

Global Citizens

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*"Eritis insuperabiles, si fueritis inseparabiles.
Explosum est illud diverbium. Divide, & impera.
You would be insuperable if you were inseparable. Divide and rule".
(as cited by Davalos, 2004, p. 30)*

Erikson (1994) stated that an established identity generates the sense of continuity and sameness which is achieved based on the need for uniqueness and also a need for affiliation. In this sense, it is not only being different from others by which people establish an identity but also by belonging to groups such as ethnic groups, clubs, family, and the like. This process of affiliation is highly reinforced by the entire environment (i.e., school, work, home, and political groups), and is throughout such a process that an individual builds a "fixed identity" (Dimitrov, 1998, p. 1) according to the groups the individual "belongs". For instance, a given fixed identity of a particular individual could be that of a male who is also a teacher, father, white, catholic and Canadian.

Although these affiliations will provide to this individual a sense of sameness with these particular groups, at the same time they highlight the differences with the myriad of other groups to which the individual is not affiliated. In addition, the increasing contact between societies generated by the accelerated process of globalization also highlights the differences. For instance, an individual living abroad will become aware of the different values, communication protocols and daily practices from those of one's country. This perception of differences and its effects has been extensively studied in what Kalvero Oberg (as cited in Practical Anthropology, 1960) defined as cultural shock.

Hence fixed identities and the increase of transnational contacts increase the number of roles that an individual can play (Dimitrov, 1998). Roles that are guided under a specific set of cultural expectations of that category in which they belong (i.e., black, Mexican, poor) and

alienated from the other categories. But moreover the human essence becomes diluted among all possible categorizations. Whether Canadian or Mexican, whether black or white, rich or poor, we share the same human essence. Given the current tendency towards increasing diversity and new roles, the question becomes how to move from the cultural stereotypes or from the individual's fixed identity of self to a global identity as human beings? How can we prevent losing our human essence in the midst of the proliferation of fixed identities?

Much has been said about this issue. The Dalai Lama (1993) invites everyone to recognize our basic nature as human beings. He talks of "developing feelings of love and kindness" (p. 234) towards our fellow humans by recognizing that we all are members of the same human family. This type of solution employs a language that includes concepts such as egolessness, oneness, and interconnectedness. This language, proper of the spiritual arena, suggests that the spiritual path is the apparent direction to follow in order to develop such feelings. I think however, that given the current level of individualized identity and the social political state of the world, the spiritual path is not realistic. Maslow (1987) for instance in his hierarchy of needs theory held that higher needs (i.e., friendship, love, self esteem) can be attended once the lower needs (i.e., food, health, security) are satisfied. In other words, "human kinship" is harder to achieve when illness, starvation and/or war pervades the individual's existence.

Although people living in difficult conditions may maintain contact with their spirituality, in so far as they may pray to alleviate immediate needs, it is hard to contemplate the idea of a third world population devotedly praying to achieve inner-peace or meditating dedicatedly to experience oneness while living in extreme conditions of poverty. This is not to say that spiritual development cannot be achieved in third world countries. In the same way that is not possible to

say that living in rich countries can guarantee a spiritual life. In fact “Sometimes those who are physically poor may be spiritually ‘rich’, and vice versa (Spiritual Poverty, ND). The point is that the socio-economical scenario of a country can either increase or reduce the possibilities of pursuing the spiritual path.

I believe in order to achieve a global self given the limitations it might be convenient to start by building a concept of self that can be actualized in the real world. This is a self that recognizes the human essence above any other categorization in the context of a world with its current social, economical, political and armed conflicts. This global self will be constituted by (a) an extended self (Roland, 1989); (b) an androgynous personality (Gross, 1993); and it will approach reality from (c) a new paradigm of knowledge (Capra, 2000).

Extended Self

Cross-cultural studies claim that in order to attain a better understanding of humanity the cultural differences have to be recognized. Roland (1989) for instance, speaks of how “... humanity has developed a few major strands of individuation” that require consideration of the psychological and anthropological specificities for each particular strand. Additionally, Roland (1989) recognizes that these strands are developing given the growing contact among cultures. Such development is being stimulated by the accelerated phenomenon of globalization and technological advances.

For Roland (1989) this “inter-civilizational” (p. 6) exchange and the assimilation of foreign social or cultural constructs widen the view of the world stimulating the formation of an expanded self. The increasing number of transnational transactions at both levels micro (i.e., blogs in Internet) and macro (i.e., International Criminal Court) represent more opportunity for all types of cultural forms, such as religion and lifestyle, to expand creating in this way a richer

vision of the world. Similarly, it increases the collection of traits that make two groups different or, for that matter, two individuals different, but it also brings the opportunity to find the similarities.

This is precisely the aspect that requires more emphasis: a pragmatic recognition of what is common to all of us in the midst of the increasing awareness of diversity. Such recognition is pragmatic in the sense that it considers our shared humanness in non-idealistic terms but from the praxis of being human. The expanded self that we are looking for, would then benefit from the diversity between cultural groups if the multiplicity of individualities is seen as complementary to our own individuality. Furthermore this expanded self will benefit if the identity as a human being prevails over the fixed identities. Similar to Roland's (1989) idea of the assimilation of structures and systems from other civilizations into the self, is Hart's (2000) concept of "accommodation" which represents a "...move from categorizing [the other] ... as we meet the other openly" (p. 35).

In this sense, it is necessary to admit that, in fact, we cannot place everyone in the same sack, insofar as cultural diversity is inherent to humanity. Acknowledging the psychological and anthropological differences of different strands of individuation honors the history and culture of a particular strand as Roland sustains. However, the one thread that knits all these strands of individuation together, the thread of humanity, also needs to be honored. Before being black, white, Jewish or Russian an individual is a human. Considering the contrary, that a quality such as white or Russian determines humanity would be to confuse different categories. Aristotle's category system (Aristotle, 1963) can illustrate this argument by saying that being Russian is a quality and a possibility, while being human is the essence and necessity to be Russian. In other

words, it will be impossible to be Russian without being human whereas one always would be human regardless of nationality.

Cross-cultural studies that recognize that certain cultural structures seem to have a relative universality are good progress. However what is required, not only from the scientific viewpoint but also from a non scientific viewpoint, is to recognize the human essence as the primordial similarity beyond the cultural ones. Roland (1989) for instance, identified in Japanese and Indian cultures a “familial self” quite similar to the “familismo” (Marín & Marín, 1991) in Latin families. Both concepts refer to the identification with an extended family and the hierarchical relationships within characterized by dimensions of interdependence, reciprocity, emotional connectedness, and loyalty. Beyond this scientific observation, what it is required is to trace parallels that transcend all categorizations, and speak of the commonality of what it means to be human. Despite the different cultural practices that imprint a particular tone to how an individual experiences the world, we all share the same experiences. We all get sick, we all have dreams and fears, we all feel love and hate because we share the same humanity. For instance, a woman in Yemen can identify with another woman in Alaska because biologically both are females, and both are mothers, but beyond that, both are human who feel and fear for their children. When they are aware of this simple fact, they will be tied by the thread of humanity; they will recreate themselves in each other while experiencing deep empathy (Hart, 2000).

Androgynous Personality

A step further towards this global self and its primary recognition of the human nature, is the acknowledgement of the masculine and feminine elements in every human being. Carl Jung (1976) represents this idea with the concept of the anima, -the female within the male, and animus, -the male within the female. Feminine studies certainly provide ample support and

recognition of the male and female principles by means of advocating for the equanimity of the genders. Simone de Beauvoir (1983), a French feminist, stated that one is not born a woman, but becomes one, in her own words: "... woman ... is a product elaborated by civilization" (p. 725). Similarly, the condition of "man" is not a condition given from birth. The final condition of man, woman, lesbian, gay, and any of the contemporary sex identities is the result of the interplay of three sex identities (Burggraf, 2007): (a) a biological, which is given by the genotype and phenotype differences; (b) a psychological, which is primarily the consciousness of being male or female; and (c) the sociological, which is the result of a cultural and historical process, and is linked to the roles assigned by each society according to the biological sex. It is precisely this last identity that requires attention. By transcending gender stereotypes, individuals can expand the self and "become androgynous whole persons instead of "half-humans"" (Gross, 1993, p. 303).

Transcending gender stereotypes is an expansion that is not related to sexual behavior or sexual orientation. It recognizes the unquestionable biological conditioning and maintains the male or female essences but goes beyond the socially built gender roles so that the individual being androgynous becomes "fully human" (as cited by Elizabeth Wright, 2007, p. 3).

Recognizing our female or male counterpart is a task that does not necessarily require altered states of consciousness, radical political changes or years of psychotherapy. It may be more effective to address this task domestically. Since we are looking for an androgynous personality and since the formation of a personality is highly influenced by the early process of socialization (Piaget, 1969) when the acquisition of values, beliefs, and expectations is dictated in the first place by the parents (Piaget, 1969), it is logical to consider that it is the parents' task to teach sons and daughters to appreciate the human essence above social and cultural

stereotypes. Even though the economical scenario has forced both man and woman to interchange roles, still there is a visible division of the roles. However such division can be reduced when the father and the mother model his and her counterpart and when mom and dad address each other as equals, infusing such relatedness in their sons and daughters. Thus recognizing both, the male and female principle, a deeper sense of empathy can emerge therefore rescuing the self from oblivion as it grows global (Gross, 1993).

A new paradigm of knowledge

Similar to the integration of the male and female principles, the global self requires a knowledge of the world that acknowledges (a) the interconnectedness of all its parts; (b) the dynamic nature of the parts; (c) the fallacy of the detachment from what is observed; (d) the non-reducible nature of the parts; (e) that concepts are not absolute; and (f) the need for cooperation (Capra, 2000). This new paradigm of knowledge is more tangible and familiar and consequently more achievable than the meta-concepts of mysticism. Capra's (2000) majestic work, drawing parallels between mysticism and physics, facilitated people who live secular lives to visualize the spiritual path from a worldly basis. In fact, Capra (2000) relates that his concepts resonate in ordinary people who were "... not scientist, nor ... mystics ... [but] were ...artist, grandmothers, businessmen, teachers; people of all ages." (p. 324).

The predominant mechanical positivist paradigm, Capra (2000) warns, promotes among others the idea of success through "economic and technological growth" (p. 325). This idea fosters selfish tendencies, and disconnectedness (Hart, 2000), which are characteristic of the present society of consumerism and competitiveness. The new paradigm, on the other hand, aimed "towards an oneness of the universe which includes not only our natural environment but also our fellow human beings" (p. 307), incorporates feminine values of community and

relationship into the way of relating to the world, so that we can achieve an equilibrium to the polarized yang mode of knowing and that can properly capture the vastness and subtle complexity of the human being (Braud & Anderson, 1998).

What is being proposed is no other than a “racial and gender liberation and reconciliation” (Schavrien, 2005, p. 101) by means of a reconstruction of the self, from a fixed identified self to a globally identified self. This is a self that begins and ends with its identification as a human being. While a fixed identity fosters a need for auto-sufficiency, fragmentation of the self and detachment from the world which are at the base of the world crisis (Grof & Grof, 1993), a global identity represents complementariness and an open attitude towards the other, the fellow human. As Burggaf (2007) states this attitude manifests that our humanity resides in the relationship with the other. Identifying ourselves with our human nature, as it has been described, represents a step towards a balanced world. If we appeal to the universal fundamental trait we all share, that is humanity, we will realize that in order to evolve we need to do it in communion with our fellow humans; we will realize that we would be insuperable if we were inseparable.

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