

How Multicultural Discourses Can Help Construct New Meaning

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Professor Shi-xu indicated that it might be fruitful to have a panel on the Multicultural Discourses in their connection with notions such as dignity and humiliation. This paper would fit into such a panel.

Abstract

This paper discusses the ‘critical paradigm’ that guides the field of Multicultural Discourses, and it makes three points. First, it reflects on the larger historical context, into which the emergence of the critical paradigm is embedded. Second, it explains how feelings of humiliation have become the marker of the critical paradigm. Third, the point is made that giving voice to the voiceless is as important and potentially life-saving as protecting biodiversity, but that this endeavour ought to be carried forward as a joint effort and with caution. The paper concludes with a discussion as to how multicultural discourses can be instrumental to constructing meaning both for each world citizen individually, but also with respect to public policy planning. The field of Multicultural Discourses, its researchers and experts, carry a particular responsibility.

Keywords: Multicultural Discourses, Humiliation, Identity, Meaning, Public Policy Planning, Genocide, War

Introduction

The biography of the author of this paper is intimately interlinked with critical inquiry, with the aim to contextualise research, and the ambition to make theory relevant to real life. Michal Billig’s profound and insightful article ‘Remembering the Particular Background of Social Identity Theory’ (Billig, 1996) made a intense impression on her. She wrote to him, ‘I remember reading “Remembering the Particular Background of Social Identity Theory” and being deeply moved. This is what is my vision, that academic work should be relevant for our lives’ (personal message, 5th February, 2004).

The author was born in Western Europe in 1954 as *Flüchlingskind* (‘refugee child’) into a displaced family from Silesia (Central Europe). Her initial identity was: ‘Here where we live we are not at home, it is not our culture, but we cannot return home either;

the place where we come from is no longer available to us and, since Silesians are now scattered, Silesian culture will die with our parents; we belong nowhere; we live in a limbo, we are no full human beings.'

In other words, the author's early identity represented a kind of 'minus-identity,' or 'no-voice and no-culture identity.' She did not fit into mainstream definitions of a 'full' human being. Her parents were mourning the loss of their *Heimat* ('homeland'), their culture was fading away, and the author asked, 'Where is my home and my culture?' She was born into a question mark. The question mark was the only realm that she could call 'my culture.'

Still today, her voice is the voice of the question mark, unsettling conventionality, yet, no longer *in despair*, but *in the service of building a functional global society*. This is, one might say, one of the fruitful outcomes of her painful biography, fruitful, hopefully, for the world *outside*, since she now dedicates her life to contributing to 'never again.' The other fruitful outcome concerns her own *inner life*, namely that she succeeded in transforming her identity from a painful *not belonging to any locality* to a deep meaningful and fulfilling *global belonging*. Interestingly, *multicultural discourses* were the path toward this two-fold construction of inner and outer meaning, or, more precisely, the author immersed herself into a wide variety of global voices and became a global citizen (as much as is practically possible in today's world).

If the author's experiences were an exception, they would be irrelevant for others, and would not merit serving as an example for this paper. However, in times of globalisation and global turmoil, a growing number of people are being touched by similar experiences, and they might be interested to ponder the solutions and insights that the author discovered. Indeed, undoubtedly, we 'will have to deal with shifting identities and cross-cultural networks rather than with autonomous individuals located in stable and homogeneous national cultures' (Kramsch, 2001, p. 205).

The author's experience resembles that of displaced people and refugees around the world, of those who feel stripped of the right to have a voice. During recent years, the author's experience also joins in with the increasing number of 'global people' (Rosabeth Kanter, 2004). Among others, the author's background gives her a victim's insight into the pain and suffering that emanates from genocides, war, displacement, and the struggle for belonging. The author has a deep understanding, for example, for many Jews, who, over centuries, felt at home in their dreams of Jerusalem without ever having been there, and she equally deeply empathises with the plight of Palestinians who feel that Haifa, for example, is their home, even though they were born in a distant refugee camp.

The author could have stopped at this point and done no more than using multicultural discourses for commiseration. However, the fact that humankind faces increasingly urgent global problems calls for a re-examination of old concepts of identity and old conceptualisations of knowledge and reality. In order to face global challenges, multicultural discourses are more than a vehicle for global commiseration, and also more than an interesting phenomenon for research: promoting multicultural discourses in practice may prove to be the only path to arriving at solutions for those global problems. This is the message that the author of this paper wishes to send from this conference to public policy planners both locally and globally, and, equally, to the field of Multicultural Discourses. This paper is thus inscribed into the author's effort to dedicate her work to

‘never again’ – never again a century of war and genocide like the twentieth century, but a constructive future for humankind.

At the heart of the author’s work, and the work carried out by the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies network that she has founded, lies the ‘critical paradigm’ that also drives the field of multicultural discourses. Shi-xu, Professor at Zhejiang University, China, Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, writes:

It is fair to say that existing journals on discourse, and on language and communication more generally, are largely oriented to the Western intellectual world. The philosophies, theories, methods, issues and data that they treat and the authors that they give voice to tend to be Western in origin and/or in orientation. Consequently, the voices and concerns of the non-Western world are repressed or ignored. In this sense, the scholarly discourses remain largely univocal or, one might argue, a-cultural, though often under the guise of universality (Shi-xu, 2006, http://www.racesci.org/happenings/journal_multicultural.htm).

The *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* hence follows the spirit of the journal *Discourse & Society*, which was founded with the aim to engage in the analysis of social inequality, opposing existing paradigms, and developing a ‘critical paradigm’ (Van Dijk, 1990, p. 10). Since 1990, a solid body of work has been collected in this critical paradigm, so much so that Michael Billig warns that is important to be on guard that the critical is not getting lost in the conventional. In his editorial ‘Towards a Critique of the Critical,’ Billig writes,

However, the success of a critical journal is not merely a matter of understandable satisfaction. There should also be a sense of doubt, even disquiet. Perhaps academic success comes at a cost for the critical analyst: success might bring a conventionality that inevitably blunts the rougher critical, not to say creative, edges (Billig, 2000, p. 291).

Not only discourse studies are steeped in an effort to address inequalities and give voice to the voiceless. Indigenous psychology is another recently emerging field that aims at a similar goal. *Indigenous and Cultural Psychology: Understanding People in Context* is the most recent publication (Kim, Yang, and Hwang, 2006). Uichol Kim explains that ten characteristics identify indigenous psychology, among them ‘it advocates the integration of ‘insiders,’ ‘outsiders’ and multiple perspectives to obtain comprehensive and integrated understanding,’ and ‘tenth, two starting points of research in indigenous psychology can be identified: indigenization from without and indigenization from within (Uichol Kim, in a personal message to the author, 30th April 2006).

In this paper, the author makes three points. The first point is that critical endeavours – exposing inequalities, including inequalities between the West and non-West – are inscribed into a larger historical context. This context is the first continuous revolution that humankind ever engaged in, usually called the human rights revolution, or, more precisely, the un-ranking of dignity. The author of this chapter has coined the term *egalisation* for this process.

The second point of this chapter addresses specifically the role of humiliation. Feelings of humiliation have become the emotional marker of the critical paradigm, feelings of humiliation when people are rendered voiceless, marginalised, and deprived of their right to enjoy equal space and equal dignity as everybody else. The author calls feelings of humiliation the ‘fuel’ of the human rights movement.

However, feelings of humiliation have an ominous force. The extremist Hutus, who perpetrated genocide on the Tutsis, whom they regarded as their former and potential future humiliators, were traditionally the downtrodden and voiceless. And when they raised their voice, this voice promoted genocide. The author’s research of the phenomenon of humiliation in the context of war and genocides, among others the Rwandan genocide in 1994 (Lindner, 2000), made her wary of giving voice to advocates of mayhem, independently of whether this voice comes from the West or from the non-West.

Nelson Mandela could have unleashed genocide on the white humiliators in South Africa – he did not. This text wishes to advocate the path of Mandela (whose achievements are untouched by any possible criticism to his person) by drawing attention to the fact that humiliating people, even humiliating humiliators, is not in the spirit of respecting everybody as equal in dignity, nor is it in the spirit of any truly critical approach. Mandela showed that social change can be attained with dignified firmness. He walked out of prison after 27 years, and some of his former prison guards had become his personal friends.

Humiliating people always creates rifts, rifts that undermine cooperation. In the face of the need for global cooperation for humankind to solve pressing global problems, an inclusive approach is essential. This entails that feelings of humiliation have to be guided with care in order to not turn the critical paradigm into a destructive paradigm.

Third, in line with the second point, this article urges that the critical paradigm ought to be embraced not only by the voiceless, but also by the dominant voices, for example, ‘the West,’ because giving space to all voices available in the world might turn out to be as life-saving as protecting biodiversity. Protecting biodiversity is potentially life-saving in many ways, for example, because new medicines might be hidden in rain forests that would be cut down only at the peril of all humankind. It is not exaggerated to posit that the diversity of the world’s voices is as significant for the survival of all, of West and non-West alike. Thus, critical endeavours ought not to descend into a misunderstood confrontation – ‘evil’ West against ‘good’ non-West – but ought to be part of a joint effort of critique, including self-critique on all sides. This caveat resonates with Shi-xu’s call that innovative positions in-between Eastern and Western cultures that are relevant to current global realities need to be developed (Shi-xu, 2004).

This text therefore wishes to critique any equation of West=‘good/bad’ or non-West=‘good/bad.’ In former times, Western colonisers had an odious history of equating themselves with ‘good,’ while disparaging the ‘non-West’ as ‘bad,’ and, unfortunately, this judgement must have been rather successful in colonising the minds of many of the voiceless, otherwise we would not witness such a widespread global imitation of Western style still today – after all, cities and their citizens’ attire around the world look alike, namely Western. But it would be misguided to merely turn this calibration around and use its reverse, stamping ‘West’ as all ‘bad,’ and ‘non-West’ as all ‘good.’ Exchanging arrogant Western colonisers with arrogant non-Western colonisers would not be worth

the effort. And what would be overlooked by merely switching the old bias, would be that, indeed, some contributions from the West are 'bad,' but not all, and likewise, not all non-Western voices are 'good.'

This paper calls for a joint effort in identifying useful voices, useful for a sustainable future for humankind, and showing due scepticism to less useful voices. The practice of South African witchcraft murders, for example, is perhaps as detrimental to a constructive future for humankind as was the European inquisition and its practice of burning 'witches,' while the African *Ubuntu* philosophy could be regarded to be as helpful as Western humanism.

In other words, giving voice to the voiceless is extremely important, it is potentially life-saving for humankind; however it is also a process that requires careful attention, and cautious differentiation.

This paper is written with the sense of urgency that Michio Kaku, renowned physicist, expresses in the concluding paragraph of his book *Parallel Worlds*:

The generation now alive is perhaps the most important generation of humans ever to walk the Earth. Unlike previous generations, we hold in our hands the future destiny of our species, whether we soar into fulfilling our promise as a type I civilization [meaning a civilization that succeeds in building a socially and ecologically sustainable world] or fall into the abyss of chaos, pollution, and war. Decisions made by us will reverberate throughout this century. How we resolve global wars, proliferating nuclear weapons, and sectarian and ethnic strife will either lay or destroy the foundations of a type I civilization. Perhaps the purpose and meaning of the current generation are to make sure that the transition to a type I civilization is a smooth one. The choice is ours. This is the legacy of the generation now alive. This is our destiny (Kaku, 2005, p. 361).

This paper is organised in five parts, whereof part two, three, and four address the three points outlined above. The first part of this paper is an introductory section that illustrates the critical paradigm by giving space to four voices, to Lu Xun and Shi-xu from China, to Michel Serres from France, and at last to the author herself. The second part reflects on the larger historical context, into which the emergence of the critical paradigm is embedded. The third part makes the link to humiliation, and how feelings of humiliation have become the marker of the critical paradigm. The fourth part argues that giving voice to the voiceless is as important as protecting biodiversity and that it ought to be carried forward as a joint effort by all players; however, it also warns that caution is necessary. Fifth, it is discussed how multicultural discourses can be instrumental to constructing meaning not only for a person individually, but also with respect to public policy planning at all levels, at global, international, national, as well as community levels. The paper concludes by calling upon the field of Multicultural Discourses and its researchers and experts to heed their particular responsibility.

Giving voice to the voiceless

The Conference on Multicultural Discourses, for which this paper has been written, is informed by the critical paradigm. The critical paradigm began with dissatisfaction. It was the dissatisfaction with the de-contextualised approach in mainstream psychology. Shi-xu insightfully explains, in his paper 'The Discourse of Mind' (Shi-xu, 1998), how Discursive Psychology emerged and was informed by anthropology, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, and pragmatics, as well as allied with Cultural Psychology (see, for example, Billig, 1987; Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Antaki, 1988, Antaki, 1994; Edwards and Potter, 1992; Parker, 1989, Parker, 1992; Harré and Gillett, 1994; Shotter, 1993). Shi-xu explains how this new social constructionist approach differentiated into two orientations, both with a new sensitivity to context, and a re-orientation in analysis. The first orientation no longer prioritised the mental world, but regarded mind-in-discursive-action as unit of study. The other orientation regarded mind as symbolic discourse, with discursive structures and processes derived from social discourse at its core.

As soon as one engages in contextualising research, power structures are being exposed, power structures that disguise themselves in claims to the de-contextualised universality of their take on reality. Philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas breaks down the concept of 'knowledge constituting interests' into the technical, practical, and emancipatorial interests of knowledge (Habermas, 1987). In other words, contextualising research serves the emancipatorial interest of knowledge by liberating knowledge from being colonised by power dynamics (Habermas speaks of the *colonisation of the lifeworld*).

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the critical paradigm has the emancipatorial effect of giving space to the voices of the powerless. This does not only unsettle established power structures but, following Habermas' analysis, is the only way to gain validity for knowledge itself, and its usefulness for practice.

Please let us give space to a number of voices in the following four sections, voices which show that the inclusion of multiple voices is a desirable endeavour for all, the powerful and powerless alike.

Lu Xun (1881-1936)

Lu Xun (Lu Hsun; real name Zhou Shuren) is being considered the founder of Modern Chinese literature. He was a writer and intellectual, author of short stories, poems, essays, and literary criticism. (The author of this chapter is thankful to Shi-xu for showing her where Lu Xun lived and worked in Shanghai.) Born in 1881 (he died in 1936), into an educated but impoverished Chinese family, Lu Xun was concerned with China's liberation from foreign imperialism, with the abandoning of oppressive and superstitious traditions, with issues of social and economic justice, the plight of the poor and the peasants, as well as with the problems of war, violence and the exploitation of others. *Call To Arms (Na-Han)* (1922) was his first collection of stories (Lu Xun, 1981), which includes his most celebrated stories such as 'Diary of a Madman' (1918) and 'The True Story of Ah Q,' where he depicts an ignorant farm labourer, who goes through a series of humiliations and finally is executed during the chaos of the revolution of 1911.

Shi-xu

Shi-xu follows in Lu Xun's footsteps, and has an emancipatorial agenda (Habermas). Lu Xun exposed the humiliation of feudalism, while Shi-xu exposes the humiliation emanating from the falsity of claims to universalism in Western scholarship. Shi-xu is a Professor and Director of the Institute of Discourse and Cultural Studies, Zhejiang University, in Hangzhou, China, Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, and organiser of the conference for which this paper is being written. He develops a *Social Constructionist Linguistics (SCL)* account of mind – cognition, emotion, self and consciousness (Shi-xu, 1998). He empirically de-constructs modern western linguistics in a social constructionist fashion and argues that 'our thinking and feeling are discursive in nature because they are culturally constructed through, presumed in, mediated by, modelled upon, and born out of, discourse' (Shi-xu, 1998, abstract).

In his more recent book *A Cultural Approach to Discourse* (Shi-xu, 2004), Shi-xu insightfully critiques that discourse studies maintain a universalist claim whilst merely adhering to Western intellectual models, with its whiteness and cultural singularity. He advocates an innovative position in-between Eastern and Western cultures relevant to current global realities.

His latest, co-edited, book, *Read the Cultural Other*, contains studies on non-Western discourse (Shi-xu, Klienpointer, and Servaes (Eds.), 2005). This book uses the specific ways of speaking of China and Hong Kong as a way to lifting non-Western, non-White, and Third-World discourses out from being relegated to *outside* of mainstream. This book illuminates to what extent discourse, both day-to-day discourse, but also academic discourse, is of cultural nature, and that a culturally pluralist vision is needed. This book calls for a radical cultural change in international scholarship on language, communication and discourse.

Michael Serres

Shi-xu calls for developing a new innovative position in-between Eastern and Western cultures. This resonates with Michel Serres' call for a 'third place.' Michel Serres, born 1930, is one of the most provocative current French philosophers. He is very little known in the English-speaking world, although he is one of the best-known contemporary French philosophers. He makes the point that modern philosophy was a philosophy of 'unveiling,' of 'unmasking' illusions, of 'exposing' hypocrisy, of winning over opponents, often accompanied by an accusatory, prosecutor-like attitude. For Serres, all this is of little merit today. He calls for *mixing* and *blending*. He suggests that it is not by eliminating and isolating that we grasp the 'real' in more fullness, it is rather by combining, by putting things into play with each other, by letting things interact.

In his book *The Troubadour of Knowledge* (Serres, 1997), Serres uses the metaphor of the 'educated third,' which, to Serres, is a 'third place' where a mixture of culture, nature, sciences, arts and humanities is being constructed. Michalinos **Zembylas** explains, 'This "educated third" will blend together our multiple heritages and will integrate the laws; he/she will be the inventor of knowledge, the eternal traveler who cares about nature and his/her fellow human beings' (Zembylas, 2002, <http://ijea.asu.edu/v3n3/>).

Evelin Lindner

‘Whereas Freud imagined repression to be an inner psychic process, it can, by contrast, be seen as an activity that is constituted within everyday language. In this respect, language is fundamentally both expressive and repressive’ (Billig, 2006, p. 1).

As recounted at the outset of this paper, the author of this paper was born into a displaced family with a distinct identity of non-belonging, trauma, and grief. From her point of view of non-belonging, mainstream ‘normality’ often appeared absurd. The repressive aspects of language were amply visible, through the ‘cracks’ of not belonging.

During the past thirty years, the author has lived as a global citizen, in the West as well as in the Non-West (she lived, studied, and worked for seven years in Egypt, for example, or for two years in Japan, in addition to Thailand, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Israel, Kenya, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, and West Africa, apart from Western countries such as New Zealand, the U.S.A., and almost all of European countries). She handles more than ten languages to various degrees. In her medical doctorate on quality of life (Lindner, 1994), she compared Egypt and Germany, and in her psychological doctorate she studied the notions of dignity and humiliation in relation to genocide and war in Africa on the background of European history (Lindner, 2000). What she learned through her global life and her studies was that there is ample common ground connecting all of humankind. We are much more similar than we think. We all wish for a sustainable future for our children. And we all yearn for recognition and validation.

When asked the question ‘Where are you from?’ she replies as follows:

I am from planet Earth, I am a living creature, I am a human being, like you, in short, I am me, Evelin. I define as ‘my history’ the history of the entire globe; Chinese history is as much ‘my history’ as Japanese or German or Arab or American history: my history is all humankind’s history. This entails that I accept feeling shame and disgust for the destruction that all humankind ever perpetrated. And I wish to carry the responsibility for contributing constructively to building a more liveable world for future generations. I feel responsible for not repeating what Stalin did, or Hitler, or any other dictator.

In the same spirit, I feel proud of all the achievements of humankind, of all the great literature, art and wisdom that have emerged all over the globe. I feel responsible for protecting and celebrating the cultural diversity of this world, for including the voices of the voiceless – with a caveat: I wish to preserve and cherish only those aspects of diversity that are not divisive. I suggest that we let go of cultural aspects and spheres that sow violence or that can only be kept alive through violence.

This entails, for example, that I let go of my family’s Silesian culture. I do not wish to instigate war. I have adopted all of planet Earth as my home, and this has healed my sense of alienation and humiliation more than I could have achieved by re-conquering Silesia by force. I believe that the concept of global citizenship is not only a way to heal my personal sense of anomie, but also a way for humankind to face its task of joint stewardship for their home planet. Jointly caring for planet Earth, by drawing on all voices, is a goal worth fighting for. It is time to develop a language that expresses humankind’s shared responsibility instead of repressing it. And the field of multicultural discourses can be of significant help, namely by offering ‘multi-voices’ to this joint task (adapted from Lindner, 2006c, and Lindner, 2006b).

To conclude this section of giving space to four voices, hopefully the attempt was successful to show to the reader how the inclusion of multiple voices is a desirable endeavour for all, the powerful and powerless alike.

The critical paradigm and its historical context

The emergence of the critical paradigm is embedded into a larger historical context, namely the context of *Homo sapiens*' adaptations through history. For the first ninety percent of their history, *Homo sapiens* populated the globe as hunters and gatherers. They lived in small bands of approximately 200 individuals who enjoyed rather egalitarian societal institutions and remarkably high qualities of life (Ury, 1999). There is no proof of organised fighting among hunters and gatherers (suggesting that 'man' is perhaps not aggressive by nature, but rather by circumstance). 'The Hobbesian view of humans in a constant state of 'Warre' is simply not supported by the archaeological record' (MacArthur, 2003).

However, around 10,000 years ago, what anthropologists call *circumscription* kicked in. Circumscription means that there was no longer enough – not enough space and not enough resources. Planet Earth is small and gives the illusion of being unlimited only as long as one has not yet reached its limits. Though the problem had been building up slowly over a long period, it reached a critical moment at one very 'brief' historic moment, namely when the global climate changed dramatically 11,600 years ago. The Pleistocene's last ice age ended and the Holocene¹ period of relatively warm, wet, stable, CO₂ rich environments began.

However, *Homo sapiens* had developed specific 'toolkits' over a long time and were pre-adapted. It was a sudden change transformed the planet, many scholars agree, making it possible to practice agriculture over a large fraction of its surface. 'The spread of agriculture throughout the world resulted from a single, strong, manipulation' (Richerson, Boyd, and Bettinger, 1999, p. 2).

The rise of complex agriculture also brought hierarchy. For the past 10,000 years, almost everywhere on the globe, human value and worthiness was ranked hierarchically. In agricultural societies, almost everybody adhered to the belief that some people were born as *higher* beings and others as *lower* beings. This was called the 'order of nature' or 'divine order.' 'Because of the pervasiveness of inequality, no one who lived in the early civilizations questioned the normalcy of this condition. If egalitarianism was known, it was as a feature of some of the despised, barbarian societies that existed beyond the borders of the "civilized" world' (Trigger, 1993, p. 52).

In other words, during long stretches of human history, for the past 10,000 years, inequality – the vertical ranking of human worth into higher and lesser beings – was much more than a reluctantly tolerated evil; it was hailed as the very core of civilisation. Equality was 'barbaric.' The so-called 'cradle of democracy,' to give just one example, the Greek city state of about 2,000 years ago, was adamant that women and slaves, per definition, had no voice.

¹ Greek holo = entire; whole, cene = recent.

The research on humiliation that the author of this article carried out, documents myriads of ways in which hierarchical systems of domination/submission have been held in place by routine humiliation throughout the past 10,000 years, and how these systems are currently breaking open (Lindner, 2000, see also Lindner, 2006c, and Lindner, 2006a). For her doctoral research in social psychology (1997-2001), for example, the author carried out 216 qualitative interviews addressing Somalia, Rwanda and Burundi and their history of genocidal killings, on the background of European history. From 1998 to 1999 the interviews took place in Africa (in Hargeisa, capital of Somaliland, in Kigali and other places in Rwanda, in Bujumbura, capital of Burundi, in Nairobi in Kenya, and in Cairo in Egypt), and from 1997 to 2001 also in Europe (in Norway, Germany, Switzerland, France, and in Belgium). Prior to this research, the author lived and worked in various parts of the world (among others, in Egypt for seven years), and since 2001, the author is including new cases, among them South East Asia, which she is studying at the current point in time.

Slavery, bondage, serfdom, feudalism, lords, vassals, Apartheid, Coverture – terms abound that describe the various degrees to which a person could lose the relative sovereignty a hunter-gatherer enjoyed prior to 10,000 years ago, and the different ways in which a person could be subordinated, stripped of her rights, and turned into the property of a master. Any pain or suffering that those had to endure who had their place somewhere at the bottom of the pyramid of power was deemed to be *necessary pain* or *prosocial humbling*.

The first paragraph of Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948, reads: ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.’ This Article does not imply that there are no differences between people. People may have different skin colours, different genders, different religious creeds, and different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. However, all human beings, solely by being human possess the same level of worth and value. Nobody is a *lesser* being, nobody is a *higher* being. Nobody is allowed to humiliate and degrade others.

In other words, after 10,000 years of ranking people, this practice is now increasingly being rejected. Even though ideas of equality and equal dignity for all human beings existed in many world philosophies and religions previously, they emerged as mainstream ‘Zeitgeist’ only very recently. Currently the idea of equal dignity for all human beings, qua being born as human being, increasingly permeates all world cultures. And this trend reaches even beyond human beings; more and more other living creatures are included as well. The critical paradigm is part of this larger historical process of deep change.

The author coined the term *egalisation* to signify the transition from ranking to un-ranking, from ranked worthiness to equal dignity for all: She claims that globalisation – at present a project of global humiliation – is only humanised by egalisation.

We might ask: Why and how could the idea of equal dignity gain mainstream influence after being relegated to the backseat for 10,000 years? Perhaps what is called globalisation is the driving force, or more precisely, the shrinking of the world, or the *ingathering* of humankind (this is the anthropological term). The technology of mobility and communication, that drives globalisation, is also a vehicle for the first continuous

revolution in human history, the human rights revolution, continuous, because power structures can no longer rigidify as easily as before. RAWA (www.rawa.org), just to give one particularly stark example, was founded by Afghan women who went out with cameras hidden under their burkhas, taking pictures and publishing them on the Internet. Western women and human rights advocates became aware of this site, forged a coalition and contributed their resources, giving a global platform to RAWA that it otherwise would not have achieved.

Technology, however, is not only a tool for continuously unsettling rigidifying power structures, it also changes humankind's image of itself in a historically unprecedented fashion. No human forefather was able to see pictures of the Blue Planet from an astronaut's perspective and thus become dramatically aware the minuteness of the human home. In the past, empires were held together by strong centers that ruled over underlings through fear and seduction. They saw themselves in opposition to the rest of the world that was not yet conquered or not worth conquering. In contrast, today's *global village* is held together, not by brute force, but increasingly by our growing awareness of *the minuteness of the globe and of our interdependence*. 'We may have all come on different ships, but we're in the same boat now,' said Martin Luther King.

Today, human rights can no longer be viewed as simply another intellectual concept. Human rights are the appropriate normative frame for maintaining an interdependent world with pressing common problems, problems that can only be addressed when all contribute with their creativity, which, in turn, can only be achieved by liberating people from having their creativity mutilated and silenced through being ranked as lower beings, unworthy of being nurtured and heard.

This conceptualisation resonates with the view on human history that William Ury has developed (Ury, 1999). Ury, anthropologist, and director of the Harvard University Project on Preventing War, has drawn together anthropology, game theory and conflict studies, and differentiates three major types of society: a) simple hunter-gatherers, who dominated human history until circa 10,000 years ago, b) complex agriculturists, who lasted throughout the past 10,000 years, and c) the currently emerging knowledge society. (This categorisation follows a Weberian *ideal-type* approach, see, for an explanation of this approach Coser, 1977, p. 224.)

In other words, for many millennia, since the inception of complex agriculture around 10,000 years ago, humankind has been caught in the rather malign win-lose framing that is brought about when land is the resource that people depend on. The emerging *global knowledge society* today promises to bring back the more benign win-win framing that hunter-gatherers enjoyed prior to the era of agriculture, this time knowledge – not wild food – being the expandable resource that renders win-win framings.

If we follow Ury's analysis, the critical paradigm is essential. It is essential for unearthing the variety and diversity of voices, the variety of perspectives and knowledge, a variety that is part and parcel of all cultural realms that have evolved among humankind. Currently, the word 'globalisation' stands for 'global domination and humiliation.' The critical paradigm is central to humanising globalisation, to 'marrying' globalisation to egalisation, to giving reality to Ury's claim that a global knowledge society entails a benign promise.

Humiliation as emotional marker for the critical paradigm

The author's experience of alienation and humiliation as a displaced person served as a lens for her critical stance to mainstream definitions of 'normality.' Feelings of humiliation also today permeate her inner life when she identifies with the voiceless of the world. She feels humiliated, disgusted, and discouraged when witnessing ignorant self-righteousness walking over the powerless, disregarding the need to stand together in the face of common challenges, and thus endangering the very survival of humanity.

In former times, such feelings would have had little chance of finding an auditorium. 'Might was right,' and the powerful called upon divine legitimacy to quell any disquiet among their underlings. The technology of mobility and communication, however, that drives globalisation, is also a vehicle for the human rights revolution – the example of RAWA was mentioned above.

But not only technology currently opens space to the voiceless. Human rights offer a new normative frame. In former times, in a world of honourable domination/submission, victims had no right to invoke the notion of humiliation as a form of violation. Underlings had to accept demeaning treatment in subdued obedience. Only their masters, when their privileged position is questioned, could appeal to humiliation as an infringement on their honour, and redeem it, for example, by going to duel. Human rights remove the right to define humiliation as violation from the masters, and give it to the downtrodden, marginalised, and underprivileged.

The consequence, from the emotional point of view, is that human rights ideals introduce humiliation in unprecedented ways. Human rights elicit *gut feelings of the undueliness of humiliation* when people are treated as *lesser* beings, when their right to be treated as *equal* in dignity is being disrespected. Human rights ideals introduce a new form of feelings of humiliation that was not present at any prior point in human history. The more human rights ideals gain weight, feelings of humiliation amplify when people are being pushed aside and voices are being suppressed, and this represents both, an emotional consequence, and an emotional driver of the human rights revolution.

Feelings of humiliation are the 'fuel' of the human rights revolution, they give force to the urgency with which we promote the critical inquiry that unsettles humiliating power structures. However, as the author found out, feelings of humiliation hamper cooperation; they lead to rifts and may even bring war and genocide. Human rights advocates, advocates of critical inquiry, must therefore take great care when eliciting feelings of humiliation. If they wish to avoid new mayhem, they have to guide feelings of humiliation into constructive social change. Genocide, war, and responding to humiliation with counter humiliation, with turning the spiral of humiliation one more turn: these are destructive ways to respond to being victimised by humiliation and to feeling humiliated. The Mandela way is the only path that leads to a sustainable future for all.

Giving voice to the voiceless needs careful attention

Maintaining biodiversity is crucial for the survival of humankind. Likewise, the cultural diversity that *Homo sapiens* has created on planet Earth is vital. Consider, for example, *Ubuntu*, the traditional African philosophy for living together and solving conflict in an atmosphere of shared humility (Battle, 1997). If we look at South East Asia, China has a vast philosophical and cultural legacy of highlighting the common good and that everybody has a responsibility to heed it. Also Japanese concepts for connection and togetherness *uchi* ('inside') an in-group have the potential of serving as cultural blue-prints for a future global culture of humankind. Globalisation signifies, among others, that humankind emerges from a past where in-groups faced out-groups. Japanese *uchi* cultural scripts could be very helpful in the process of humankind becoming one single in-group.

However, traditional Japanese cultural paradigms of *soto* ('out') and *tainin* ('far out') that teach how to keep out-groups out would be counterproductive in this context. (A misguided application of Japanese cultural *soto* and *tainin* scripts may precisely lie at the core of the current rift between Japan and its neighbours.)

If we agree that the voiceless need to be given voice, that marginalised cultures need to receive more attention, deserve to be protected, and treated with respect, do we wish to give space to all parts of marginalised cultures? What about honour killings? Or female genital cutting? Or South African witchcraft murder? Do we wish to protect those cultural templates and practices as well? Do not such practices resemble the Chinese practice of foot binding that we regard as humiliating to women, dysfunctional, malign, and outdated?

In a new global culture, we no longer want secondary citizens with bound feet. Protecting dysfunctional cultural differences is inappropriate. But how do we solve the dilemma of rejecting malign cultural practices while accepting benign ones? How do we define what we want to regard as malign or benign? How do we avoid that outdated diversity becomes as malign as current forced global sameness? Could the human rights ideals that are emerging at the current point in historical time serve as a global ethical framework that we can use to gauge these questions?

In an article on interreligious and interethnic relations, Reimon Bachika writes, 'The major pitfalls on the road to a world culture seen in the present context are attempts at imposing a set of values and declaring that all values are of equal significance. As for putting all values on a par, this would lead to excessive particularism and arbitrariness. This would make 'black holes' of cultures from which no sense of commonality can grow' (Bachika, 2006, p. 18).

In other words, both sameness and diversity entail potentially malign and benign elements. The solution for humankind is not that all become the same, or that all cling to difference. The important cleavage for critical inquiry to pinpoint is not between sameness and difference, but between benign and malign elements in sameness and difference. Only the benign aspects are suitable for a new inclusive global culture, for the radical cultural change in international scholarship on language, communication and discourse that Shi-xu calls for.

Outlook: Constructing Meaning through Multicultural Discourses

Soon, Beijing will host Olympic Games. The Olympic Committee promotes the following *Ideals of Olympism* in the message it sends to all participants, a message that also mentions humiliation:

You are my adversary, but you are not my enemy.
 For your resistance gives me strength.
 Your will gives me courage.
 Your spirit ennobles me.
 And though I aim to defeat you, should I succeed, I will not *humiliate* you.
 Instead, I will *honor* you.
 For without you, I am a lesser man

(Celebrate Humanity campaign 2002, see <http://www.olympic.org/>. The italic emphasis is added).

The author of this paper is deeply troubled when people protect their cultural sphere by violence or force their cultural preferences upon others, and she is equally distressed when she sees that people abandon valuable cultural solutions without good reason. Cultural diversity, as much as bio-diversity, represents a precious treasure trove of inspiration and knowledge for humankind. Much cultural diversity is currently being squandered. The big cities of this world, and their citizens, for example, look increasingly identical. If this change were for the better, we might be inclined to accept it. However, the problem is that a host of dysfunctional solutions is being adopted. ‘Western status,’ providing the illusion of belonging to the ‘rich’ of the world, represents itself as a rather malign driving force. The author labels the subaltern yearning for ‘Western status’ as ‘inadvertent self-humiliation,’ or even as ‘voluntary self-humiliation.’

The critical paradigm that underlies the field of Multicultural Discourses attempts precisely to undo this voluntary self-humiliation that permeates West and non-West alike, at their own peril.

The human tendency to think in terms of status, a tendency forged during 10,000 years of agriculture as basic livelihood, is as damaging as ancient Chinese foot-binding. Ranking humans in higher and lesser beings incapacitates all. This is because the ‘lesser’ beings’ creativity is underused, while the ‘higher’ beings’ fullness of health is undermined, and the world’s resources are depleted in the competitive rush for status. Everybody loses out. Drawing one’s meaning of life, and one’s definition of success in life, from accumulating riches, and dominating others, is dysfunctional for everybody. Meaning and success are better drawn from everybody connecting in mutual respect for equal dignity, and jointly caring for our world.

In other words, the author opposes both, over-protection of cultural diversity, as much as its self-humiliating under-protection. If we wish to give life to the human rights motto of ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights,’ we need to build a world of *global inter-human relations*. Everything else should be secondary. Diversity is enriching, as opposed to divisive, only if we relegate sub-group affiliations to a second

place. Inter-national relations or inter-cultural relations need to be embedded into *global inter-human relations*.

Therefore the author would like to advocate that we stop pressing people into group identities and that we discontinue using labels such as inter-national relations or inter-cultural relations when individuals meet. These terms ought to be reserved to those cases where we expressly speak about relations between nations or cultural spheres, for example when we analyse the activities of diplomats or heads of states in their capacity as representatives of their groups. The author suggests that we cease categorising citizens of the Earth by the passport they carry, or what we call their ‘nationality,’ except when we expressly talk about passports as administrative tools.

Land, nations, ethnic, cultural, or religious group delineations should not provide the essence of identity to people, lest we wish to open the door for the malignancies of in-group/out-group relations. When we delineate the essence of our identity as belonging to in-groups whose definition depends on out-group enmity, we give tyrants potential hate-tickets: What do we do when we are told that we betray our country or our group when we do not kill our supposed ‘enemies’? Hutus had to prove their ‘Hutuness’ by killing Tutsis, and a Serb killed his wife when she was not Serb. Primary identity built on sub-segments of the land of the Earth, or erected on national, ethnic or religious delineations, precludes what we need most when we wish to cooperate for building a better world: in-group trust. Pressing people into in-group/out-group delineations is as much ‘foot-binding’ as ranking people’s worthiness hierarchically. Both incapacitate the world. We need to give due priority to our commonalities, to our belonging to *one single* in-group of humankind, where everybody needs to enjoy respect for equal dignity. Equal dignity for everybody is not just a blue-eyed ideal; it is the best-practice approach for a sustainable future of an interdependent world.

Identity is best conceptualised like a sunflower: At the center is our essence, our being human; at the periphery are the petals, our ‘local’ affiliations. The author describes her ‘multicultural’ identity as follows:

In my case, for example, my ‘petals’ are global, and I cherish them all. I am deeply connected with my friends all around the world, whom I call my close family. I am furthermore attached to lots of cultural practices and countless geographical places. For example, I love old cultures such as China or Egypt, or, I love Norwegian cultural gifts to the world and its fjords and mountains – my list is very long. My ‘personal culture’ entails a puzzle of bits and pieces from all over the world. I think and dream in a mosaic of languages. My meaning-of-life is not to accumulate anything, neither power nor material goods. I derive my definition of ‘success’ for my life from me living as a full human being wrapped into nurturing and empowering connections with my global friends, from cherishing helpful cultural practices from all corners of the world, and appreciating geographical locations everywhere on our globe. In sum, the entire ecosphere and sociosphere is my home. Particularly since we live in times of emergency, where this world, our home, is at a tipping point and in danger of self-destruction, I do not wish to lose a single minute, nor a single ounce of energy, in trying to find ‘my true roots’ or the ‘essence of my identity’ in potentially divisive and therefore dangerous sub-group affiliations (adapted from Lindner, 2006).

To summarise, cultural diversity can only be enriching when it is embedded into respect for equal dignity for all people, and an awareness that we, all humanity, need to cooperate to protect ecological and social sustainability for coming generations. The world believes that Germans during World War II ought to have stood up and not stood by when Jews were transported away. 6 million people died in the Holocaust. Today, 12 million children die each year before they are 5 years old, of preventable diseases and poverty. The author identifies with that. Global exploitation of resources and the destructive effects of the way humans make use of them renders our world unliveable for coming generations. The author does not want to stand by. And in order to stand up, she identifies with all humankind as her first priority, as her home, and relegates all 'local' identities to a second plane. The *global village* is her home, she calls it 'my *World House*' (see also Immanuel Kant's term 'Welthaus'), and she wishes to have as many diverse rooms in it as possible, however, only if these rooms are not filled with content that destroys the house. Currently, we live in an *undignified* and *ramshackle Welthaus*, where millions suffer. In order to stand up, the author does her utmost to design her life as a global citizen, exposing herself to as many multicultural discourses as possible, and she tries to do whatever she can to protect her family, humankind. This orientation not only heals her wounds from feeling homeless, but also leads her to believe that her experiences may be helpful to others, and may stimulate fruitful visions for a sustainable future world.

Multicultural discourses can be deeply instrumental to constructing meaning both for a person individually, but also with respect to public policy planning. This is valid for all levels of social and societal life, macro, meso and micro levels. The field of Multicultural Discourses therefore carries a particular responsibility in times of global crisis.

In the case of China, this would perhaps mean to merge the voice of Lu Xun and Shi-xu with the voice of Confucius, and bring these voices into the larger world. The message would go as follows: 'A wide diversity of voices needs to be given space, however, not in the service of mutual destruction, but in the service of a sustainable future for all.' In many parts of the West, in the United States of America, for example, liberation from past oppressive collectivism has been misunderstood as license to becoming 'rugged individualists.' However, 'rugged individualism' is a detour that should be avoided on the way to 'connected individualism,' where personal responsibility extends beyond narrowly defined self-interest. Connecting the message from Confucius with the voices of Lu Xun and Shi-xu, and giving this message to the world would be an invaluable gift to humankind.

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