be negotiated in these broader areas of human contact and interaction?

**Politics of cultural change.** The question will lead us to that of cultural change, though within certain limits, as minorities with their disadvantages must be able to negotiate ethical and cultural issues as long as they remain within the political mechanism of democracy, which too is ultimately based on the self-understanding of society concerning ethics and culture, and this is bound to change over time. In fact, Habermas admits, though not without ambiguity and reservations, the possibility of a cultural change

occurring in the heart of the culture receiving alien cultures: "...the legitimately asserted identity of the political community [with its roots on the mainstream culture] will by no means be preserved from alterations in the long run in the wake of waves of immigration."

**Reflexive thinking.** Even if there ought to be the proviso of "in the long run," we must say Western societies are already equipped with political, mental and cultural resources for accepting a cultural change brought about by new multicultural situations. The main mental agent is the faculty of reflection, The "reflexive attitude" does not necessarily exorcise " 'subjectivized demons and gods' of the modern world," but reflexive reason "allow[s] for a civilized debate among convictions, in which one party can recognize the other parties as co-combatants in the search for authentic truths without sacrificing its own claims to validity." And a reflexive culture can admit to itself the possibility of its own change.

When a culture [he argues] has become reflexive, the only traditions and forms of life that can sustain themselves are those that bind their members while at the same time subjecting themselves to critical examination and leaving later generations the option of learning from other traditions or converting and setting out for other shores.

In order for a society, to develop room for compromise, it must have become reflexive; it must be able to reflect upon itself with a critical eye and expand its horizon to enclose as much as possible-as long as the democratic principles underwriting this expansive inclusiveness, and possibly even included cultural elements that will change the basic characteristics of the society.

## 6.

But this reflective faculty would have to be at work on all the parties in the negotiation for alterations, not simply on the West, we must say. This would require a radical transformation on the part of the non-Western cultures intersecting with the West. Would it not involve an imperialist demand on the part of the West? At any rate, the reflexive attitude would not be easily acquired without training in the Western cultural tradition-let us say, reading canonical texts in that tradition-but eventually learning to circumlocute and circumnavigate substantive cultural values, and to accept necessary separation of culture and politics.

**Simplification of human nature,** To think about cultural integration in political terms is to enter into an area of contradictions and paradoxes. Co-existence of cultures requires politics to exclude cultures from its jurisdiction, But politics is itself a product of culture, and even its process, which seems to abstract itself from culture, encloses movements and struggles motivated by the different interpretations of the cultural and ethical premises underlying the democratic politics. The solution is the establishment of "the legal universalism" which allows "unrestrained communication in the public sphere"-within the procedures consensually agreed upon and leaving cultural substance alone under the principle of ethical neutrality. This seems to be, however unsatisfactory it may be, the only formula that could be used in cultural integration of negotiation in all societies slipping into a multicultural mode of existence. For it is, for all societies, the only way to universal harmony, if not to ultimate cultural integration.

**Multiple dimensions of the human self.** However, separation of law, ethic and culture remains problematic, as it results in simplifying humanity into a kind of one-dimensionality and impoverishing the human potential. Especially, politics, as it is understood in Western democracy, is predicated on the narrowly utilitarian understanding of the nature of the human individual, including the idea of rights, as rights can be taken as part of the defence installations of the interest of the individual self. Last August when Mr. Muhammad Yunus, the founder of Grameen Bank and the microfinance movement in Bangladesh visited Korea, I had the honor of having a brief conversation with him. While explaining his idea of social business-a business run according to the normal rules of business administration, its accounting system, but not by the principle of profit alone, he said that there is a gross distortion of human nature in the assumption underlying normal economic theory, the idea of homo economicus, human being seen exclusively as profit-seeking, self-seeking being. He admitted that one should not ignore the selfish sides of human personality, but an exclusive emphasis on them would bring distortion and also pain as the unselfish and more benevolent side of human aspirations is suppressed. Justice is not done to the full spectrum of human nature. The legalistic abstraction of human potential, we may say, results in distortion and discontent (*das Unbehagene*) in a similar way. Habermas' view on multicultural issue I have just summed up was originally placed in my conference presentation to discuss it in the comparative perspective of civilizations East and West. To speak somewhat bluntly, while admitting the pragmatic validity of universal legalism in Habermas and other Western democratic thinkers, both left and right, I tried to point out that it is predicated on a simplified view of human nature and the mode of earthly dwelling humans have. In this connection, I made reference to the three dimensions of human existence in Bhagavad Gita, *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*, and argued that the modern conception of human motivation could be said to concentrate on that of *rajas*, which makes life "weary toil... /Under the whip of lust and the will of the ego," and which, though better than the life of darkness and mutual torture in *tamas*, excludes *sattwa*, the spiritual dimension, where human conduct is motivated by the sense of sacred duty and detachment with no hatred or compulsion, though there is no pleasure either; in *rajas*, there is no stability in life, in which life's discipline is "practiced out of selfish pride, or to gain notoriety, honor and worship."

There cannot be a complete congruence of ideas between Hinduism and modern thought devised for understanding human reality, but it is not too far-fetched to juxtapose the state of *rajas* as defined in Hinduism and the condition of humanity as assumed as innate by the modern mind. For humanity in the condition of *rajas* or of self-pursuit, pride, honor, and social recognition, the universalism of law must be the only way of avoiding war of everybody against everybody and diverting the energy released to economic and political achievements. It may also be a way of achieving eventually pragmatic reconciliation for the multiple cultures of the world clashing and intermixing with each other.

**Ethical erosion.** But an end result may be evaporation of ethic and multi-foliated cultural sensibility. The enabling condition for legal universalism is development of reason, which would bring together

individuals into a cohering political unity in such a way that it builds firm legal frameworks to protect the rights and the individuals which are seen as always in need of defence as if in an impregnable fortress. Reason also has its function in the development of science, technology and capitalist economy. It is also an indispensable tool, in the form of reflective equilibrium, to borrow from Rawls, in achieving correct procedure in the construction of equitable democracy. Reflexive thinking, a necessity for accepting the possibility peaceful coexistence of differences of values and identities and eventually for their possible reconciliation, is also based on the faculty of reason inherent or developed in the human mind. But in the process of rationalization, ethical rules and cultural values are likely to be occluded. Of course, individuals would have freedom to pursue whatever objectives they choose. In the public realm, values pursued would be mostly instrumental ones, which lead to status and wealth. Ethical or cultural cultivation, as they are privatized, soon lose their objective meaning. We can see the irony of the separation of the two realms, that of public order and private ethic, in scandals of many public figures in America and Europe, often sensationally reported and exculpated in the prolonged court processes. Altogether, narrowing of vision is inevitable, and other possibilities of being human, even if they are products of long historical development are likely to drop out of the horizon of public concern.

**Debate in the political arena.** We may see even in Habermas' discussion of multiculturalism traces of the general retreat of public discourse from any argument based on other than realistic reasons—realistic in the sense that human reality is interpreted in terms of the self, pursuing its interest or proclaiming its righteous anchoring in truths. Although Habermas is not insensitive to ethical and cultural issues, his moral argument is also based on realistic reason. In the essay in question, for example, he is entirely for accommodating the political asylum seekers. (It is morally justifiable, but it is already legislated in the Geneva Convention [1949, 1967] and the German Basic Law.) Habermas' distinction is that he is also for a more lenient policy to economic refugees, though somewhat ambiguously, the reason is, he argues, that it is proper for Europeans to return the benefit they harvested in migrating widely to the other parts of the globe in the previous centuries. The argument might have been worked out purely in ethical terms or at least appeal could have been made for humanitarianism, benevolence or compassion, but such is the strength of 'realistic' thinking that it would not carry weight in the political arena.

## 7

**Relaxation of compressed time and space.** In spite of these lacunae in the modern vision of human potential, it remains true, as we have already admitted, that only effective measures responding to the exigencies of a situation would be practical ones enmeshed with the reality of today's world, and in a democracy, the universalism of law is the only practical measure to deal with conflicting meeting of cultures and, above all, of peoples of diverse cultures, though other possibilities must not be allowed to fall into occlusion, hoping they would loom up more clearly as situations ameliorate. As noted earlier, there has been an unusual compression of time, space and people in modern times. Besides imperialism,



the roots causes have been discrepancies in national wealth, whether due to differential economic development or, as some theorists used to put it, development of underdevelopment. Apart from the increased globalization of the market economy, poverty in the underdeveloped parts of the world is the pressure that has become the main cause of mass migration. As the pressure becomes lighter, with distribution of economic advantages among the nations becoming fairer-this is indeed to speak truly of a long-term projection, the movement of people would become slower, one could speculate-at least the people who are coerced by the straitened circumstances of life. There would set in then another slower-paced globalization as has been the case in the long duree of human history. Given the ever-increasing development of transportation and communication, cultural exchange and hybridization is unlikely to relent, but conflict from it would not be as severe as it is in the present phase of globalization. For it would not have the weight of material gain pressing down on humanity besides, there would mature a global culture enlarged, enriched and elevated, as the equalizer of human conduct. But cultural process itself can have dangerous implications.

In the beginning of this paper, I have spoken of the global culture as a complex system of cultures. It was not only because of the undesirability of homogenization of human culture, but because culture can be understood as the process of subjectivity transforming the objective necessities of life into expressive fashioning of human needs and desires as a cohesive whole, and overheating the danger of the unifying process of subjectivity. Hence, the idea of a complex system or a federated system consisting of subsystems.

**Knowledge and power.** Subjectivity relates to power. Part of the critique of subjectivity that has been launched in the latter part of the 20th century is targeted at this relationship. The critique, in its theoretical beginning, concerns the epistemological difficulty subjectivity presents: if the subject is understood as the agent of representation of the objective world, the being of this world, and then the being of the subject itself fall into the limbo of uncertainty. On the other hand, if the subject is made responsible for the objective world represented or, ultimately, constructed for humans, the agent of this subjectivity would be in the position of domination-over the world as well as humans, mostly, at the present moment of human history under the sway of the Western regimes of science and technology: the non-West. The Cartesian subjectivity locating itself in cogito connects, as has been often pointed out, with the project of making humans “masters and possessors of nature,” as Descartes himself put it, which becomes a prospectus for the rapid development of science and technology. A vision of a global culture could be seen, in a similar way, as an offshoot of this project-a universal vision of culture arrived at through integration, by the dominant subject, of partial visions of the human world evolved in various cultures. Knowledge is power for Bacon as well as for Foucault. Does the universal vision of the cultural world propelled by reflexive reason represent the only way for humans to be cognitively and practically at home in the world? At least, there has spread enough skepticism about the result of scientific and technological progress as far as the practical mastery of reality by humankind is concerned-with ecological problems resulting from it. We



find the world view built through various scientific endeavors not doing complete justice for the intuitively perceived sense of the world expressed in various non-scientific visions-religious, mystical and intuitive visions of the world, though all these may have fallen into discredit under scientific scrutiny.

**Humanity of primitive societies.** In a lecture Levi-Strauss delivered in 1986 in Japan, he expressed a strong skepticism about the global culture, what he called “a world civilization, une civilisation mondiale,” to which modern humanity seems to be headed. For him, the term itself is a contradiction, for “the idea of civilization implies and requires coexistence of cultures offering greatest diversity among them.” But his prediction is that “the more closely the world civilization seems to have come to be homogenized, the more differences would be brewed in its interior,” and “there would be discovered ways of producing differences.” Diversity is diversity of resources for better life, though there might be, he suggests, a maximal limit to the extent of diversity. His observations on the blessings of diversity that could be reaped are based on his study of “primitive societies” and his backward reflection on human evolution. Underneath them lay, of course, the affirmative sense he had had throughout his long career in anthropology that most human societies have unique techniques of meeting human problems, however weird and odd they may appear to the Western eyes, and that primitive societies present more preferable models of human community. In his observation, primitive societies constitute a balanced ecological whole, in their relationship with nature and with each other, while so-called civilized societies appear to be efficient, as it pursues the maximization of profit in accordance with rational calculation, but at the huge cost of producing problems, which he calls “entropy”: social conflict, political in-fighting, psychological stress, disappearance of clarity in social structure, loss of cultural and spiritual values, etc. As Levi-Strauss sums up the idealized ethos of the primitive societies: “they were founded on the principles that could effectively convert the riches produced into moral and social values: accomplishment of the self in work, respect for relatives and neighbors, moral and social prestige, achieved harmony between the human and the natural and supernatural worlds.”

**Authentic community.** In spite of the common characteristics, they are all embodied in different social and cultural forms in different societies. (However, Levi-Strauss thinks it is culture, not society that shaped these societies, since in his mind society tends to develop into a system of oppression.) One of the most important points Levi-Strauss empathizes is that these primitive societies are very small in size, possibly, only tens or hundreds in population. The exemplary primitive society is a face-to-face society where members of community are personally acquainted with each other. This kind of society he calls “authentic.” It is this authentic community that anthropology tries to understand, unlike other social sciences that tend to rely on abstract data statistically collected and analyzed. But this authenticity has been destroyed by the development of larger social organizations and by propagation of abstract means of communication, books, photography, radio and TV. (We might add to this list the internet and other electronic means of communication.) Small as these societies are, they have diverse answers to various human problems as if they have conducted experiments in small way over long duration of time. It is important to learn from

them for the wisdom they preserved and for the authentic form of human existence they have held on to.

**Une civilisation plus sage.** How can their wisdom be incorporated in the global development for a better future of humankind? Levi-Strauss thinks that anthropology could contribute to the work, that by making insights it has gathered from its study of primitive societies it could help the world make transition to a “wiser civilization, une civilisation plus sage.” It is significant that he thought these anthropological insights could constitute a “third humanism,” inheriting two humanisms in Western history, the Renaissance and the bourgeois humanism of the 19th century, but differing from them in its true open-mindedness without civilizational prejudices in incorporating the diverse cultures of the world. An implication of the name, this humanism, seems to be that the transition would not be engineered by various politics of ideology, including Marxism, even if he thinks equality and fraternity belong to highest communal virtues. This distance he wants to keep from political engineering seems to be related to the view that he has of various politics of ideology he has seen, He seems to think therefore that if these insights gathered in his third humanism are properly conveyed to humankind, they would by themselves eventually make the transition possible-transition to a more ecologically and humanely harmonious society.

**Rationality and understanding the purity of primitive societies.** In saying this, however, we cannot say that he is advocating a return to the “primitive” world nor his view of the “primitive societies” truly authentic. Anthropology is itself studies of humans with scientific claims, a product of rational thinking. Levi-Strauss recommends in Structural Anthropology for the training of anthropologist intensive and extensive reading in various humanistic and social sciences, linguistics, geography, social and economic history, social history. And, in spite of his view of the effect of inauthenticity media have brought onto concrete human existence, use of “photographic slides, documentary films and linguistic and musical recordings.” Aim in anthropological studies is to attain scientific objectivity, and “totality” which “regards social life in a system of which all the aspects are organically connected”—a sense of the total panorama of human existence in its diverse expressions, Needless to say, structural anthropology he helped found is a product of intellectual effort to make it realize this ideal of scientific objectivity as much as possible. There has been much post-structural critique of this scientific pretension as untenable.

It is a strong scientific attitude that informs his openness to primitive societies, to their cultures. There is also in his attitude a romantic idealization of primitive societies. In the lecture we have been referring to, the examples he brings to illustrate the thesis that primitive societies have their own solutions for human problems are various patterns of kinship relations, which, while looking strange to the Western eye, keep the biological basis of social relations in clearly sustainable forms-upholding the solidarity of humans in kinship and communal relations. But we must note that this strong sense of solidarity also helps to keep the communal membership exclusive and incites animosity to the outsiders. Levi-Strauss mentions this, but he does not mention, as reported in other anthropological reports, the custom of killing the outsiders unconditionally nor other instances, occurring in these primitive societies, of atrocious violence against

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the principles of equality and fraternity and general humaneness.

## 8.

**Two poles of a global culture.** The point of remarking on these contradictions in Levi-Strauss's approach to primitive societies is not to find fault with him, but to note the contradictions inevitable in the modern hermeneutics of these societies, which cannot stay at the level of facticity, but must be mediated by a broader reflective overview. In both books we have dipped in, Levi-Strauss quotes a statement by Niels Bohr: "The traditional differences of [human cultures]... in many ways resemble the equivalent modes in which physical experience can be described." But in normal scientific procedure, these equivalent modes must be scientifically evaluated. A unified theory, a theory of everything, is ultimately what physics strives after. Primitive cultures are, in Levi-Strauss's project, carefully observed as they are, and then they are placed in the context of the totality of human reality, which inevitably entail a great deal of cogitative effort. But this effort must remain transparent as much as possible so that the uniqueness of the objective, that is, a primitive society, is suspended as it is, in all its quidditas, in its transparency. A global culture, if there develops such a culture ever, would combine respect for the subjectivity of diverse cultures, in all clarity, with their integration in an emergent universal subjectivity, the medium of transparency. This must be a rule in the ethic I spoke in the beginning of this presentation-the universal ethic that would strive to assure peaceful co-existence of human groups with different cultural roots and to develop a universal culture enlarging and enriching resources for human fulfillment. Ethical concern could be enlisted for this purpose.

**Life's locale and the world/ the earth and the cosmic space.** We cannot foresee the outcome, but whatever forms it may take, two contradictory facts must be conjoined in them: local root and global openness. Levi-Strauss is right in describing a small community as "authentic," and yet he does not close off the global horizon beyond it. It is a necessity for humans to be rooted in a limited locality which are ecologically adequate enough for meeting their biological and psychological needs. But this locality is physically speaking only a small part of vast global or even cosmic space, even if they may not be aware of this spatial infinity that surrounds their place of quotidian work. This locality of life then needs to be definably bounded, in an ideal conception, by multiple-layered boundaries variously permeable and open to the vastness of the universe.

I will end this desultory essay by referring to an astronomical analogy. The planet, Earth, is a separate entity in the universe, but it stays completely open to the entire universe. This enclosing universe is not simply static space of order, which our nightly observation ascertains, but an expanding totality full of turbulence beyond human imagination. The wonder is that the astronomical environment around the earth is in relatively stable state. The fundamental reason, as one astronomer in his popular writing explains it, lies, interesting enough, in the ultimate limit set by the speed of light on to the movement of things and information.

If the speed of light were not finite, then radiation of all sorts would be received instantaneously after it was emitted, no matter how far away its source. The result would be a reverberating cacophony. We would be dramatically influenced by signals from everywhere. Instead of local influences dominating over far distant ones, we would be affected instantaneously by challenges occurring on the other side of the Universe. The impossibility of transferring information faster than the speed of light makes it possible to discriminate and organize any form of information.

The light is the subjective process of cultural reason with a certain limit of speed for processing diverse cultures.

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## Humanizing Humanity: The Global Significance of the Humanities

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This is indeed a momentous gathering: the first “World Humanities Forum,” the first international meeting designed to underscore the importance of the humanities in our world. And significantly, the gathering is called and organized by UNESCO, that institutional branch of the world community whose assigned task is the promotion of global learning and education. As we read in the charter establishing that world body (in 1946): “The wide diffusion of culture, and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace are indispensable to the dignity of man.”<sup>1</sup> To be sure, education whose promotion is entrusted to UNESCO is not limited to the humanities or what we also call the “liberal arts”; however, one can argue—and I shall in fact argue—that the humanities occupy a crucial and indeed pivotal place in the educational household of humankind. This has, in part, to do with the fact that, in many contexts, the humanities are an endangered species. In many colleges and universities today, programs in the humanities or liberal arts are curtailed if not eliminated in favor of a focus on technology and narrowly professional training.<sup>2</sup> Such a shift of focus—I want to argue—comes at a steep price. As we know, our world today is nearly overrun by atrocities: torture, terrorism, genocide. We have new categories in international law to combat these atrocities: we speak not only of war crimes but “crimes against humanity” (where the latter term is equivalent both to “humankind” and “humaneness”). But how can such crimes be combated or reduced if there is no deliberate cultivation of humanity and humaneness—which is precisely the aim of the humanities?

Looked at it from this angle, the frequent charge leveled against the humanities is revealed as utterly baseless: the charge that such education is useless or devoid of tangible benefit. Surely, the reduction of slaughter and mayhem would be of immense benefit to humanity at any time. What is correct about the charge—although not intended as such—is the fact that the humanities do not yield an extrinsic benefit or are cultivated for the sake of such benefit; to this extent, their cultivation—as Martha Nussbaum has correctly noted—is without profit or “not for profit.”<sup>3</sup> Philosophically stated, the yield of the humanities

is an “intrinsic” good, in the sense that their cultivation—just like the reading of poetry and flute playing—carries its benefit in itself: namely, in the ongoing transformation and “humanization” of the practitioner. This does not mean, of course, that this benefit may not also have broader social and political ramifications; in fact, in my view, these ramifications—like the reduction of mayhem—are part and parcel of the intrinsic good: the humanizing practice of the humanities. In the following, I want to do mainly three things. First, I shall explore the meaning of the “humanities” by turning to the history of the liberal arts and the so-called “classification of disciplines” in recent centuries. Next, I want to highlight some of the prominent and distinctive features of the humanities and their educational significance. Finally, I want to discuss the crucial contribution the humanities can and should make to the emergence of a properly humane cosmopolis.

### **Humanities and the Liberal Arts**

The humanities are often also labeled “human studies” because of their primary concern with human life, human conduct and experience. To this extent, Socrates may be called the father of the humanities because of his shift of attention from astronomy and metaphysics to human affairs (“ta anthropina”) including ethics, politics and social psychology. In a way, Plato continued this shift with his emphasis on the transformational quality of genuine education, leading from random opinion to reflective insight. From Aristotle we have inherited the important division of human knowledge or inquiry into three main branches: “theoretical” science, “practical” inquiry, and “productive” (or constructive-technical) endeavor. While, in the first type, the scientist observes and analysis phenomena from a detached or neutral standpoint, practical inquiry requires the concrete engagement of the practitioner in human affairs (particularly on the level of ethics and politics); constructive endeavor, finally, involves the fostering of technical “know-how” useful for instrumental purposes. As can readily be seen, among the three Aristotelian types, the practical branch is most closely connected with what today we call the “humanities”—a fact which explain the close affiliation of many “humanists” with the Aristotelian legacy.<sup>4</sup> In a way, what has happened in modern Western thought is a near reversal of the Aristotelian preference scheme, in the sense that theoretical or pure science in combination with instrumental technology has tended to sideline or smother the practical-humanist concerns.

Another term closely connected with the humanities is that of the “liberal arts.” The term goes back to the school curriculum established by the Stoics during the Roman Empire—a curriculum that was continued and fleshed out during the European Middle Ages. It was customary at the time to speak of seven liberal arts, with the educational process moving through two stages: from the more elementary “*trivium*” to the more advance “*quadrivium*”—a sequence reflecting distantly the Platonic idea of the transformational quality of human learning.<sup>5</sup> I am not concerned here with the details of the classical curriculum; rather I

want to turn to the employed terminology. Why were the disciplines offered in the classical curriculum called “liberal arts” (*artes liberales*)? One explanation frequently advanced is that these were disciplines fit for the education of “free” citizens rather than slaves (of whom the Roman Empire had plenty). There is probably some grain of truth to this explanation—but it does not account for the persistence of the term in societies devoid of slavery or after slavery had long been abolished. Removed from narrow ideological blinders, the term in fact carries another possible and deeper meaning: the idea that the liberal arts contribute to the liberty or freedom of practitioners, to their liberation from external tutelage and the subservience to materialistic or instrumental benefits. Taken in this sense, the liberal arts clearly resonate with the non-utilitarian and “not-for-profit” character of the humanities; differently put, liberty here is again an intrinsic good of the practice and not an extrinsic project or subsidiary product.<sup>6</sup>

As indicated before, modern Western thought entailed a near reversal of the Greek and Roman concern with practice human affairs (*ta anthropina*). This is curious or surprising in view of the simultaneous ascent of “anthropocentrism” in modern intellectual life. What one needs to take into account, however, is the fact that this ascent was predominantly channeled in the direction of the scientific analysis and control of “external” nature and the technical utilization of this control. One of the leading figures inaugurating the modern shift was the philosopher-scientist Francis Bacon for whom all study or learning was oriented toward one goal or tangible “profit”: the “enhancement of man’s estate” and comfortable living. In his *Advancement of Learning* and *Novum Organum*, Bacon dramatically re-designed the traditional (Aristotelian) tripartition of inquiry: namely, by juxtaposing the fields of history, poetry, and scientific philosophy. While history amounted to no more than the gathering of data, and poetry to a mere flight of fancy, scientific inquiry was extolled as the only true path to knowledge proceeding through the investigation of the natural “laws” of cause and effect.<sup>7</sup> Under the impact of Bacon and his followers, the traditional domain of “praxis” or practical thought was either shunted aside or—still more fatefully—was transformed into a branch of “theoretical” or scientific knowledge. Thus, ethics was tendentially transformed into the study of psychic affects and aversions and thus into a corollary of empirical psychology. A similarly far-ranging change happened in the domain of “economics” which, for Aristotelians, involved the contributions of the “household” (*oikos*) to the good life. Shifting again radically from praxis to theory, modern economics developed into the rational-mathematical calculation of profit in a market largely devoid of any considerations of social well-being or justice.

As one should note in fairness, however, the triumph of the Baconian system in modernity was contested all along by a counter-current or a host of voices remonstrating against the domination of theory over praxis. A particularly significant counter-trend was the current of “humanism” extending from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment to the Romantic era. Among Renaissance and post-Renaissance figures special mention should be made of the Italian thinkers Mario Nizolio, Tommaso Campanella, and



Giambattista Vico. In sharp contrast to Bacon, Nizolio and Campanella assigned primary significance to the fields of literature and history, treating these fields as rich storehouses of narratives and experiences in compassion with which the maxims of rational-scientific philosophy are only pale and lifeless abstractions. On the eve of the Enlightenment, Vico boldly proclaimed the preeminence of historical and “human” studies over other sciences, tracing this preferred status to their roots in “practical” knowledge: the fact that history and social life are human activities and thus more readily intelligible (*“verum et factum convertuntur”*).<sup>8</sup> A bit later, and mainly in response to the pretense of an abstract rationalism, the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder issued a plea for the study of different cultures and languages—that is, for a broad study of the “humanities”—arguing that only concrete instances and practical examples could foster the desired “progress” of humankind: the genuine “humanization” of humanity. It was in this connection that Herder formulated the important notion of an upward formation or transformation of humanity (*“Emporbildung zur Humanität”*)—a notion that can serve as basic motto for the humanities.<sup>9</sup>

During the subsequent two centuries, “positivism” (the focus on positively useful knowledge) brought increasing pressure on all the disciplines in the “republic of knowledge,” seeking to assimilate them to the model of scientific cause-effect analysis. This pressure was felt not only in ethics and economics, but also in historiography, linguistics, and even in the study of politics where public conduct was increasingly leveled into quantitative measurement. No doubt, efforts were repeatedly launched to rescue aspects of the social and human sciences from the positivist tentacles. The nineteenth century, in fact, was replete with complex classification schemes seeking to differentiate certain forms of study from the domain of strict scientific inquiry. This is not the place to recount this ongoing “battle of the faculties”; a few comments must suffice. One prominent and widely influential scheme was the distinction between natural sciences and “mental” sciences (*Naturwissenschaften* vs. *Geisteswissenschaften*). For advocates of this scheme, the latter disciplines were anchored in insights generated by the human mind or “spirit”; they all dealt with phenomena available directly to humane experience and mental life. Although appealing at a first glance, this distinction was challenged and undermined, however, by the growing inroads of empirical psychology into mental processes. Another classification scheme relied on the separation between natural science and history, where the former was said to focus on general laws and the second on particular events (thus yielding a distinction between “nomothetic” and “idiographic” disciplines). Yet, as long as particular events were not actively interpreted and understood, historiography could not rise above empirical data-gathering (along Baconian lines).<sup>10</sup> What emerged from these impasses, in the long run, was the realization that the “humanities” could not be rescued or restored without a return to human praxis and the differentiation between two kinds of practical endeavor: the endeavor either to know and control nature or else to articulate “meaning” in practical conduct.<sup>11</sup>

## The Humanities as Practical Endeavor

In late modern and recent times, the shift toward praxis—often inspired by Aristotle’s legacy—was promoted by a number of philosophical orientations, including pragmatism, ordinary language philosophy, and hermeneutics. For the sake of brevity, I shall concentrate here on the latter and its leading representative, Hans-Georg Gadamer. As is well known, Gadamer’s hermeneutics revolves around interpretation and “understanding,” an understanding accomplished through the dialogical interchange between reader and text, between speaker and interlocutor. However, what is not always sufficiently recognized is that “understanding” here is not simply a cognitive exercise, the acquisition of knowledge by a detached “knower,” but always involves a practical engagement, a close embroilment of thought and praxis. As Gadamer repeatedly emphasizes, entering into dialogical exchange involves an intellectual as well as existential risk-taking: one runs the risk of falling short, of being shown to be wrong, of undergoing an experience which may transform one’s life (not only change one’s “mind”). In his *Truth and Method*, he frequently invokes Aeschylus’s formula “*pathei mathos*,” which means having learned through suffering or the “hard way,” being in the grip of a learning experience which changes our existence—we might say: an experience which “humanizes” us.<sup>12</sup> From this angle, learning is “practical” not simply in a utilitarian or instrumental sense; nor does it involve the simple application of abstract maxims or principles to empirical situations. Rather, it means taking experience seriously as a presupposition and guidepost to knowledge and ethical conduct. In this broad sense, Gadamer can rightly be considered as an eminent mentor of the humanities.

The title of “mentor” is not an arbitrary designation but follows directly from his work. An important part of *Truth and Method* deals with the “significance of the humanist tradition for the human sciences” (or humanities). To illustrate this significance Gadamer discusses a number of prominent features (or “guiding ideas”) of the humanist tradition relevant for the study of the humanities. A central theme is that of “*Bildung*,” a term which designates not simply a given empirical culture or way of life, but rather denotes a process of cultivation, a process of “formation” or transformation. As Gadamer notes, the German word “*Bildung*” derives from “*Bild*” (image) and thus carries within it the older notion of an “*imago Dei*” or divine image “in the likeness of which human beings are fashioned and which they must strive to achieve.” Thus, what resonates in the word is not just a simple pedagogical recipe, but a complex happening which one might call “humanization as divinization” (or the reverse). The most important aspect stressed by Gadamer is the fact that formation or transformation in this sense does not pursue an extrinsic profit, but carries its value within itself. “It is not an accident,” he writes, “that *Bildung* in this respect resembles the Great term *physis*. Like nature (*physis*), *Bildung* has no goals outside itself.” Taken in this sense, *Bildung* transcends the mere training of existing talents or aptitudes for occupational or career purposes. Rather, in *Bildung* “that by which and through which one is formed becomes and

remains completely one's own."<sup>13</sup>

In the Western humanist tradition, *Bildung* was not a static concept or idea, but involved itself a process of cultivation, of steady reformulation and reinterpretation. Starting from the writings of Renaissance and pietistic thinkers, the term acquired decisive accents or impulses during the Enlightenment and the ensuing period of German classical thought. Herder's contribution was previously mentioned; his immediate interlocutors were the poet Klopstock and Immanuel Kant. For Gadamer, however, a decisive reformulation derives from the work of Hegel. In his *Philosophical Propaedeutics* and his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel clearly insisted on the point that *Bildung* is not limited to the fine-tuning of existing capacities, but involves a movement of self-transgression in response to challenges. Particularly important in this context is Hegel's notion of "alienation," his insistence that learning has to proceed through otherness, that self-finding can only happen through the encounter with others and the world. In Gadamer's words: "The basic and correct idea is this: To recognize one's own in the alien, to become at home in it—this is the basic movement of spirit (*Geist*) whose essence consists only in returning to itself from and through otherness." One can readily see how fruitful this idea was for the subsequent development of the human sciences, especially the disciplines of history, anthropology, and literature—provided these disciplines remained faithful to the humanist tradition. For, Gadamer states, "what properly constitutes the human studies can be grasped more readily from the tradition of *Bildung* than from the modern canon of natural-scientific method."<sup>14</sup>

Another important feature of the humanist tradition and the humanities is the accent on prudential "judgment" (*Urteil*) in contradistinction from apodictic knowledge and the epistemic claims of strict science. In this respect, the Aristotelian legacy of "*phronesis*" is decisive which involves the search for the right middle path (*mesotes*) and the cultivation of the ethical ability to weigh carefully the pros and cons of a given situation. Just like the stress on formative *Bildung*, the notion of prudential judgment stands in opposition to, or at least modifies, the Enlightenment emphasis on universal maxims by requiring attention to particular aspects—an attention which is also characteristic of the English "common-law" tradition with its reliance of concrete precedents. In Gadamer's words: "Sensible reasoning here is exhibited primarily in the faculty to judge about what is right or wrong, proper or improper, fitting or unfitting. Having sound judgment in this respect does not mean the ability to subsume particular instances under universal rules, but rather the capacity to know what is really important: that is, to judge cases from a right or sound perspective." The latter perspective draws its inspiration from Aristotelian teachings, and not from Kantian rationalism—not even from Kant's *Critique of Judgment* where judging and the weighing of pros and cons remain subordinated to the rule of "categorical imperatives." From the vantage of humanism and the humanities, this kind of subordination is uncongenial and unacceptable because it involves the surrender of praxis and practical engagement in favor of abstract knowledge.<sup>15</sup>

Closely connected with the role of judgment, and in many ways the pivot of humanism, is the conception of “common sense” (*sensus communis*). As extolled in the humanist tradition, judgment is not the expression of a purely private or idiosyncratic opinion, but a faculty nurtured in a community or social context, in interaction with other members of that context. To this extent, it is a shared or “public” sense—without ceasing to be amenable to ongoing revision and transformation. An early modern champion of the conception was Grambattista Vico whose defense of rhetoric and public discourse mounted a challenge to Descartes’ celebration of the isolated “*cogito*” separated from world and society. In Gadamer’s account: “A prominent teacher of rhetoric, Vico stands in the humanist tradition dating back to antiquity. Quite clearly, this tradition is important for the self-understanding of the humanities or human sciences.” What Vico attempted to do was to give a new direction and a new meaning to modern education and ultimately to the Enlightenment, a direction which would grant primacy not to abstractly universal cognition, but to practical, ethically nurtured experience in a social context. To quote Gadamer again: “For Vico, the wisdom of the ancients, their cultivation of prudence and eloquence, remains indispensable precisely in the face of modern science and its quantitative methodology. For, even now, the most important aspect of education is something else: namely, the cultivation of the ‘*sensus communis*’ which is nurtured not by apodictic truth but by weighing the likely or probably.” Seen from this angle, the *sensus communis* is not merely an individual aptitude but “a sense that founds community or communality (*Gemeinsamkeit*).”<sup>16</sup>

As can readily be seen, common sense here is not simply a set of empirical beliefs, but the emblem of an ethical quest for public virtue (in both the Aristotelian and Stoic sense). The ethical quality of the conception was clearly grasped by Lord Shaftesbury and the entire school of Scottish moralists, from Francis Hutcheson to Thomas Reid and Adam Ferguson. Here one has to take note of the difference between ethical common sense and modern “natural law,” the latter entirely committed to abstract rational principles. “What Shaftesbury had in mind,” Gadamer comments, “is not so much a universal human capacity captured by modern natural law, but rather a social virtue, a virtue of the heart more than of the head.” In Shaftesbury’s work, the notion of common sense was closely associated with the social virtue of empathy or “sympathy” functioning as the foundation of his entire metaphysics and as the crucial antipode to the modern glorification of self-interest. In the hands of his followers—especially Hutcheson and Reid—the combination of common sense and sympathy was further developed and fleshed out into the theory of “moral sense” which served as a vital (though ultimately sidelined) counter-current to the liberal individualism of Hobbes and John Locke. To quote Gadamer again: “It was in the philosophy of the Scottish moralists that ‘common sense’ acquired its truly central systematic significance—a significance which stood polemically against both rationalist metaphysics and its skeptical deconstruction, and which built its own new system on the basis of the original and ‘natural’ judgments of common sense.” At the same time, Scottish moralists never allowed common sense to disintegrate into private preferences. In the words of Thomas Reid, its judgment “serves to direct us in the common affairs of life, where our

reasoning faculty would leave us in the dark.” Hence, Gadamer adds, the good sense tradition “not only offers a cure for the ‘moon-sickness’ of metaphysics, but provides the basis for a moral philosophy that really does justice to social life.”<sup>17</sup>

### **The Humanities and Global Democracy**

From historical reminiscences we need to return now to our contemporary situation. As should be clear, the historical excursus was designed primarily to alert us to some key features—like *Bildung*, prudential judgment, and shared sensibility—without which the humanities cannot flourish at any time. In their works, people like Vico, Herder, and the Scottish moralists sought to establish a safe haven or a beachhead for human studies against the onslaught of anti-humanist tendencies in modernity. In the meantime, this onslaught has turned into something like a tsunami. Wherever one looks, in the West as well as the non-West, the humanities today find themselves on the defensive in the face of so-called “modernizing” forces privileging scientific and technological advances; sometimes the defense resembles a “last stand” or nearly abandoned outpost. In lieu of humanizing *Bildung* we have the increasing stress on career objectives; instead of the cultivation of judgment, we find utilitarian or ideological maxims; in place of common sense we have the relentless glorification of privatization and private profit. Even some of the traditional custodians of the humanities—like American liberal arts colleges—are increasingly being transformed into corporate business. In her book *Not for Profit*, Martha Nussbaum rightly deplores these developments. As she observes, radical educational changes are occurring today: “The humanities and the arts are being cut away, in both primary/secondary and college/university education, in virtually every nation of the world. Seen by policy-makers as useless frills, at a time when nations must cut away all useless things in order to stay competitive in the global market, they are rapidly losing their place in curricula, and also in the minds and hearts of parents and children.”<sup>18</sup>

Nussbaum’s book provides many concrete examples to back up her claim of a “silent crisis,” that is, a crisis which is insidious and pervasive but not fully recognized. In her presentation, what is threatened by this crisis are not only curricula and educational institutions but rather—and this is her most provocative insight—the future of democracy in our world. Here the crucial significance of the humanities for the cultivation of practical judgment and shared sensibility comes to the fore. In her words (which deserve to be quoted in full):

Thirsty for national profit, nations and their systems of education are heedlessly discarding skills that are needed to keep democracies alive. If this trend continues, societies all over the world will soon be producing generations of useful machines, rather than complete citizens who can think for themselves, criticize tradition, and understand the significance of another person’s sufferings and

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achievements. The future of the world's democracies hangs in the balance.

Based on this insight, Nussbaum's book delineates two basic models of education, what she calls "education for profit" and "education for democracy," where the former is basically geared toward economic development or growth and the second toward the fostering of humanistic "capabilities" (what I prefer to call the formation or *Bildung* of character, good judgment and sensibility). As she writes: "Producing economic growth does not mean producing democracy. Nor does it mean producing a healthy, engaged, educated publication in which opportunities for a good life are available to all social classes." On the other hand, cultivation of the humanities and liberal arts—properly pruned of older elitist tendencies—can and should form the core of a contemporary "education for democracy."<sup>19</sup>

Significantly, democracy for Nussbaum is not a Western or American prerogative but a global aspiration; accordingly, education for democracy today has to have a global or cosmopolitan cast. One of the most stirring chapters in her book deals with the requisites of a genuinely cosmopolitan *Bildung* or the formation of "citizens of the world." Taking a leaf from Rabindranath Tagore she states that, by contrast to the earlier segregation of continents and cultures, we live today in a world where "people face one another across gulfs of geography, language, and nationality"; hence our problems are "global in scope." To find our way in this context we need more than "the thin norms of market exchange" which are oriented toward private gain; rather, a new pedagogy is needed:

The world's schools, colleges, and universities . . . have an important and urgent task: to cultivate in students the ability to see themselves as members of a heterogeneous nation (for all modern nations are heterogeneous), and a still more heterogeneous world, and to understand something of the history and character of the diverse groups that inhabit it.

Among the pioneers of cosmopolitan pedagogy or *Bildung*, Nussbaum mentions above all the Indian Tagore—the founder of Visva-Bharati with its focus on liberal arts education—and the American philosopher John Dewey with his commitment to the fostering of global civility and citizenship. Contrary to some narrowly instrumentalist readings, she rightly stresses Dewey's broadly humanist outlook, an outlook which was "capacious and nonreductive" and insisted on "human relationships rich in meaning, emotion, and curiosity." What these and other educational pioneers encouraged was a radical engagement with the pluralism of our world, a "citizen-of-the-world education" as part and parcel of the liberal arts curriculum in schools and colleges.<sup>20</sup>

Nussbaum's *Not for Profit* ends on a sober or sobering note—not a despairing note, but one acknowledging the challenge ahead. The "silent crisis" is not going to go away by itself, but requires a

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courageous response. “If the real clash of civilizations,” she writes, “is a clash within the human soul—as greed and narcissism contend against respect and love—then all modern societies are rapidly losing the battle, as they feed the forces that lead to violence and dehumanization and fail to feed the forces that lead to cultures of equality and respect.”<sup>21</sup> So, there is a struggle going on between humanization and dehumanization. As major resources in the struggle for humanization, the Mahatma Gandhi singled out the commitments to ahimsa (non-violence) and satyagraha (the quest for truth and goodness). In terms of its constitution, UNESCO is predicated precisely on this kind of struggle. It seems appropriate in this context to recall the opening sentence of its preamble: “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.” To which the preamble adds these statements (partially quoted before): “That the wide diffusion of culture and the education of humanity for justice and liberty and peace . . . constitute a sacred duty which all the nations must fulfill in a spirit of mutual assistance and concern”; and “that the peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind.”<sup>22</sup> Let us hope that the present “World Humanities Forum” will foster recognition of the “sacred duty” that all nations must shoulder and thus contribute to the desired cosmopolitan solidarity in our world.

## References

1. *Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization*, Preamble, see <http://portal.unesco.org>.
2. Compare, e.g., Jennifer Washburn, *University, Inc.: The Corporate Corruption of American Higher Education* (New York: Basic Books, 2005); and Noam Chomsky, “Public Education under Massive Corporate Assault,” (August 5, 2011) <http://www.readersupportednews.org/off-site-opinion-section/7>.
3. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).
4. Even without a close attachment to the Aristotelian legacy, political theorist Hannah Arendt in her writings stipulated a tripartition of human endeavors: labor, work, and action—where the second corresponds to technical know-how and the third to Aristotle’s practical branch. See, e.g., *The Human Condition: A Study of the Central Dilemmas Facing Modern Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 9.
5. For some background see Robert Flint, *Philosophy as Scientia Scientiarum and a History of Classifications of the Sciences* (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1904); also my “Political Science and the Two Cultures,” in *Beyond Dogma and Despair: Toward a Critical Phenomenology of Politics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), pp. 21-42.
6. Compare, e.g., Henry M. Wriston, *The Nature of a Liberal College* (Appleton, WI: Lawrence University Press, 1937); Brand Blanshard, *The Uses of a Liberal Education, and Other Talks to*



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- Students* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1973).
7. On the Baconian *Organon* and his “classification” of knowledge compare, e.g., Henry E. Bliss, *The Organization of Knowledge and the System of the Sciences* (New York: Holt, 1929), pp. 316-320.
  8. See Giambattista Vico, *On the Study Methods of Our Time (De Nostri Temporis Studiorum Ratione)*, trans. Elio Gianturco, with introduction by Donald P. Verene (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990).
  9. See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, with epilogue by Hans-Georg Gadamer (Frankfurt-Main: Suhrkamp, 1967).
  10. For a more detailed account of these schemes see my “Political Science and the Two Cultures,” pp. 30-36.
  11. In terms of the republic of knowledge, the “practical turn” can be found, e.g., in Martin Heidegger’s emphasis on the central category of “care” (*Sorge*) and its differentiation into care about things, care for others, and self-care. See *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: Harper Row, 1962), par. 41-42, pp. 235-244. The scheme can be compared with Max Scheler’s pointed distinction between instrumental “*Leistungswissen*,” metaphysical “*Erlösungswissen*,” and humanistic “*Bildungswissen*,” see his *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft* (Leipzig: Neue Geist Verlag, 1926). A similar practical shift, but along more neo-Kantian lines, can be found in Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. Jeremy J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971). Compare also Bernard Crick, *In Defence of Politics* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964), and Wilhelm Hennis, *Politik und praktische Philosophie* (Neuwied and Berlin: Luchterhand, 1963).
  12. See Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1989), pp. 356-357.
  13. *Truth and Method*, pp. 9-11. (In the above and subsequent citations, the translation is slightly altered for the sake of clarity).
  14. *Truth and Method*, pp. 14, 18.
  15. *Truth and Method*, pp. 31-32.
  16. *Truth and Method*, pp. 19-21. As Gadamer adds (p. 21): “According to Vico, what gives to human striving its direction is not the abstract universality of reason but the concrete universality represented by the community of a group, a people, a nation, and ultimately of humanity at large. Hence, developing this communal sense is of decisive importance for human life.”
  17. *Truth and Method*, pp. 24-25. See also Thomas Reid, *The Philosophical Works*, ed. William Hamilton (8th ed.; Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1967), vol. 2, p. 774. Unsurprisingly, Alasdair MacIntyre in his *After Virtue* devotes close attention to the teachings of the Scottish “enlightenment”; see *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd. ed. (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), pp. 37-39, 272. Compare also Louis Schneider, ed., *The Scottish Moralists on Human Nature and Society*
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- (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).
18. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, p. 2.
  19. *Not for Profit*, pp. 2, 15, 24. Among pioneering defenders of the humanities during the last two centuries, Nussbaum (pp. 18, 57-68) mentions especially the philosophers Rousseau and John Dewey and the educators Friedrich Froebel in Germany, Johann Pestalozzi in Switzerland, Bronson Alcott in the United States, and Maria Montessori in Italy. The most prominent Indian educator celebrated throughout the book is the poet Rabindranath Tagore. One probably would have to add Rudolf Steiner to her list.
  20. *Not for Profit*, pp. 79-80, 86, 91. One aspect strongly emphasized by Nussbaum is multi-lingual training, the demand that “all students should learn at least one foreign language” (p. 90).
  21. *Not for Profit*, p. 143. For a similar perspective see also Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), and Elise Boulding, *Building a Global Civic Culture: Education for an Interdependent World* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990).
  22. UNESCO *Constitution*, Preamble.

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## A Door Which Opens

**Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio**

Novelist

My presentation will, with your permission, be a plea in the favor of intercultural practice. Before I begin, however, I wish to explain the reasons why I came to engage in this issue.

Although I was born and raised in France, a country that upholds the universal values of the republic and the unity of its language, I also belong to another country through the history of my family: the island of Mauritius, a small independent republic in the Indian Ocean, which has been an example of ethnic and cultural diversity through its history and trade.

Like many countries located on the route of the trade winds, the island of Mauritius has been greatly coveted by colonial powers from the beginning.

Mauritius has also witnessed one of the first cases of violence of conquest wars, pirates, and had become one of centers of the cruel treatment of slaves, as the departing point of vessels that transported African slaves to South America and the Pacific Ocean.

Mauritius has been passed from colonist to colonist through trade and naval combats; discovered in 1507 by the Portuguese navigator Pedro de Mascarenhas, the island was under the domination of Spain, Holland in 1598, France in 1715, and England in 1810, before it gained independence in 1968.

These colonizations left their marks. The first French colonists were miners contracted through the India Company. Many of these miners were Protestants looking for an island to realize their dream of equality.

However, the corruption of the colonists transformed this dream into a nightmare for the African slaves imported by the colonists to replace their work. Slavery in Mauritius was not only a criminal exploitation, but also an origin of a new culture and a new language. The Creole language was invented by the slaves from the language of their masters, and it is considered to be the most recently formed language among the indo-European languages.

It is this language that is the vernacular language of Mauritius, used by all inhabitants of Mauritius today, regardless of their origins.

When England abolished the slave trade in 1828, the colonists received, to replace the slaves, a new immigrant population: “indentured” workers from mostly India.

Because of this turn of history, it is this immigrant population, which constitutes the majority today, that holds political power in Mauritius.

It's this history, from which I take part through my familial heritage, that is the origin of the co-education that we recognize in Mauritius and similar regions in the world (in the Antilles, Indonesia, and Pacific Ocean).

This history seems to exemplify a few things. As French poet Edouard Glissant (*Poetics of Relation*) has said, the island preceded continental metropolitan cities by 100 years in its intermingling of cultures, the painful experience of colonization, and the practice of exchange with others.

In these islands (except Saint Domingue, the victim of blind oppression by colonial forces) the harmony between communities became a peaceful revolution.

Mauritius, in particular, is an example of this peaceful revolution: in this small island - approximately the size of Jeju Island - men and women of every origin, skin color, and religion live together. There are descendants of English and French colonists, descendants of slaves from Africa and Madagascar, sons and daughters of Indians and Chinese who came by the sugar industry, Chinese and Arab tradesmen, and even a small Korean community!

Here, we encounter multiple languages. First, the Creole language, but also French (language of culture), English (the official language of the island), Hindi, Urdu, Hakka (a dialect of Hong Kong), and finally Bhojpuri, a kind of Indian Creole that comes from the state of Bhojpur, in the center of India.

Not all of these languages are taught in schools, but each citizen of Mauritius speaks at least three of these languages.

Similarly, each citizen can, over the course of his or her travels, see the edifices of the three principal religions of Mauritius: the Christian churches, Hindi temples and Muslim mosques- to which we can add the sanctuaries of animism installed in Arab creeds.

These religions guard their places in Mauritius, and not one religion is more important than the other. The official calendar of Mauritius thus celebrates, through the course of the year, Christmas (celebrating the birth of Christ), the Mouloud (celebrating the birth of Mohammed), and Indian rites, such as Divali (Festival of the Light). Not without pride, Mauricians themselves exemplify their national flag and define themselves as the "people of the rainbow."

In brief, this description of Mauritius can seem idyllic, having already realized cultural harmony. Alas, even Mauritian society cannot be exempt from crisis. The juxtaposition of cultures does not always allow harmony. As Mauritian sociologist Issa Asgrally (\*) has said, the rainbow is an ephemeral phenomenon.

In 2000, an incident (the death of the Creole prison singer Kaya) started an uprising. The population of African origin affronted the Indian community, and the island was on the brink of a bloody revolution.

The reasons for this revolt were multiple: inequality among the communities, pockets of poverty, the ignorance and abandonment of the powerful majority against the Creole population, and the lack of representation of minorities in the government. Added to this mix was racism and ignorance of each

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community towards another.

Only the courageous action of President Kassam Uteem, a Muslim, who put himself in front of the rioters and exhorted a deposition of arms, could end the conflict and restore peace. But for how long?

We pose this question because the principal problems haven't been resolved yet; each community is recognized and has an official existence, but there is no communication between these communities. More recently, religious and cultural radicalism has increased these gaps.

I wish to provide in front of you a portrait of my small motherland (the island of Mauritius) because I believe its example causes us to muse on a number of questions raised by the intercultural ideal.

Our world today, without doubt, is dedicated to encounters. We often speak of globalization as if it is a recent phenomenon.

That would be to ignore the movement that shook the world since the first explorers' voyages of discovery, in the 15th century. The merchant empires, before the soldiers and the missionaries, fueled this desire towards discovery.

When the first Spanish explorers departed to the conquest of the New World, they signed a treatise (what we call today a contract of exclusivity) after they began their expeditions, like enterprises. Through these treatises, the shareholders divided the rights to the territories and their inhabitants without the least knowledge thereof (similar to the contract on Panama signed by Almagro, Pinzón and Pizarro).

The discovery of the world was not always violent. The first contact between Eastern Europe and the Far East contributed to the enrichment and progress of the entire human race. From India, China, Korea and Japan, European explorers brought back technology that transformed the world.

The wheelbarrow allowed the construction of cathedrals, the cultivation of silk transformed the clothing industry, the compass and rudder enabled navigation, and the printing press (invented by the Chinese and Koreans) facilitated the transmission of knowledge and diffusion of literature.

The exchange took place in both directions, and the Eastern cultures discovered technologies of architecture and urban planning, heritages from the Arab world. The American-Indian civilizations, through their Spanish conquerors, improved the agriculture of the entire world by introducing crops previously unknown, such as corn, beans, tomato, and potato.

From this era of discovery, for the first time there came forth a sense of prosperity of the entire world (although there was also the sense of a partaking of calamities, with the diffusion of variola, cholera and the bubonic plague).

Leaving their own boundaries, European countries and also China, Japan and Korea discovered the importance of communication. From this era originated all accounts of travels, and the contents of these accounts invented a new science, which we now call the human sciences. Great thoughts of philosophy, which cannot be considered as simple merchandise, also participated in these travels. In conclusion, civilization substituted prejudices of cruelty in every part of the world-an extremely slow progress, which still has not been fully achieved today.

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However, in our present era of rapid communications and planet-wide exchanges at the speed of light, the question of cultural relativity subsists. Consistently, the developed world has asked itself questions on the necessity to define a unique culture, like a charter of the human race on universal values. Therefore, this is the question posed by the dominant cultures: Does there exist a possibility of well-being for humans that surpasses their limits? Is there one worldwide culture? And a theme that resurfaces even after the tragic experience of two world wars: is there a hierarchy of cultures, which separates the civilized from the barbarous? This last question implies, naturally, a right and need for superior cultures to destroy everything that is inferior to them.

To begin, these questions are less abstract than they seem. The Western world (Europe, and also the United States of America, Australia and a certain part of Japan) propose a model of society defined as superior to others: a secular, democratic system built on economic realism, and founded on the values of individuality.

France is a good example of this affirmation. France readily defines itself as “Lights” of the 18th century and on the grand principles of the revolution of 1789, in particular the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen - an admirable text, certainly, but we should not forget that these philosophies and the Declaration also coexisted with the crime of slavery - even Voltaire was a shareholder of the India Company (which supported slavery), and the peak of the slave trade in France, Holland, and England exactly coincides with this era.

Later, the Republic of France continued to accommodate the injustice of colonization, which spoiled indigenous terrains and maintained entire races under the yoke. The Declaration of 1789 should no longer overshadow the fact the inferior condition to which women were subjected - the revolutionary Olympe de Gouges had dared to proclaim a Declaration of Rights of Women and the Citizen, because of which she was condemned to a death by the Tribunal of the Republic. In France, the right to vote has only recently been acquired by women, and even today, women’s access to politics is still far from accepted.

When we speak of multiculturalism, we propose the example of England (the United States serve as a counter-example). In England, components of the population are recognized and even encouraged. Each component has the right to practice its religion, right to its desired dress and hairstyle, and to speak its own language. On the contrary, in Latin countries we often speak of “tolerance,” as if immigration was a kind of necessary evil. The dress codes are strict, and everything that is different is resented, considered provocative. Recently, the French government had a serious discussion on the question of “national identity” on whether it is appropriate that a woman (or a man) promenade Paris on the streets of Champs-Élysées with her face completely covered.

The debate between the partisans of multiculturalism and partisans of a unique-cultural model lead to unproductive polemics. According to proponents of a uni-culture, multiculturalism supports communitarianism, and thus the perversion of quotas and establishment of mafias. It could pose a danger

to the sense of unity in the nation, and would dissolve the patriotism in the proliferation of sub-cultures. On the reverse side, for the proponents of multiculturalism, the radicalism of forced integration supports acculturation and dissimulates inequalities that create inferior castes excluded from the public life and knowledge.

In reality, both models resulted in failure. One flaw was idealism, another was authoritarianism. The truth is that cultural co-education is inevitable (since physical intermingling no longer exists, since all human races are a result of millions of years of interbreeding). It is also a vain and illusory attempt to claim an ethnic purity, as it is futile to stop the flow of water from rivers to the sea. We could construct barriers and slow down the flow, but sooner or later the water would circumvent the obstacles and the different brooks, rivers and the streams would meet each other in the ocean.

One aspect that could lead to optimism is that art has always preceded institutions and customs in its advancement. Like the fact that I was invited to speak at the First World Humanities Forum under the aegis of the Korea National Commission for UNESCO, it is literature that we honor. Let me speak to you a little about literature.

Literature, from the start of its existence, gives a clear response to the disconcerting question of identity. Indeed, even though it is related to a culture and territory, literature cannot in any case be confounded with nationalism. The language literature utilizes, and sometimes invents, is certainly connected to the history of a people, rooted in a legendary past. However, literature is a sublimation, not an illustration.

The Greek poet Homer (whom we say never existed, but this raises the necessity of faith) tells the first myths of the Hellenic people; the Trojan war, the voyages of Ulysses, and his return to his birthplace are fabulous monuments that formed the foundations of Greek culture. However, these events he describes, though majestic they may be, are nothing more than minuscule episodes in the history of the world, concerning only a couple of Peloponnesian tribes. The migration of the Polynesians across the Pacific Ocean, just as the story evoked by the female poet Teuira Henry, or the exodus of the Mexicans across the American continent, and the foundation of Tenochtitlan, such as the story told by writer Fernando Alva Ixtlilxochitl, are equally important events. Why do we recognize one, and ignore the others?

And how can we, in the 21st century, identify and recognize accounts of a culture that is - aside from whatever scholars might discuss - so alien to us that it seems to exist in another planet? Especially, what is there in common between the heroes and the gods, their avatars and their love, and our present dominated by economic anguishes and the nightmare of industrial pollution?

Consider another example. In the beginning of the 20th century, one solitary man, with no job and afflicted with asthma, decided to undertake writing the chronicle of his contemporaries. They were a tiny group of rich shareholders living in the privileged quarters of Paris and its suburbs. This chronicle, surprisingly, became a worldwide literary masterpiece, under the name of "In Search for Lost Time."

In reality, this piece, long ignored by the general public (and even among critics, since the first copy was refused by the editor Gallimard who judged it "illegible") became a universal classic, translated and



diffused in almost every language. What is there in common between a novel by Marcel Proust and the epic poems of Homer?

These two cases - the adventures of Swann and the voyage of Ulysses - transcend their form and their region, and touch us in the areas we all have in common, whatever may be our skin color, our mother tongue or the history of our countries. This universal commonality is not complex: it's the anxiety of time, the quest to happiness, love, pain of exile and the death of those dear to us.

I took the example of Proust not because of facility, but for other reasons. For a long time, I have not been awakened to his novels, not because they were foreign to me, but because they spoke of a society and characters that were familiar to me and yet profoundly antipathetic to me as well. Swann, Charlus, the Verdurins, I encountered them in my youth, among my grandmother's friends, all of whom were typical emanations of this era (my grandmother did not resemble them, thanks be to God) - snobby, arrogant, superficial people, indifferent to the ruins that war has brought, in which they were the participants. Only Odette, half-cultured, won my affection as a victim of this unjust and egotistic society. I refused to enter such a world.

And one day, accidentally, I read the haïkus of the great Japanese poet Matsuo, more widely known as Bashô:

Listen to the sound of the streams  
in the mountains  
There is the entrance

And thereafter, I realized that this poem seemed to be the key to Proust's novels. In the first pages of *Beside the House of Swann*, when the narrator, hearing the sound of the bells that rang each time Swann pushed the garden gates of the Verdurins, trembles in the recollection of his own memories unlocked, triggered by the same signal. As such, a poem written very long ago in a foreign language could enable a reader to understand a romantic novel.

This anecdote helps illustrate what the intercultural could represent- not the intertextual. In a conceptual framework that transcends eras and regions, encounters are possible, even though they sometimes seem to defy logic that proceeds according to anachronistic and anachronistic thinking.

The reward is in the knowledge of the history of humanity and in the relationship between eras and regions. If we could read today the works of Hesiodus and Claude Levi Strauss's *Mythology*, *Don Quixote* by Cervantes and detective novels, it is because an intelligent understanding between cultures is the true reason why language exists. We now know that, in the symphony of cultures, each voice, each melody has its role, and it is something we cannot let pass by. On this liberty depends the peace and the future of humanity as a whole.

Interculturalism is far from a realization. Governments of the world still hesitate among the tension that

comes from nationalism, uniculturalism and the heteroclit assembly of multiculturalism. Therefore, it is our task, a task for us who have experienced intolerance and wars of domination, a task for us to prepare an intercultural peace, and this is why the education and knowledge of humanities are necessary and indispensable.

Let us be careful of excessive idealism. We will not seek to change reality, which is the global dominance of three or four languages imposed upon the world via colonization. The question of language has its importance. Among the 4000 languages spoken today throughout the world, many are on the brink of extinction. We do not need to solve this by establishing a lingua franca, to make a commercial pidgin of a planetary scale. The Senegal poet and chief of state Leopold Senghor had proposed to replace English with Latin, for international relations; he thought, by doing this, we would avoid the criticism of neo-colonism.

However, without doubt this is not solely a question of language. We should examine numerous ideas that reign absolute in the world: the idea of natural inequality, a name for the laws of the market (in truth, closer to the laws of the jungle); the refusal to re-evaluate the effects of development in full price; the idea that our resources are inexhaustible; that we cannot reflect on the disequilibrium caused by the rich countries' lifestyle; and that poor countries should be excluded from development because of ecological reasons. All of these reflections involve an exchange.

Without doubt, we should inspire other models of culture, considered as minorities, which favor development in psychology and social relations rather than technology.

In reality, it's through education of future generations that we can hope to change the destiny of our sick world. Elimination of illiteracy, access to culture is one of the keys to this change.

This project does not rest only on abstract discourses: the island of Mauritius has had a public interest association since three years ago, Foundation for Intercultural and Peace (FIP), which has started ground-level fieldwork, distributing books to schools and while presenting to the children a permanent exposition on the theme: "Every parent, everyone different." This is because the future will be passed onto these children, and through them we will correct our mistakes and the crimes of the past- this is my hope.

Thank you for your attention.

JMG Le Clezio

September 2011

(\*) Issa Asgarally, Intercultural or war, essay, Mauritius printing 2003

Mr. Asgarally is a co-founder with Ms. Sarojini Bissessor and myself of FIP (Foundation of Intercultural and Peace), one Cathedral Square, Port Louis, Island of Mauritius..

## Une porte qui s'ouvre

**Jean-Marie Gustave Le Clézio**

Auteur

Ma présentation sera, si vous le permettez, un plaidoyer en faveur de la pratique de l'Interculturel. Mais je souhaiterais au préalable donner les raisons de mon engagement.

Bien que je sois né et que j'aie grandi en France, un pays où sont affirmées les valeurs de la république universelle et de l'unité linguistique, j'appartiens, par l'histoire de ma famille à une autre nation, l'île Maurice, petite république indépendante de l'Océan Indien, qui par son passe et sa vocation, est un exemple de la diversité ethnique et culturelle. Comme la plupart des pays qui se sont trouvés sur la route des alizes (trade winds) l'île Maurice a été dès le commencement de son existence l'objet de la convoitise des puissances coloniales. Elle a été aussi l'une des premières à expérimenter la violence des guerres de conquête, la piraterie, et elle est devenue l'un des abcès de fixation de la cruelle traite des esclaves, le point de départ des vaisseaux négriers vers l'Amérique du sud, et vers le Pacifique.

L'île est passée de mains en mains au gré des traités et des combats navals; découverte en 1507 par le navigateur portugais Pedro de Mascarenhas, elle s'est trouvée successivement sous la domination des Espagnols, des Hollandais en 1598, des Français en 1715, puis des Anglais en 1810, avant d'acquérir son indépendance en 1968. Ces prises de possession ont laissé leur marque. Les premiers colons français, contractés par la Compagnie des Indes, furent des travailleurs terriens (beaucoup d'entre eux étaient protestants et cherchaient une terre d'asile où réaliser leur rêve égalitaire).

La corruption des mœurs transforma ce rêve en cauchemar pour les esclaves africains, importés par les colons pour travailler à leur place. L'esclavage, à Maurice, ne fut pas seulement une exploitation criminelle, il fut également à l'origine d'une nouvelle culture, et d'une langue, la langue créole, inventée par les esclaves à partir du langage de leurs maîtres, et qui est considérée comme la dernière née des langues indo-européennes. C'est cette langue qui est aujourd'hui la langue vernaculaire de l'île Maurice, parlée par tous ses habitants, quelle que soit leur origine.

Lorsque les Anglais abolirent la traite en 1828, les colons eurent recours, pour remplacer les esclaves, à une nouvelle population d'immigrants: les 'engagés' (indentured) provenant pour sa plus grande part de l'Inde. Par un juste retournement des choses, c'est cette population, actuellement majoritaire, qui détient le pouvoir politique à l'île Maurice.

C'est cette histoire (dont je fais partie par mon héritage familial) qui est à l'origine de la mixité que l'on constate à Maurice et dans d'autres régions similaires du globe (aux Antilles, en Insulinde, dans le Pacifique). Il me semble qu'elle montre quelque chose d'exemplaire. Comme l'a dit le poète français Edouard Glissant (Poétique de la relation), les îles ont cent ans d'avance sur les métropoles continentales, en matière de métissage, d'expérience douloureuse de la colonisation, et de pratique de l'échange avec les autres. Dans ces îles (hormis sans doute Saint Domingue, victime d'une répression aveugle par les forces coloniales) l'entente entre les communautés se fit comme une révolution pacifique. Maurice, en particulier, est un exemple de cette révolution pacifique: dans ce petit pays -- approximativement la taille de l'île de Jeju -- vivent ensemble des hommes et des femmes de toutes origines, de toutes les couleurs de peau, de toutes les confessions: descendants des colons anglais et français, descendants des esclaves africains ou malgaches, fils et filles des coolies indiens et chinois importés par l'industrie du sucre, commerçants chinois, arabes, et même une petite communauté coréenne! L'on y entend parler plusieurs langues, d'abord la langue créole, mais aussi le français (langue de culture), l'anglais (langue officielle de l'île) l'hindi, l'urdu, le hakka (dialecte de Hong Kong), et enfin le bhojpuri, sorte de créole indien venant de l'état de Bhojpur, au centre de l'Inde. Toutes ces langues ne sont pas enseignées dans les écoles, mais chaque citoyen de Maurice parle au moins trois d'entre elles. De la même façon, chaque citoyen peut, au cours de ses déplacements, voir les édifices des trois principales religions de Maurice, les églises chrétiennes, les temples hindous et les mosquées musulmanes -- auxquels il faudrait ajouter les sanctuaires animistes installés au creux des arbres. Ces religions ont gardé leur place à Maurice, sans qu'aucune soit plus importante qu'une autre. Le calendrier officiel de Maurice célèbre ainsi au cours de l'année, la fête de Noël (anniversaire de la naissance du Christ), le Mouloud (anniversaire du prophète Mohammad) et les rites indiens, tels que Divali (fête de la lumière). Non sans orgueil, les Mauriciens à l'instar de leur drapeau, se définissent comme le "peuple de l'arc-en-ciel".

Bref, ce tableau de Maurice pourrait sembler idyllique, ayant réalisé une harmonie culturelle. Hélas la société mauricienne n'est pas exempte de crise. La juxtaposition des cultures ne permet pas toujours l'entente. Comme le dit le sociologue mauricien Issa Asgarally (\*) l'arc-en-ciel est un phénomène éphémère. En 2000, un incident (la mort en prison du chanteur créole Kaya) déclencha une insurrection. La population d'origine africaine affronta la communauté indienne, et l'île fut bien près d'être le théâtre d'une révolution sanglante. Les raisons de cette révolte étaient multiples: l'inégalité entre les communautés, les poches de pauvreté, l'ignorance et l'abandon dans lesquels le pouvoir majoritaire laisse la population créole, le manque de représentation des minorités dans le gouvernement. A cela s'ajoutait une ignorance des communautés les unes envers les autres, et le racisme. Seule l'action courageuse du Président Kassam Uteem, un Musulman, qui se porta au devant des émeutiers et les exhorta à déposer les armes, mit fin au conflit et restaura la paix, mais pour combien de temps? Car les questions principales n'ont pas été résolues; les communautés sont reconnues, elles ont une existence officielle, mais il n'y a

pas de communication entre elles. Plus récemment, les radicalismes religieux et culturels ont augmenté la fracture.

Si j'ai voulu faire devant vous le portrait de ma petite patrie (l'île Maurice) c'est parce que je crois que son exemple suscite bon nombre des questions que soulève l'idéal interculturel.

Notre monde actuel, n'en doutons pas, est voué à la rencontre. L'on parle souvent de la mondialisation comme d'un fait récent. C'est ignorer le courant qui remue le monde depuis les premiers voyages de découverte, au XV<sup>ème</sup> siècle. Les empires marchands, avant les soldats et les missionnaires, ont suscité cet appétit de découvertes. Quand les premiers Espagnols partent à la conquête du Nouveau Monde, c'est après avoir monté leurs expéditions comme des entreprises, et signé des traités (on dirait aujourd'hui des contrats d'exclusivité) par lesquels les actionnaires se répartissaient des territoires et des peuples dont ils n'avaient pas la moindre idée (tel le contrat signé à Panama entre Almagro, Pinzón et Pizarro).

La découverte du monde ne s'est pas toujours faite dans la violence. Les premiers contacts entre l'Europe occidentale et l'Extrême orient ont contribué à l'enrichissement et au progrès de l'humanité entière. De l'Inde, de la Chine, de la Corée ou du Japon, les voyageurs européens rapportèrent des techniques qui ont transformé le monde. La brouette (wheel barrow) permit la construction des cathédrales, la culture du ver à soie transforma l'industrie du vêtement, la boussole et le gouvernail permirent la navigation, l'imprimerie (invention chinoise et coréenne) facilita la transmission du savoir et diffusa la littérature. L'échange eut lieu dans les deux sens, et en Orient l'on découvrit les techniques d'architecture et d'urbanisme héritées du monde arabe, et la civilisation amérindienne, par le biais des conquérants espagnols, améliora l'alimentation de la terre toute entière en apportant des aliments inconnus jusqu'alors tels que le maïs, le haricot, la tomate ou la pomme de terre.

De cette ère des découvertes naquit pour la première fois le sentiment d'une prospérité à l'échelle mondiale (mais aussi, bien entendu, le sentiment de partage des calamités, avec la diffusion de la variole, du choléra et de la peste bubonique). En sortant de leur enfermement, les pays d'Europe, et aussi la Chine, le Japon ou la Corée découvrirent l'importance de la communication. De cette époque datent tous les récits de voyage dont la matière, parfois fantaisiste, inventa une science nouvelle, qu'on appelle aujourd'hui la science de l'homme. Les grandes pensées de la philosophie, si elles ne peuvent pas être assimilées à des denrées marchandes, participèrent aussi au voyage. En bref, la civilisation se substitua, partout dans le monde, au préjugé de la barbarie -- un progrès extrêmement lent, puisqu'il n'est pas encore achevé présentement.

Pourtant, à notre époque de communications rapides et d'échanges planétaires à la vitesse de la lumière, la question de la relativité des cultures subsiste. Régulièrement, les pays développés s'interrogent sur la nécessité de définir une culture unique, une sorte de charte de l'humain à valeur universelle. Car c'est

bien la question qui est posée par les cultures majoritaires: existe-t-il une possibilité de salut pour les hommes en dehors de ces limites? Y a-t-il une culture mondiale? Et, thème récurrent malgré les tristes expériences des fauteurs de la dernière guerre mondiale, existe-t-il une hiérarchie des cultures, une sorte d'échelle de valeurs qui séparerait le civilisé du barbare? Cette dernière question impliquant, bien entendu, le droit et même le devoir pour les cultures supérieures d'anéantir toutes celles qui lui seraient inférieures.

Ces questions sont moins abstraites qu'il n'y paraît d'abord. Le monde occidental (L'Europe, mais aussi les Etats-Unis d'Amérique, l'Australie et d'une certaine façon le Japon) propose un modèle de société défini comme supérieur aux autres: laïque, démocrate, empreint de réalisme économique, et fondé sur les valeurs individuelles. La France est un bon exemple de cette affirmation. L'on se réfère volontiers aux "Lumières" du XVIII<sup>ème</sup> siècle et aux grands principes de la Révolution de 1789, en particulier à la Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen -- texte admirable, certes, mais qui ne doit pas faire oublier que ces philosophies et que cette Déclaration ont cohabité avec le crime de l'esclavage -- Voltaire lui-même fut actionnaire de la Compagnie des Indes (esclavagiste) et le pic de la traite, en France, en Hollande, ou en Angleterre eut lieu exactement à la même époque. Plus tard, la République s'accommoda fort bien de l'injustice de la colonisation, spoliant les terres indigènes et maintenant des peuples entiers sous le joug. La Déclaration de 1789 ne doit pas faire oublier non plus la condition d'infériorité dans laquelle furent maintenues les femmes -- la révolutionnaire Olympe de Gouges osa proclamer une Déclaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne, à la suite de quoi elle fut condamnée à mort par le tribunal de la république. En France, le droit de vote fut un acquit récent pour les femmes, et leur accès aux choses politiques est loin d'être accepté encore aujourd'hui.

Lorsqu'on parle de multiculturalisme, c'est l'exemple de l'Angleterre qu'on propose (les Etats-Unis seraient plutôt le contre-exemple). Dans ce pays, les composantes de la population sont reconnues et même favorisées. Chacun y a le droit de pratiquer sa religion, de se vêtir et de se coiffer selon son désir, et de parler sa propre langue. Dans les pays latins, au contraire, l'on parle plutôt de "tolérance", comme si l'immigration était un mal inévitable. Les codes vestimentaires sont stricts, et toute différence y est ressentie comme provocation. Naguère, le gouvernement français s'est interrogé gravement sur le sens de l'"identité nationale" et sur la question de savoir s'il était convenable qu'une femme (ou un homme) se promène à Paris sur les champs Elysées avec le visage complètement voilé.

Le débat entre les partisans du multiculturalisme et ceux du modèle culturel unique alimente donc des polémiques stériles. Pour les tenants de l'uni-culturel, le multiculturalisme favorise le communautarisme, donc la perversion des quotas et l'établissement de mafias. Il mettrait en danger le sentiment d'unité de la nation et dissoudrait le patriotisme dans une prolifération de sous-cultures. En revanche, pour les partisans du multicultural, le radicalisme de l'intégration forcée favorise l'acculturation et dissimule les inégalités, créant des castes inférieures exclues de la connaissance et de la vie publique.

En réalité, ce sont ces deux modèles qui sont mis en échec. L'un pèche par idéalisme, l'autre par

autoritarisme. La vérité est que la mixité culturelle (puisque le métissage physique n'existe pas, toutes les races humaines étant le résultat de mélanges depuis des milliers d'années) est inévitable. Il serait aussi vain et illusoire de prétendre à une pureté ethnique que de vouloir empêcher l'eau des rivières et des torrents d'aller à la mer. L'on peut construire des barrages, retarder le courant, mais tôt ou tard l'eau contourne l'obstacle et les ruisseaux, les rivières et les fleuves se rencontrent dans la mer.

L'un des aspects qui peut rendre optimiste, c'est que l'art a toujours été en avance sur les institutions et les mœurs. Puisqu'en m'invitant à prendre la parole dans ce Premier Forum mondial de l'humanisme (First World Humanities Forum) sous l'égide de la commission nationale coréenne de l'UNESCO, c'est la littérature qu'on met à l'honneur, permettez moi de vous parler un peu de littérature.

La littérature, depuis qu'elle existe, donne une réponse claire à la question troublante de l'identité. En effet, même si elle se relie à une culture et à un territoire, la littérature ne peut en aucun cas se confondre avec le nationalisme. Le langage que la littérature utilise, et parfois inventé, est certes relié à l'histoire d'un peuple, enraciné dans un passé légendaire. Mais la littérature en est la sublimation, et non l'illustration.

Le poète grec Homère (dont on dit qu'il n'a jamais existé, mais cela relève davantage de la foi) raconte les mythes premiers du peuple hellène: la guerre de Troie, le voyage d'Ulysse, son retour au pays natal sont le monument fabuleux qui fonde la culture grecque. Mais ces événements qu'il relate, pour majestueux qu'ils soient, ne sont que de minuscules épisodes dans l'histoire du monde, et ne concernent que quelques tribus du Péloponnèse. La migration des Polynésiens à travers l'Océan Pacifique, telle que l'évoque la poétesse Teuira Henry, ou l'exode des Mexicains à travers le continent américain, et la fondation de Tenochtitlan, telle que l'a racontée le chroniqueur Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl, sont des événements d'une importance égale. Pourquoi a-t-on retenu l'un, et ignore-t-on les autres? Et comment pouvons nous, au XXI<sup>ème</sup> siècle, nous identifier à un récit qui concerne une culture qui -- quoi qu'en disent les lettrés -- nous est aussi étrangère que si elle avait existé sur une autre planète? Et qu'y a-t-il de commun entre ces héros et ces déesses, leurs avatars et leurs amours, et notre présent dominé par les angoisses économiques et le cauchemar de la pollution industrielle?

Prenons un autre exemple. Au début du XX<sup>ème</sup> siècle, un homme solitaire, sans profession et malade d'asthme, décida d'entreprendre la chronique de ses contemporains, c'est-à-dire du tout petit milieu des rentiers fortunés habitant les quartiers privilégiés de Paris et de sa proche banlieue. Cette chronique, de façon surprenante, est devenue une référence littéraire mondiale, sous le nom de "A la recherche du temps perdu". De fait, cette somme, longtemps ignorée du grand public (et même de la critique, puisque le premier tome fut refusé par l'éditeur Gallimard qui la jugea "illisible") est devenue une œuvre universelle, traduite et diffusée dans presque toutes les langues. Qu'y a-t-il de commun entre le roman de Marcel Proust et le poème épique de Homère? L'un et l'autre -- les aventures de Swann et le voyage d'Ulysse -- sont sortis de leur cadre, de leur territoire, et ont su toucher en nous ce qui nous est commun à tous et à toutes, quelle que soit la couleur de notre peau, la langue de notre mère ou l'histoire de notre pays. Cet universel n'est pas complexe: c'est l'inquiétude du temps, la quête du bonheur, l'amour, la douleur de l'exil



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et la mort de ceux qui nous sont chers.

Je n'ai pas pris l'exemple de Proust par facilité. Longtemps, je me suis couché sans avoir pu lire ses livres, non parce que ce qui s'y trouvait m'était étranger, mais au contraire parce qu'ils parlaient d'une société et de personnages qui m'étaient familiers et profondément antipathiques. Swann, Charlus, les Verdurin, je les avais rencontrés dans mon enfance, parmi les amis de ma grand-mère qui tous étaient l'émanation de cette époque -- snobs, infatués, superficiels, indifférents à la ruine de l'après-guerre dont ils avaient été les acteurs. Seule Odette, la demie mondaine, réussissait à me plaire car elle était une victime de cette société injuste et égoïste. Je refusais d'entrer dans un tel monde. Et un jour, par hasard, je lus les haïkus du grand poète japonais Matsuo, plus connu sous le nom de Bashô:

Ecoute le bruit du torrent  
dans la montagne  
La est l'entrée

et aussitôt m'apparut la clef des romans de Proust, dans les premières pages de *Du côté de chez Swann*, quand le narrateur, écoutant le son de la clochette qui tinte chaque fois que Swann pousse le portillon du jardin des Verdurin, frémit en sentant en lui-même le signal du déclenchement de sa mémoire. Ainsi, un poème écrit il y a très longtemps, dans une langue étrangère, pouvait permettre à un lecteur de pénétrer dans une œuvre romanesque.

Cette petite parabole me sert à illustrer ce que peut représenter l'Interculturel -- et non pas l'intertextuel. Dans le courant des pensées qui traversent les époques et les territoires, la rencontre est possible, même si elle semble parfois heurter la logique en procédant selon l'anachronisme et l'anatopisme. La récompense est dans la connaissance de l'histoire humaine, et dans la relation qu'elle implique entre les époques et les lieux. Si nous pouvons lire aujourd'hui l'œuvre d'Hésiode et les *Mythologiques* de Claude Lévi Strauss, le *Quijote* de Cervantès et les romans policiers, c'est parce que l'intelligence entre les cultures est la vraie raison d'être du langage. Nous savons maintenant que dans le concert des cultures, chaque voix, chaque mélodie a son rôle, et que nous ne pouvons nous en passer. De cette liberté dépendent la paix et l'avenir de l'humanité toute entière.

L'Interculturel est loin d'être réalisé. Les gouvernements du monde hésitent encore entre la tentation nationaliste, uniculturelle et l'assemblage hétéroclite du multiculturel. C'est donc notre tâche, à nous qui avons connu l'intolérance et les guerres de domination, de nous préparer à la paix interculturelle, et c'est pourquoi l'éducation et la connaissance de l'humanisme est nécessaire, indispensable.

Gardons nous d'un excès d'idéalisme. Nous ne changerons pas la réalité, qui est la domination mondiale de trois ou quatre des langues imposées par la colonisation. La question des langues a son importance. Des 4000 langues actuellement parlées dans le monde, beaucoup sont menacées d'extinction. Nous ne devons pas nous résoudre à une lingua franca, sabir commercial à l'échelle planétaire. Le poète et chef d'état sénégalais Léopold Senghor avait proposé de remplacer l'anglais par le latin, pour les relations internationales: ainsi, pensait-il, nous éviterions l'écueil du néo colonialisme.

Mais ce n'est sans doute pas seulement une question de langue. Nous devons examiner nombre d'idées reçues, qui règnent absolument sur le monde: l'idée de l'inégalité naturelle, au nom des lois du marché (en vérité plus proche des lois de la jungle); le refus de la remise en cause du développement à tout prix; l'idée que nos ressources sont inépuisables; que nous ne pouvons pas réfléchir au déséquilibre causé par le mode de vie des pays riches, et que les pays pauvres doivent être exclus du développement pour des raisons d'écologie. Toutes ces réflexions impliquent l'échange. Sans doute devons-nous nous inspirer d'autres modèles de cultures, dites minoritaires, qui ont favorisé le développement psychique et les relations sociales plutôt que la technique.

En réalité, c'est par l'éducation des générations futures que l'on peut espérer changer la destinée de notre monde malade. L'accès à l'alphabétisation, à la culture est une des clefs de ce changement.

Ce projet ne repose pas sur des discours abstraits: à l'île Maurice, depuis trois ans, existe une association de bonne volonté, la FIP, Foundation for Intercultural and Peace, qui a commencé un travail de terrain, en distribuant des livres dans les écoles et en présentant aux enfants une exposition sur le thème: "Tous parents, tous différents." Car c'est aux enfants qu'appartient l'avenir, et ce sera par eux que seront rachetées les erreurs et les crimes du passé -- tel est mon souhait.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.

JMG Le Clézio  
septembre 20011

(\*) Issa Asgarally, L'Interculturel ou la guerre, essai, Mauritius printing 2003

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# **The 1<sup>st</sup>** **World Humanities Forum** Proceedings

## **Session 1**

**Plenary Session 1.**  
Cultural Relativism and Universalism