DIOGENES

A Universal Ethic for a Globalizing World: Accommodation, Rights and Human Values

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Abstract

The present moment in human history is marked by the ever-accelerating movement across the world of materials, peoples, and information, creating various problems but also opportunities as well –especially for the movement of people. Such demographic movement makes multiculturalism a major issue for many societies. Differences between immigrants and the society receiving them tend to create conflict, as another culture encroaching upon one's own culture is often felt as a threatening challenge to one's identity. Within any society, identity is constructed in the subjective process of culture. But where two or more cultures come into close contact, a dominance–subordination struggle frequently develops between their respective subjectivities. One solution to such conflict might be found in the legal provision of equality of rights for all members of society, including cultural minorities. But if the legal solution alone is considered, the resources accumulated in cultures as enabling agents for amenable social coexistence would go unused, and tension and conflict will frequently persist. As an intermediate position, cultural subjectivities, whether personal or collective, could be induced to constitute a complex system of federated subjectivities within the general society. Even such a system may not, however, be completely effective. The adoption by all parties of an ethic universally conceived on the minimal basis could meet the urgent need to prevent escalation of conflict, but its ultimate goal would be to prepare a common ground for the development of a global culture incorporating multiple cultures as historically inherited resources for the enrichment of human life. Ethical awareness is what reveals the otherness of the other and also the ontological ground of human life on earth; as ethics and epistemology coincide, a human reason would emerge as the ground of a new global culture, and the world would hopefully become a single *Lebensraum* for the whole of humanity.

Globalization and the need for a global ethic

Though the plurality of cultures has always been a recognizable fact in human history, the present state of the world makes it a subject for reflection, and calls for a meaningful pragmatics for solving the problems it raises.

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Globalization is one of the most notable characteristics of this later modern age. The present moment in human history is certainly marked, more than anything else, by the ever-accelerating movement across the world of materials, peoples, and information, no doubt due in large part to the dynamic generated by the capitalist economy. Inevitably the diverse elements of life that have constituted the local unities spread across the earth have come or are coming together in confluence, making the globe a single *Lebensraum* for the whole of humanity, in the process creating confusion and conflict but opportunities as well. Needless to say, it is the confusion and conflict arising from these multiple confluences that is worrying, together with the accompanying degradation of life, which may in some cases lead to a constant state of struggle for survival, if not by tooth and claw, then at least by ruse and manipulation which demeans human dignity.

In this process of globalization, ways of avoiding these negative consequences, most notably occurrences of large-scale conflict, need to be found; a regime favouring peace and coexistence is urgently required. This is particularly so in cases where globalization moves peoples beyond their existing social, political, and cultural boundaries. But efforts must also be made to devise ways of overcoming the potential discrepancies and contradictions that arise from the global intermixing of institutions and ideas that outwardly may appear mutually incompatible.

What we can hope for eventually is a new world order which will reconcile the diverse elements that are now in confrontation, one which will on the one hand limit the dangers of dehumanization, and on the other will promise a better quality of human life – and life in general. Speculatively, this order could be established through something like a world government, with appropriate political and legal tools for controlling damage and promoting peace, though such a government could be by no means a replica of a nation-state associated with a unitary national culture. However, a world government or legal order has little chance of realization for a long time to come, and it is not even certain that it is desirable. In the meantime, single political units, usually nation-states, would have to remain responsible for implementing policies to safeguard the rights of people with different cultural values who live within their borders.

Yet establishing a reliable program to achieve such goals in the current political environment would not be easy. What could be more readily realized is the development by scholars and thinkers collaborating internationally of a universal ethic at the level of ideas, detached from practical politics, to promote an international awareness of the need for peaceful coexistence of peoples and cultures. Such an initiative might then lead to the framing of an international charter laying down the minimal guidelines for multicultural coexistence.

Of course, apart from the practical problems of organizing international forums able to produce such a charter, one may doubt the possibility that a universal ethic independent of a particular historically derived cultural context and tradition can in fact be generated. But a universal ethic suitable for a globalizing world is an urgent present imperative. If the entire globe is becoming a single *Lebensraum* to be shared by all humanity, it must be constituted as a livable space set about with devices for the protection of basic human values and rights. We frequently meet the assertion that ethical codes diverge from one society to another, and from culture to culture, but it is also inconceivable that there should be no minimal common rules of respect for life, which may be derived from the different ethical practices of different cultures. An effect of cultural interaction over time, confirmable at this particular moment in history, is the acknowledgement of the common humanity of all mankind, however this commonality may be defined. At the very least, seeing strangers as non-human monsters is an attitude that has become in most places defunct and is now generally regarded as an historic or pre-historic curiosity. If this is the case, a peaceful co-acceptance of difference can be acknowledged as a minimal condition of collective human life on earth. This recognition may serve as a starting point from which possibilities for a more complex universal ethic could be explored. Such an exploration, besides reinforcing global thought endeavors in the field

of ethics, allows the hope that certain rules can be normatively defined, and that a concerted international effort could be undertaken to incorporate them into concrete political practice in societies across the world.

The cultural matrix of a global ethic

In thinking about a global ethic that would hold good for different societies, it will be important to give consideration to the multiple contexts in which it would subsist; in fact, an ethic is an aspect of a whole complex of culture. A practical ethic could be constructed as a set of normative rules, but an ethic provides more than just the external regulatory scaffolding of a community. It is what is thematized from the general ethos of a society, or, more broadly conceived, from its culture. Culture, in its idealized global conception, would exist as a comprehensive context of life, made congenial and inclusive as habitus beyond the regulations of law or ethics. In turn, the ethic would exist as a nucleus within the self-organizing process of a culture in its multi-layered habits and concepts of social relations. It could be postulated as categorically normative but would not be enforced in the same way as law and order. Yet it would function as an intermediary agent between the overall culture and the state, as a resource for making legal provisions where these are deemed necessary. One of the social and political ideals of past East Asian societies was a social order maintained by means of 'transformation by culture,' or 'transformation by virtue,' rather than by the rule of law, though the idea of cultural transformation did not go as far as dispensing with ethical rules that lay half-way between law and culture.

What is emphasized in these ideas is the desirability of a non-coercive life environment, a self-sustaining life-world that is subtly transformed by culture, and from which only under the pressure of circumstances arises the necessity, first, of ethical imperatives, and then of legal enforcement. In any case, regardless of civilizational contexts, East or West, as mediating agents in interpersonal encounters, we can think of culturally evolved modes of behavior, such as manners, courtesy, civility, or hospitality which, to revert to the East Asian tradition, were all wrapped up in the idea of *ye/ren*, human connectedness, (仁), and *li*, ritual (礼). We may hope then that these diverse forms of civil behavior can also apply in intercultural encounters – hospitality above all. The ethic we have essayed above as a countermeasure to problems created by the globalizing world is the minimal kind that would meet the requirements of the globalizing age. But such a minimal ethic could eventually be a catalyst, it is hoped, for the construction of a global culture in which the multi-faceted practice of life would naturally accommodate the different human groups in an inclusive order of tolerance, integration, and human enrichment. This ethic would then form part of a culture encompassing the whole spectrum of human potential, instead of being a set of ethical commandments or measures to be enforced by the legal and political procedure for the protection of rights and the control of conflicts. What is in question is the possibility of a universal culture, of which this ethic would form a natural part. Globalization would in this respect represent both a challenge and an opportunity for the development of a global and universal culture.

Culture and universality

A culture is an ensemble of practices and habits accumulated in a tradition, overlapping with the life-world of a historical people. This life-world, when taken up thematically as culture, becomes the object of elaboration by thought, above and beyond actual life practice. It could then become objectified, as in the case of many societies, as a conscious formative project striving to encompass a cohesive totality configuring the express needs of humanity – initially a particular part of

humanity, but, in most cases, then generalized to apply to the entirety of humankind. That is to say that culture, even with its particularistic origin, generates a propensity towards universality. The principle of universality is indeed taken up as the ideal of self-formation in many cultural traditions. If we may risk a reductive formulation, the ideal of a humanist education both in the East and West is often explained in terms of the self-reflective upward spiraling movement of the self towards universality – in the Hegelian formulation of the ideal of *Bildung*, '*Erhebung zur Allgemeinheit*' or in Chu Shi's expression of the aim of self-cultivation, often quoted by Korean Confucian scholars, as '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 to reach enlightenment, but it could be said to exist already in the process of a living culture, even if it is not always articulated into a program of education.

But the idea of universality is likely to have ambivalent implications. A totality projected by culture is not an objective state, but a product of an ongoing process of subjectivity which encloses the objective world within its inclusive centripetal energy. An individual becomes a subject, a centered being, thanks to this centripetal energy, incorporating the broader world outside into his/her self-formation. The process of subjectivity is already at work in the community within which the individual is located; and the significance of culture lies in the fact that it is a totality subjectively interpreted and assumed; it is through the interactive involvement in the collective process of subjectivity, that is, in a culture, that an individual achieves his or her subjectivity. Or more schematically we can say, following the formula of Althusser, that the individual becomes a subject only in the interpellation of the larger subject, though, in this case, we will have to substitute the entirety of culture for Althusser's ideological apparatuses. This process of developing subjectivity, both personal and collective, transforms practical needs that arise from the material and social conditions of existence into active expressions of aspirations, discursively communicated and artistically shaped; and concrete and configured instances of life are, in the ultimate projection, enveloped in the possibility of a total inclusiveness – in which nothing human would be considered alien. Thus is born the thrust, in both the collectivity and the individual, that impels a movement rising above the limited condition of life's facticity towards a wider horizon – in effect, towards universality.

Global culture as a complex system

The integration of the principle of universality with this subjective process could be a resource for developing a global culture, but it also carries the birthmark of its self-centered origination. A culture, even if its particularistic origin is sublated into universality, is likelier than not to remain a product of the locally-centered subject's appropriation of the objective world, a process which negates the otherness of what is being appropriated – even when the otherness is recognized as such, namely, as not belonging the humanized world of the subjective center. Under such circumstances, universality is not quite as universal as claimed. From the viewpoint of the construction of a global culture, a claimed universality may in effect become a source of conflict instead of integration. There may well be as many subjectivities and universalities as there are high cultural traditions in the world, and which are potentially conflictual or incompatible with one another.

In everyday life, an individual becomes a subject within the collectivity to which he or she belongs, and this subjectivity must be contradictorily negotiated, as the collectivity confronts it with its own assertive presence, while the collectivity itself is constituted as a subject only as the sum of the individual subjectivities within it; that is, as long as these individuals continue to be interactive participants in the constitution of this collective subjectivity. It is also an everyday experience that an individual lives within a complex network of social relations – family, kinship relations, friends, workplace communities, nations, etc., and that he or she can enter and exit these different

collectivities, attuning him- or herself diversely to their different subjective claims. Human subjectivity expresses itself intimately or expansively, in different phases and forms, depending upon the nature of the groups with which it must interact and the occasions of such interactions.

Taking these instances of everyday experience as an analogy, we may think of a global culture developing as a multi-layered totality of cultures with their own subjective centers. The individual can then draw upon these multi-centered resources in the various life situations that he or she faces, up to and including beyond the cultural boundaries of his or her nation or tradition, as a member of humankind, and part of the bio-ecological world – although not necessarily all at the same time.

To attempt a more systematic way of encompassing the problems of cultural globalization, we might borrow from complex system studies to conceive the emerging global culture as a system of complexity; that is, it could be seen as a system built out of federated multiple subsystems of local cultures, with 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 hopefully constitute a cohering whole, a totality constantly in the process of reshaping itself.

Ethical intervention and ontological confirmation

We would like to imagine that this subjective wholeness of the global culture might be achieved as an emergent property, on the basis of the progressive evolution of other subsystems of subjectivities which local cultures constitute. The catalyzing nucleus of this emergence would be the universality-directed propensity characterizing the subjectivities of the constituent subsystems. Yet universalism, as noted above, is as much the cause of conflict as of integration. All subjectivities enter into agonal contention with each other, while they can also be brought, by way of appropriate dialectical exchange, into a relation of metabolic reciprocity as well, where contention reverts to a synthetic sublation. This affirms then that there is a substratum or continuum underlying the contentious relationship. This substratum can be more clearly disclosed and recognized by an act of ethical intervention, which could be expected to ease and pacify at a more conscious level the tension between contrary elements.

The historical evolution of culture

To speak thus of the complex system of cultures as emerging from the process of the globalization and ultimately of its transcendental epiphany may sound unreal and fanciful, but it is in a way just an abstract formulation of what has frequently happened in human history. Culture or civilization was in fact, more often than not, a product of the contact and exchange between different societies and their ways of life, or, in its more creative outcomes, 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; the latest phase is only an enormously accelerated manifestation of the same process (Warnier 2004; *Warnier's book sets globalization within a broad historical perspective*.)

Human beings are no doubt creatures deeply attached to their habitats through personal connections and memories, but they are also instinctive explorers who are driven to wander beyond these habitats, a characteristic which has made human history a narrative of the constant expansion of mankind's physical and mental reach. This wandering might have been forced by external circumstance – wars or natural disasters – or it could have been through voluntary nomadism motivated by the needs of life or by mental curiosity. In the modern era, there has been a great

deal of emphasis on maintaining the racial homogeneity of Koreans, largely owing to the necessity of asserting national identity under the threat of Japanese colonialism, but there are studies of the historical demography of Korea, which show that in the past there were constant influxes of migrant populations into the peninsula, with, for instance, immigrants composing 2–8 % of the population for more than two hundred years in the early period of the Koryo dynasty (918–1392 CE) (Pak 1996: 101ff). Trade, in many parts of the world as in Korea, has been the main channel of distribution of merchandise beyond the boundaries of particular societies. It has had a transformative effect on the cultures of the parties involved in trade, not only because it is easily accompanied by cultural exchange, but also because no artifact exists in the condition of a *Ding an sich* in the human mind without being transformed into a figure in the totality of the objective world that is culturally comprehended and symbolically constructed – a sign in the system of signification that is culture. But even without the mediation of things traded, people have always been sensitive to possible different ways of understanding the world coming from abroad, and have allowed themselves to be proselytized by systems of philosophical thought and religious beliefs coming from outside. In Korea, the arrival of Buddhism in the sixth century, which transformed the whole country into a Buddhist society, can be cited as an example, though the coming of Confucianism and Chinese civilization in general, which was more influential in shaping the nation as we know it, and in recent centuries, that of modern Western civilization, may be more complex examples in which more than ideas are involved.

Cultural clashes in compressed time and space

As already mentioned, the speed of cultural contact and intermixture has come to be enormously accelerated in modern times. Movement of goods, people, and ideas has occurred on a massive scale – with the development of advanced modes of transportation and information transmission, of imperialism, and then of global capitalism. Ideas penetrating cultural barriers have also subverted any effort toward autonomous self-integration, as they often arrived bringing models of epistemic, social, and economic dynamics validated through the display of goods or power. Even without the backing of military force, in modern times trade became, instead of the vector of simple exchange, a builder of a global network of manufactured goods and services, penetrating into alien social structures and transforming them. It then stimulated emulation on the part of societies considered less developed. More than anything, the exportation of the system of industrial economy, science, and technology gave the greatest impetus to cultural change throughout the world; it brought about not only the total transformation of the societies that absorbed this change and the patterns of life of those societies; it also required the movement of their young people for training in these fields, and then their return after this education to transform their native lands.

Such industrialization has inevitably caused the fragmentation and destruction of traditional cultures in many societies, disorienting, demoralizing, and de-ethicizing life in the societies subject to political or cultural incursion. The exponentially increasing speed of global expansion since the last years of the twentieth century has precipitated the same clashes as occurred in the age of imperialism, but ironically, a certain uniformity, or mutual simulation and assimilation, in areas of merchandise, architectural design, life-style, ideology, and ideas has begun to descend upon the world. Yet it is difficult to see this as a sign of an authentic global culture emerging – that is, a culture maturing out of the organic process of integration between cultures that historically evolved in diverse parts of the world. Behind the virtual conformism of contemporary culture, what has 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 has not allowed such integrative processes to take place.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a concept that has come into discursive use as attempts are made to grasp the latest phase of problems of cultural change resulting from globalization: cultural clashes on the one hand, and cultural homogenization on the other. It is natural that there has arisen a need to resolve the consequences of increased contact and intermixture of cultures, and multiculturalism is one conceptually operative tool that anticipates meeting the need. But multiculturalism also poses a problematic, which seems to have been brought into focus, more than anything, by the movement of people, in most cases from less developed to more developed countries. As their economies expanded, many advanced nations came to depend on labor recruited from outside their borders. Also, the discrepancy in economic wealth and employment opportunity motivated the migration of people from those less developed countries. However, the question of cultural adaptation or adjustment became acute as these migrant workers began to settle down in the countries where they had been first considered as temporary sojourners, or *Gastarbeiter* as they were called in Germany. As the migrant workers took up more long-term residency, the question arose: How could they be appropriately integrated into the receiving society? One answer was to grant them a secure legal status. It could be considered that such a status would suffice for accommodating the migrant workers within the larger society they had moved to, though even this presupposes a degree of cultural understanding on the part of the migrants, as obtaining the legal status would require their free consent and acceptance of the rights and obligations that the status entailed.

But what if they do not learn the language and the culture of the society in which they have come to reside, not only those of the initial generation of migrants but over several generations, as the Turkish immigrants in Germany were supposed not to have done? For this to happen requires a cultural negotiation with, or ultimately assimilation of, the immigrants. Recently German Chancellor Angela Merkel and British Prime Minister David Cameron were reported to have publicly stated that multiculturalism in their societies was a failure, which they blamed on the failure of the immigrants to assimilate into the main culture of their adopted country. Though their conservative party allegiances might have made it easier for Merkel and Cameron to say this openly, it would not be too unnatural a conclusion to reach, unless one's view is consciously formed from a more critical liberal point of view, that cultural identity forms the basis of political or communal identity, and that acculturation to that identity is a condition of membership in the community which an immigrant wishes to join.

The politics of recognition

If we grant this conclusion, however, there may be raised for the sake of argument an awkward question: if assimilation, that is, the assimilation and absorption of A into B, is the proposal in question, then why equally might there not be assimilation of B into A, for instance, German assimilation to Turkish culture? Besides the matter of the need for cultural harmony, there is obviously an implicit struggle between the dominant and the subordinate involved in the demand for assimilation, with the dominant subject consciousness by which German identity is defined demanding subordination of the Turkish subjectivity to it. At one level, this demand could be satisfied by the minimal requirement of obedience to the prevailing law or, going a little further, by demonstrated readiness to take steps towards an assimilation over time, entailing at least such a first step as learning the language. But if a culture is regarded as a more full-bodied expression of belonging to a historical community, what is at issue is a complicated struggle between two groups in that community, one dominant, the other subordinate, whose identity and pride are defined by different cultures.

We must admit that nowadays there is a growing consciousness around the world of the imperative to maintain a separate identity as part of one's sense of dignity. Immigrants to a new country are more likely to develop this consciousness as they come to constitute a minority within it with large enough numbers to assert its own identity. The resolution of frictions brought about by the assertion of this identity cannot be found simply in improving the fairness of legal processes or softening the expression of cultural dominance of the host culture over the subaltern immigrants. A new politics of recognition, incorporating the equal recognition of different collective identities, is now a world-historical trend. The assertion of a separate identity along with its supporting culture by African-Americans in the United States is a typical case. Another is the right demanded by the Québécois to give emphatic priority to the preservation of their French-speaking culture, though the factors involved in the demands for social and cultural recognition of these two groups of people are of different natures.

The problems of differential identity invite diverse solutions. But if we are to hope for a flourishing global human community, a true global culture will eventually have to evolve. In the meantime, enforceable policies for conflict resolution, differently arrived at in different countries, need to be implemented.

Multicultural problems in Korea

The terms, 'multicultural,' or 'multiculturalism' have now been in use in Korea for some time. As in Western countries, they were adopted only when contact with foreign peoples came to involve demographic movement. With this movement, contact with foreign cultures has become an everyday experience for many Koreans, making them aware of problems it could generate. The experience of foreign culture has of course been part of Korean history for a long time and in multiple ways, but it has been with the recent increase in immigration that multiculturalism has come to be perceived as a political and social issue. There has been in recent years an enormous increase on other fronts as well, notably in travel for business or tourism purposes, either by Korean nationals going abroad or foreign nationals visiting Korea. According to government statistics (Statistics Bureau, Republic of Korea Government, s.d.), Koreans travelling abroad increased from 1981 to 2010 from less than half a million a year to more than 12 million; foreign visitors increased from one million to almost 9 million. More importantly, there has been an ever-increasing number, presently approaching 1.3 million, of foreign nationals residing more permanently in Korea for business or other reasons. But from the viewpoint of multiculturalism, more significant are the migrant workers seeking work on the Korean labor market. As mentioned above, the terms, 'multinational' or 'multinationalism,' '*damunhwa*' or '*damunhwachui*,' have entered the common vocabulary for conceptualizing this demographic phenomenon.

Loss of sovereignty and multiculturalism

As an incidental yet nonetheless important sidelight to illustrate the semiological twist carried by the term 'multiculturalism', the recognition of the issues involved in this concept signifies the self-confidence of a nation that has grown out of the economic development and modernization achieved in recent decades, after the historical turmoil of its transition from the pre-modern to the modern world in the past 150 years. No historical society completely loses its practical habitus or 'habits of the heart', even when it loses its political sovereignty, but a nation under foreign occupation suffers loss of control over its destiny, and its culture endures without a center. Without a sense of conscious cultural self-creation and self-authentication reinforced by political independence, habituses get reduced indeed to mere habits. The Japanese occupation of Korea in 1910 and

the influx of a colonizing Japanese population certainly created a multicultural situation, but that situation was not perceived as multicultural. What Koreans experienced was rather a complete suppression or paralysis of their culture, as it was simply pushed aside, surviving without legitimacy on the margins of the dominant Japanese civilization. In contrast, as Korea recovered its independence and 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 into a host culture, thus bringing the issue of multiculturalism to the Korean consciousness. Koreans have thus experienced within the last century both aspects of the dominance–subordination dialectic which underlies many multicultural situations.

Social justice and multicultural personal relations

In the Korean approach to multiculturalism, what is interesting to note is the fact that the issue presents more in the context of personal relationships than in that of collective political action at national level, unlike in North America and Europe. There is indeed conflict of a public nature in relation to migrant workers in Korea, but it is more often conflict that could be classified as between labor and employers, who are perceived as trying to exploit the disadvantaged status of the migrant workers, who stand outside the full protection of legal rights given to the Korean citizens or to unionized labor. There are also attempts by migrant workers to organize themselves industrially. In addition, the migrant problem is being addressed through intervention by nongovernmental organizations committed to bringing humanitarian aid and legal empowerment to migrant groups. The issue of multiculturalism is thus related to the whole process of modernization and democratization in Korea. Yet it remains on the whole at the level of interpersonal adjustment on the part of the immigrants and the local population.

Intercultural marriage is an important indicator of the extent to which multicultural problems are experienced and addressed at the personal level. Statistics shows that there were about 35,000 intercultural marriages recorded in Korea in 2010 alone; the total number from 2002 to 2010 amounted to almost 300,000. Typically, such marriages are contracted between a Korean man and a woman from East or South East Asia. In large part, the male partner is from the lower stratum of Korean society, as it has become harder for rural and low-income urban youth to find suitable spouses at or even past normal marriageable age, leading them to make use of match-making agencies to find foreign marriageable young women for brides, most often from China, Vietnam, or the Philippines. It is estimated that one out of ten marriages now taking place is intercultural. In such marriages, there quite frequently occur problems in personal relationships – between husband and wife or the wife and her husband's family, as well as in the socialization of children from these marriages with their school mates. International couples often have difficulty even in simple communication, as they may enter into the marriage not even comprehending each other's languages. A particularly prominent factor in inhibiting cultural adjustment appears to be the patriarchal and male-dominant culture of Korea with its complex code of behavior to which foreign brides are expected to submit. Cultural attunement in general to the nuances of the codes of social relations presents a complex challenge for new arrivals. Part of the recommendations of a report into this issue published in 2005 includes the promotion of multicultural understanding in order to make the family and communal relationships of the new arrivals more harmonious: foreign wives may be encouraged to form associations among those similarly situated in Korean society, if only for the therapeutic benefits shared sympathy may bring about. For the sake of fairness, it is recommended that they should also learn more about their own native culture and bring their pride in that native culture to their life in Korean society (Seol et al. 2005).

The code of hospitality

In summary, the increase in the number of migrant workers, foreign residents, and intercultural marriages has caused problems – notably of mutual adjustment. General responses have been directed to taking measures to accommodate them within the existing social space. Public opinion has been favorable to suggestions for correcting instances of unfairness and discomfort suffered by the incoming visitors, short-stay residents, and longer-term settlers, and also to the idea that adjustment to these new social conditions needs to be mutual.

There are many reasons for the generally open-minded attitudes displayed by the Korean public to multiculturalism. One is obviously practical need. Many newcomers come to Korea meeting the need for low-wage labor and more easily available spouses. Added to this is the sense of fairness and justice in the democratic ideals which Korea has embraced. But the traditional Confucian culture already incorporated ideals of social fairness and justice, at the same time as it provided ideological legitimation of a patriarchal class society. There have been attempts to theorize that Confucianism already contained the seeds for stimulating the economic development that we have observed in the past several decades in various East Asian societies. Extending this view of Confucianism, we might say that its secularism made it easy to embrace modernity all around, not only for economic development but also for political and cultural transformation. However, it is important to note that Confucianism works as a hidden source of cultural or ethical capital which Korean multicultural solutions have drawn upon. Confucianism is often considered a kind of humanism which made room for concern for the plight of human beings beyond the more narrowly conceived national boundaries. Culturally, what is still binding from Confucianism is, in particular, the ethical code of hospitality: the Confucian program of cultivation, starting in childhood and perfected in maturity, emphasized courteous behavior in personal encounters – with elders, guests, and strangers. Hospitality is an ethical or cultural precept, but in its mature form it goes along with the cultivation of other virtues, such as magnanimity and tolerance. The personal turn in Korean multicultural measures may reasonably be ascribed to the cultural capital still operative in the Korean psyche, including the ethic of hospitality. However, we may say that it would be desirable, not only in Korea but in other societies as well, to socially encourage the nurturing of this ethic as a natural human virtue.

Multicultural issues in democratic politics

It is a strength of democracy that there is already embedded within its constitutional system a legal process for embracing within a single political order individuals with claims to different values and identities. In the same way the democratic process might also be expediently relied upon to handle multicultural problems – or at least provide suitable political and legal solutions for them.

Jürgen Habermas addresses the issue in his 1994 essay entitled 'Struggles for Recognition in the Constitutional State', which was written as a comment on Charles Taylor's speech on the issue of multiculturalism, which sought to defend, among other things, the attempt by the Province of Quebec in Canada to legislate various measures for the preservation of its French-speaking cultural heritage within the federal state of Canada dominated by English speakers. Habermas thinks that it goes against basic democratic principles to grant 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 values and ethical rules they might hold; hence, he asserted, there could not be an exception for the Québécois with their special tradition. As a general rule, it is inevitable that certain values which individuals hold dear will need to be disregarded in the constitution of a polity, except for those values

which effectively make democracy possible. This exclusion of values is also required to protect the autonomy of the individual. Value neutrality and, going a step further, ethical neutrality are necessary conditions for a democratic regime, as has been argued by Dworkin, Rawls, and other liberal theorists. Consequently, all the substantive elements of individual differences must be subtracted if there is to be a political order allowing peaceful coexistence of differences; it is only within such a framework that conflict resolution can be negotiated. The same procedure of negotiation could consequently be utilized for the accommodation of multicultural claims within a democratic state.

Democracy and cultural values

One test case of how cultural differences could be negotiated might be that of immigrants to a Western country. There could be two requirements, Habermas says, imposed on an immigrant at the threshold of entry into a Western democracy: one, acceptance of the democratic principles of the Western state, and two, cultural assimilation into its society, 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, he asserts. Acknowledging this one basic condition is essential for their admittance into a democratic country. But the second requirement demanding complete cultural assimilation is unacceptable, he thinks, as it also contradicts the autonomy of the individual in the area of ethics and culture, as stipulated by basic 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 necessarily mean that democracy is a rigid unchangeable system free from all engagement with values. For Habermas, a democratic order maintains its vitality through an on-going process of engagement. This is evidenced in the way democratic rights are secured. Democracy is not realized once and 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' (Habermas 1994: 113). Part of this actualization effort is expressed in the problematization of the situations of disadvantage 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 well-meaning welfare provisions for women during pregnancy and motherhood which result in the risk of increased difficulty in maintaining or returning to employment). There is also need for constant revision of the ways various needs and requirements are understood and implicitly assumed in the interpretation and implementation of rights so that a fuller understanding of a disadvantaged group's situation may be available to the general public. The quest for such understanding essentially draws upon cultural and ethical resources available to the society, both from the past and in the present.

Ethics and politics

For Habermas, democracy is, in the final analysis, not value-neutral, for it is itself a product of an ethical tradition. As he says, '... every legal community and every democratic process for actualizing basic rights is inevitably permeated by ethics' (Habermas 1994: 126). More broadly, such ethics may be incorporated into the process by which awareness is reached of how the system should be understood. 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' (Habermas 1994: 138). 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, the possibility of interpretation also implies the possibility of change. The change may extend to the cultural worlds of those involved as well. Habermas presents a formula for effecting change: cultural heritages can be preserved and changed by methods of persuasion, that is, by a 'herme-neutic achievement of the cultural reproduction of life-worlds,' which we assume would, besides in politics, be reflected in pedagogies and other forms of cultural nurturing. As a principle, it is in any case wrong, he says, 'to deny in advance the freedom to say yes or no' (Habermas 1994: 130).

The disadvantaged, immigrants, and world-cultural change

We can then go on and ask: does Habermas's argument for hermeneutic renovation apply to minor-ities with cultural differences – to the Turkish immigrants in Germany, to Afro-Americans, to 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 particular society but the broader case of accommodating these within a larger community of nations such as the European Union, a regional community or a globalized world. How should cultural and politi-cal differences be negotiated in these wider areas of human contact and interaction?

Reflexive thinking

Even with the proviso of expecting change 'in the long run,' it should be acknowledged that Western societies are already well equipped with political, mental, and cultural resources for accepting cul-tural change brought about by new multicultural situations. The main mental resource for facilitating this process is the faculty of reflection. Adopting a 'reflexive attitude' does not necessarily exorcise the '"subjectivized demons and gods" of the modern world,' but reflective reason 'allow[s] for a civilized debate among convictions, in which one party can recognize the other parties as co-com-batants in the search for authentic truths without sacrificing its own claims to validity' (Habermas 1994: 133). And a reflexive culture can admit to itself the possibility of its own change.

But this reflective faculty would have to be functional in all the parties to the negotiation for change, not simply a requirement on the West, we must say. The demand is fair enough. Habermas seems to be assuming that the non-Western culture encountered by the West is likely to be per-ceived as being in a state of objective passivity in contrast to Western subjectivity. If cultural change is to be mutually acceptable, there must be mutual interaction between the parties involved. This would require a radical transformation on the part of the non-Western cultures interacting with the West. If a reflexive attitude is demanded without regard to the non-Western parties involved, would that not be an imperialist demand on the part of the West? At any rate, such a reflexive attitude may not be easily acquired without training in the Western cultural tradition – let us say, through reading canonical texts in that tradition – but eventually this may lead to learning a broadly encompassing discourse for addressing and circumnavigating substantive cultural values, and for accepting a necessary separation of culture and politics.

Simplification of human nature

To think about the practical steps of cultural integration in political terms is to enter into an area of contradictions and paradoxes. Complete co-existence of cultures would be possible only by sepa-rating cultures from politics. Yet the disentanglement of politics and culture is possible only by the

establishment of a 'legal universalism' which allows 'unrestrained communication in the public sphere' (Habermas 1994: 135). This seems the only effective formula for bringing about cultural integration or negotiation in societies whose multicultural character is progressively becoming more significant.

Multiple dimensions of the human self

However, the separation of law from ethics and culture remains problematic, as it results in simplifying humanity into a kind of one-dimensionality, thereby impoverishing its potential. Politics must be also simplified. Western democracy, as normally understood, is predicated on the narrowly utilitarian understanding of the nature of the human individual, including the concept of individual rights, as such rights can be perceived as part of the defence mechanism for the individual self against oppression by the collectivity. Last August when visiting Korea, Mr Muhammad Yunus, the founder of Grameen Bank and the microfinance movement in Bangladesh, told me that there is a gross distortion in the assumption about human nature that underlies conventional economic theory, with its paradigm of *homo economicus* where the individual human being is conceived exclusively as a self-seeking entity. Yunus' social business was intended to respond to both the self-directed and other-directed sides of human nature. The legalistic abstraction of human potential however, premised on the same paradigm of the self-seeking human being, tends to result in repression and discontent *(das Unbehagene)*.

Ethical erosion

An end result of any attempt to establish a legal universalism, however, may well be the withering away of multi-layered ethical and cultural sensibility. The enabling agency for realizing such a legal universalism is the development of reason, which would bring together individuals into a coherent political unity in such a way as to build firm legal frameworks to protect the rights of private individuals. In the public realm, values pursued would be mostly instrumental ones; the assumption is that these values would be exchanged for whatever value objectives individuals chose to pursue. But instrumental values thus pursued and acquired tend to define the status and worth of the individuals, and they become valorized and fetishized as such. Meanwhile, the cultivation of ethical or cultural values, since it falls within the private realm, soon loses its objective public meaning and status. We can see the irony of the separation of the two realms, that of public order and private ethic, in the scandals involving many public figures in America and Europe, which are often sensationally reported but whose perpetrators are frequently exculpated in the prolonged court processes. Altogether, a narrowing of the vision of what it is to be human is inevitable, and other projections, even if they are the products of long historical development, are likely to disappear from the horizon of public awareness.

Debate in the political arena

We may see even in Habermas' discussion of multiculturalism traces of the general narrowing of the scope of public discourse on this matter, as it tends to avoid argument based on any other reasoning than realism – realism in the sense that human reality is to be interpreted in terms of the self, pursuing its own interest or proclaiming its rights anchored in asserted truths. Although Habermas is not insensitive to ethical and cultural issues, his moral argument is inevitably based on realist rationality as the only way of engaging the reality of the struggle for power in today's political space. While, in the essay I have been quoting from, Habermas puts forward a defence for admitting refugees from

outside, it is interesting to note how he advances different arguments for political and for economic refugees. In regard to political asylum seekers, he is entirely for accommodating them without reservation. (He views this as not only morally justifiable, but justifiable also in terms of international law, as laid down in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and 1967, and in the German Basic Law.) Habermas also supports a lenient policy towards those defined as economic refugees, although somewhat ambiguously. His reasoning is that it is proper for Europeans to return the economic benefit which they themselves harvested in migrating widely to the other parts of the globe in previous centuries by more freely admitting such migrants. One wonders if a defence could not have been made more simply in ethical terms or at least if appeal could not have been made to adopting such practice in the name of humanitarianism, benevolence, or compassion. But given the prevalence of 'realist' thinking in the political arena, such a proposition would probably not carry much weight.

Relaxation of compressed time and space

In spite of these gaps in the modern vision of human potential that forms the framework for political disputations, it perhaps needs to be admitted that the only effective measures capable of responding to situational exigencies are likely to be practical ones that engage with the reality of today's world. In a democracy, the universalism of law is the only practical measure available to deal with conflicting cultural encounters and, above all, of conflicts between peoples of diverse cultures.

At the beginning of this paper, I spoke of global culture as a complex system of distinct cultures. This observation was made not only because of the undesirability of perceiving global culture as a homogenization of human culture, but because culture can be understood as the process of a subjectivity which transforms the objective necessities of life into the express realization of human needs and desires within a cohesive and coherent whole. But because this unifying process governed by subjectivity is essentially evolutionary, as distinct cultures confront then negotiate with each other, any attempt to overheat the process by imposing a universal system could be dangerous. Hence, the alternative idea of moving via a complex system or a federated system of cultural subsystems, as a more peaceable way of integrating the global community of humankind.

But, in the final analysis, is such integration desirable at all? And, if desirable, would it be at all possible without allowing some integrative principle, if not power, to emerge which might subsequently subdue, or at the very least short-change, the manifold potential of human society?

Knowledge and power

When we think of the possibility of a global culture, we must consider not only the confrontation of different cultures, but that of modern and pre-modern cultures, that is, the balancing of modernity and pre-modernity. It is probable, however, that the globalization of cultures will be conceived as occurring on the plane of modernity, and hence pre-modern cultures will need to accommodate to that environment. One integrative vision we could easily have would be a universal community resulting from the spread of scientific and technological development over the entire globe. In fact, the unification of world cultures, whether envisioned as a complex of particular cultures or arrived at through a process of reflexive reasoning, is likely in the last resort to rely on the integrative power of rationality. In this vision, the subjectivity involved in scientific reason would be at issue again, as it relates to power. The Cartesian subjectivity located in the *cogito* connects, as has often been pointed out, with the project of making humans 'masters and possessors of nature,' as Descartes himself put it as a prospectus for the development of science and technology (see Amatayakul 2014). A vision of a global culture could be seen in a similar way as an offshoot of this project. Knowledge is power for Sir Francis Bacon as well as for Foucault. Does the universal

vision of the cultural world driven by scientific and reflexive reason represent the only way for humans to be cognitively and practically at home in it? To be sure, there has been considerable skepticism about the value of scientific and technological progress as far as the practical mastery of reality by humankind is concerned, notably around the ecological problems resulting from this progress. The world-view built through various scientific endeavors is now being perceived as not doing complete justice to the intuitively attained sense of the world as experienced in our daily lives and also as expressed in various non-scientific visions of the world, whether religious, mystical, or intuitive, that have fallen into discredit under the domination of the scientific world-view. This discredit is also cast on the various forms of understanding and organizing human life pejoratively branded 'pre-modern' or 'primitive'.

The humanity of primitive societies

In a lecture Claude Lévi-Strauss delivered in Japan in 1986 (Lévi-Strauss 1988) he expressed a strong skepticism about the notion of global culture, or what he called 'a world civilization, *une civilisation mondiale*,' towards which modern humanity seemed to be headed. For him, the term 'world civilization' itself was a contradiction, for 'the idea of civilization implies and requires the coexistence of cultures offering the greatest diversity among them' (Lévi-Strauss 1988: 172). But his prediction was 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' (Lévi-Strauss 1988: 152, 153).

Diversity means a diversity of resources for achieving better life, though there might, he suggests, be a maximal limit to the amount of diversity that can be sustained. His observations on the blessings of diversity are based on his study of 'primitive societies' and his backward-directed reflection on human evolution. Underpinning these observations lay the affirmative conviction which he maintained throughout his long career in anthropology that most human societies have their own unique techniques for meeting human problems, however strange they may appear to the Western or modern eyes, and that primitive societies often present preferable models of human community over those of modern ones. In his view, primitive societies tend to constitute a balanced ecological whole, through both their relationship with nature and that of their members with each other, while so-called civilized societies, for their part, appear to be efficient in the maximization of life's amenities and profit by the application of rational calculation, but at the huge cost of generating problems, which he calls 'entropy': social conflict, political in-fighting, psychological stress, distressing loss of clarity in social structure, waning of cultural and spiritual values, etc. (Lévi-Strauss 1988: 210). What for him was remarkable about primitive communities was not only the non-wasteful solutions they adopted for meeting life's needs but also the way they could retain a sense of the wholeness of humanity across their diverse activities of life. Lévi-Strauss sums up the idealized ethos of the primitive societies thus: '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' (Levi-Strauss 1988: 205).

The authentic community

Across primitive societies, although they share common human characteristics, the organization of life and work may be expressed in different social and cultural forms. (Lévi-Strauss thinks it is culture, not social ordering, that shaped these societies, since in his mind social ordering tends to develop into a system of oppression.) One important common characteristic that Lévi-Strauss does

emphasize, however, is the fact that primitive societies are often very small in size, with populations numbering only in the tens or hundreds. The small numbers make a natural communality possible. The exemplary primitive society is a face-to-face community whose members are personally acquainted with each other. This creates a society which he calls 'authentic' (Lévi-Strauss 1988: 137, 245–247; see Lévi-Strauss 1963: 363–366). It is such authentic communities that anthropology tries to understand through personal field work, unlike other social sciences that tend to rely on abstract data statistically collected and analyzed. But this primitive authenticity has generally been destroyed by the development of larger social organizations and by the spread of non-personal means of communication such as books, photography, radio, and television. Yet, small as these societies are, they provide diverse answers to various human problems derived from their experience over a long duration of time. It is important to learn from them for the wisdom they have preserved and for the authentic form of human existence they have maintained.

Une civilisation plus sage

How can their wisdom be incorporated into the global development for a better future of humankind? Lévi-Strauss thought that, by making available the insights it has gathered from its study of primitive societies, anthropology could contribute to the transition of the world towards a wiser civilization, '*une civilisation plus sage*' (Lévi-Strauss 1988: 209). He believed that anthropological insights could constitute a 'third humanism,' subsuming the two humanisms of Western history, that of the Renaissance and the bourgeois humanism of the nineteenth century, but differing from them in its true open-mindedness in incorporating the diverse cultures of the world into this wiser civilization. One implication of the term, 'third humanism,' is that the transition to it would not be engineered by the politics of various ideologies, including Marxism, even if Lévi-Strauss still rates equality and fraternity as belonging to the highest communal virtues. The distance which he wants to keep from the programs of political engineering seems to be related to his views of the various ideologies, which are all predicated on the progress of modern civilization. He thinks that if the insights of his third humanism are properly conveyed to humankind, they will by themselves eventually make the transition possible to a more ecologically and humanely harmonious society, whether locally or globally organized.

Two poles of a global culture

Lévi-Strauss's approach to primitive societies, however, is problematic both in terms of overlooked facts and in theoretical reflection. The point of remarking on its complex elements is to note the contradictions that inevitably emerge in the modern hermeneutics of these societies, which cannot operate purely at the level of facticity, but must be mediated by a broader reflective overview. In Lévi-Strauss's approach, primitive cultures are first carefully observed in their objective reality, and then they are placed, through the application of reason, within the context of human striving after totality. This rational effort must remain as transparent as possible so that the unique quiddity of the primitive society observed is suspended in all its transparency. A global culture, should it ever develop, would combine respect for the subjectivity of diverse cultures, both modern and pre-modern, together with their integration into an emergent universal subjectivity, refined through transparency.

Locating life in the world and cosmic space

Whatever ultimate form a globalized culture may take, the task is how to unite, at the more concrete level, two contradictory elements that human life cannot do without: local rootedness and

global openness. Lévi-Strauss is right in describing a small community as a humanly habitable place, as being 'authentic,' 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 is ecologically adequate for meeting their biological and psychological needs. But this locale is, physically speaking, only a small point within a vast global or even cosmic space. Hence for life to be coherent, this locale needs to have definable bounds, but ones which are ideally multiply-layered and permeable to the vastness of the universe.

I will end this exploratory essay with an astronomical analogy. The planet Earth is a separate entity in the universe, apparently subsisting as an independent autonomous locale, and yet also completely open to the entire universe. This enfolding universe is not simply a static space full of stars, as perceived by our nightly observation, but an expanding totality beyond human imagination. The wonder is nevertheless that the astronomical environment around the earth is in a relatively stable state. The fundamental reason, as one astronomer explains it, lies in the ultimate limit set by the speed of light to the movement of things and information, including light itself.

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 (Barrow 1998: 25).

We may take light here as a metaphor for the subjective process of cultural reasoning within a globalizing movement, with a certain speed limit for processing diverse cultures. The process can speed up or slow down, but it has its limit, which is the need for life to organize itself on a local basis, even when this locale becomes global. But we may say that when the reasoning process is completed, its limit would still remain unperceivable, because it is the very condition for life to endure stably in a unified and yet local order. But it is also unperceivable because the reason at work would be a principle for letting things be what they are – ubiquitous and omnipresent yet entirely unobtrusive and almost absent. It would coincide with the ethical and epistemic practice of the highest reason in its utmost reach, which becomes possible on account of the attainment of truth by the self through askesis and through respect for the alterity of the other; ethics approximating ontology, ontology coinciding with ethics.

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