and a corresponding need for joint programmes and joint degrees to allow students to profit from field experience in the global South and from comparative work in the global North.

Many intricacies, however, are involved in rethinking international education. Will the respective staffs see the need for cooperation, both national and international? Will they be able to link up seriously with partner institutes in the global South? Will the funding agencies be ready to provide support? Will accreditation agencies be ready to recognise joint degrees? These are important questions that we have to face.

A third choice: engage public debate. Our founding fathers wisely called us the International Institute of Social Studies. Social studies form the link between academic insight and public action, or between the conceptual realm and the realm of policy and practice. I have argued the continued relevance of social theorists like Karl POLANYI or Ludwig VON MISES: they deal with the conceptual, or even, the ideological realm.

There is no single truth in the social sciences; there are different viewpoints that explain more, or less, of a particular phenomenon. In this article, I have followed the views of POLANYI, but a neo-conservative could probably make a sensible counterargument based on VON MISES to explain the relations between society and economy, or polity and market.

Social studies are always informed by intellectual debate; it is naïve and therefore dangerous to assume one value-free form of social science. It is in the confrontation of different views, and in their respective capacity to explain processes of social change, that we come to greater understanding.

Such debate is the life-blood of an international institute of social studies; it is also the contribution that such an institute can make to public debate by enlightening assumptions and confronting alternatives.

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Suzanna VERGOUWE

We Have More Lives than a Cat:

An Eclectic Essay on Culture, Education and Being a World Citizen

There is a Hungarian proverb which goes, "You are as many persons as the languages you speak" (annyi nyelv, annyi ember). And once someone told me, "When you meet a new person, you get a new life." We all look at the world in different ways. According to these sentences above, though, we are never complete replicas of that which is considered to be our 'culture.'

This fact is strange, because the debate on multiculturality is usually about clashes between clearly cut cultural ways of expression, of politics of culture and identity. "I am Dutch, you are Indian"; or "You behave like a Dane, and therefore are not like me, Ukrainian."

But everybody is a person in a network of many others. Then who are we? Products of our cultures? Or hybrid human beings? And what does education have to do with it?

ADAM AND HIS KIND

A major chunk of anthropological and sociological writings is about culture. Bill EPSTEIN writes about how similar we are, basing his theories on our common human biological characteristics and emotions. Clifford GEERTZ envisages cultures as entities that are enclosed in themselves as systems of meaning and thought. Cultures, in his view, are opposed to each other and exclusive.

Fredrik BARTH, although I never really got his point, uses the concepts of identity and ethnicity: 'we' as opposed to 'them,' which presupposes the other in order to define ourselves. Actually, that is not such an odd thought.

In the very beginning, Adam saw that the animals were different from himself and found only Eve to be of his kind. They were not necessarily of the same opinion, though, and so generic misconceptions of good and bad have become part and parcel of our nature. And of course there is confusing Babel, which challenged us to use the left part of our brain well by learning a couple of foreign languages.

BABEL IN THE KITCHEN

Apart from speech, which clearly marks boundaries between different language zones, there is another sphere which can make one dazed: food. (Globalised food chains and fast-food restaurants left aside, for now).

One of my most memorable culture shocks after having moved into a Romanian family was embodied by a plate of chicken soup. In the tiny kitchen where we used to eat two or three at a time (the table being too small for the whole family to sit around), Grandma poured the soup and placed it in front of me.

There it was: the leg of the chicken, its toes (nails removed), covered with a wrinkled and fluffy skin. Why on earth would they serve exactly that piece of animal to me? Delicacy probably. Fortunately, Grandma, with who at that time communication was still restricted to gestures and some occasional short sentences, noticed I was puzzled.

She offered to exchange her plate with mine, so I was spared the embarrassment of having to eat the leg. I guess people have the same experience when being served caterpillars for dinner, or frog legs. Alternatively, the mussels and shrimps or 'head cheese' (made out of the brains of a pig) some people are so fond of down here by the sea.

Later on, when visiting the Hungarian butchers in order to find meat for a proper 'Dutch' dish, I could not figure out what part of the beef I should choose. The meat in the shop window just did not look like the slices of *braadlappen* I would find in The Netherlands.

There comes culture: the preparation of certain dishes calls for specific ingredients. Try to make a Thai curry in an Amsterdam flat; first of all, you will need to substitute ingredients, and secondly, it will not taste as good as in the narrow streets of Bangkok's market places. The characteristic smell is missing, the sounds are different, and the atmosphere is not as delicate.

Consequently, when asked the impossible question of the most significant difference between my country's culture and, for example, Hungary, Thailand or Lithuania, I simply say: "They cut a cow into different pieces than back home."

Being able to travel, then, enlarges one's tactile senses to a previously unimaginable extent. Nevertheless, through the senses one also discovers how similar we actually are. People love to feed their guests anywhere around the world. Sharing a meal, moving on to even sharing the same plate, broadens and deepens the relationship; over a meal, conversation starts (of course presupposing a lingua franca shared by all those involved).

We also discover that wherever we are, people share emotions like anger, laughter, sadness and sorrow. Meeting others makes it less likely that we do not understand each other. We might even actually start liking each other.

EDUCATION INTO WORLD CITIZENS

Such mutual understanding was one of the outcomes of a group discussion on higher education among a group of students from all over the world, who met at WSCF's General Assembly in 2004. While the discussion was ensuing, it became clear that the adaptation of higher education structures, which is taking place around the world, has both positive and negative effects on the learning effect of education.

While students are enabled to follow a more diverse (international) programme, time pressure, specialisation and fragmentation lead to uncertainty about what value diplomas will have. As the commodification of education is sharply increasing, the costs of a good education are flying high as well.

A growing gap is appearing between educational institutions that can attract wealthy students and, consequently, can offer high salaries to the best professors and lecturers. Accessibility and costs, and a poor labour market, were also commonly perceived as threats to the value of education.

By sharing our experiences and voicing that, we stand for whom we are and where we come from—different, yet equal—we found common perspectives. One of those perspectives was to keep informing each other about what is going on in higher education in our countries; because, in that way, we can learn from each other and take action.

Much of the discussion above is echoed in Martha NUSSBAUM's *Cultivating Humanity*. She envisions education as having the task to educate people as world citizens. She sees educational systems as communities of dialogue, questioning each other on the basis of arguments about lifestyle and principles relating to democracy and wellbeing.

She argues: "Marcus AURELIUS insisted that to become world citizens we must not simply amass knowledge; we must also cultivate in ourselves a capacity for sympathetic imagination that will enable us to comprehend the motives and choices of people different from ourselves, seeing them not as forbiddingly alien and other, but as sharing many problems and possibilities with us.

"Differences of religion, gender, race, class, and national origin make the task of understanding harder, since these differences shape not only the practical choices people face but also their "insides," their desires, thoughts, and ways of looking at the world" (p.85).

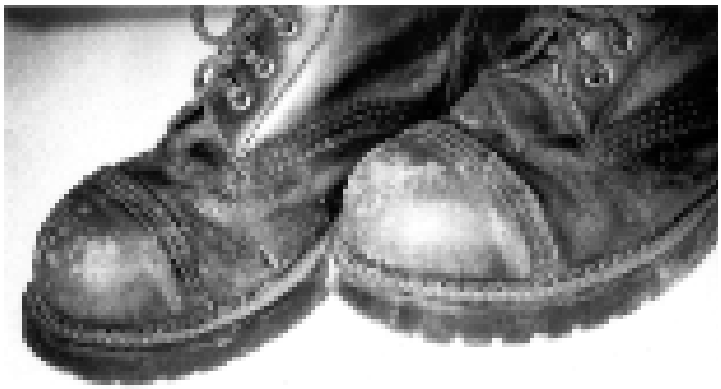
So where do we stand, in these 'politics'? I think we are constantly asked to take a stance, to be critical and reflective in a Socratic way. To consider our own ways not as the best, but as good in the situation with which we are familiar.

NUSSBAUM attributes a central role to education in this process of becoming 'world citizens.' She envisages a world in which people are not centrifugally dragged towards the same point; she argues in favour of education as to develop the tools and ways of dialogue for understanding differences, and opposes the 'politics of identity' which do not feed into the practice of dialogue and the creation of understanding among people.

She says: "Under the label 'multiculturalism'—which can refer to appropriate recognition of human diversity and cultural complexity—a new antihumanist view has sometimes emerged, one that celebrates difference in an uncritical way and denies the very possibility of common interests and understandings, even of dialogue and debate, that take one outside one's own group."

"The best way to begin avoiding these pitfalls [the descriptive and normative vices] in teaching is to think in terms of common human problems, spheres of life in which human beings, wherever they live, have to make choices."

SHARING PLATE AND CUP



Coming from The Netherlands, I see daily how hard a job this actually is. In the past years, integration politics have been listed high on the agenda. It is startlingly easy to live one's life without really getting to know one's neighbour, whether being of Dutch, Moroccan, or Chinese origin.

This once much-vaunted miracle of multicultural society has gone bankrupt from its own pride and prejudices. Dutch journalists write books about families from the Middle East who have been living here for the past twenty-odd years, and to my understanding these reports completely miss the core. That is: they sustain the division between 'us' and 'them.'

Fortunately, there are the small local initiatives that one hears about, where people really share plate and cup, bread and wine, and live this global community locally. However, it is true that we are a bit lost at the moment and are faced with a re-evaluation of who we are.

Realistically dreaming about history, our ancestors Adam and Eve must have seen themselves faced with this challenge of living with inherent differences, and perhaps they 'agreed to disagree' about the shared condition of being human.

Despite the differences in wealth and circumstances people are facing, this is the key identity (among others underlined by NUSSBAUM) that underlies interaction among people. Or can I say - should?

All too often, the rhetoric in political debates presupposes superiority based on military power, attributed religious power, or economic stronghold. There is no easy answer as to which debate is fruitful, where freedom of speech ends and respecting the (feelings of) the other should prevail. Using the jargon of results, efficiency and effectivity are out of the question here.

Luckily, these easy ways out do not solve the issues, because it means we cannot sit back in our armchair and be lazy. Somehow, I think the concept of 'global citizen' lived locally is a good start. At least it is a basis for empathetic dialogue and understanding and it allows for disagreement, for differences to have their place.

Our identity and self-image is broader than the borders of our country, our culture, our language, like a pancake hanging over the edges of a plate. Alternatively, we might use the comparison of a cat that has nine lives.

AND IF YOU CAN'T SING IT, YOU SIMPLY HAVE TO SWING IT …

Communication across boundaries is not limited to language, though. A good WSCF tradition is to dance together, as dancing is universally practiced. In Chiang Mai, Thailand we had excellent dancers among the women, as one of the first evenings demonstrated. It was a women's-only party, a safe environment, and most of us felt free to 'swing it.'

Having said all this, and reflecting about my own journey, I do find myself being an eclectic experiment-in-progress. Living in The Netherlands, where I was born, I cannot say that I am typically Dutch. Even fellow country-people, when hearing that I have lived in Central Europe for quite some time, suspect some exotic ancestors from that part of the world.

Well, they were exotic, these ancestors, but they came from Southern Europe. Some of them were Alva's soldiers who quite liked the Flemish women, jumped in and out of their beds, and there we were, the Dutch Flemish.

Also not to forget the share of the Hugenots, who fled the French guillotine and found a peaceful though harsh living on the muddy clay along the seashore just across the Belgian border (which at that time was not called Belgium, but the Southern Netherlands).

Still, I do find myself being Dutch. I love the sea and the strong wind, the white clouds in the air, lined up as the stage curtains in the theatre. And the cheese and black liquorice sweets that foreigners would stick under the table out of shame for dislike of this national delight.

Clearly, the paths I have walked and the people I have met have changed my world, perhaps more than I can imagine. Adaptation to new situations has proven not to be that hard. What was more difficult, to be honest, was to re-adapt to my own 'culture.'

Somehow, I do not fit the models of being Dutch anymore, but rather challenge them. And I quite like that role, being a spectator and commentator on the tribune of my own society. Then, honestly speaking, who of my friends, colleagues or neighbours is not an 'odd one out'?

Just what is worrying is precisely the musical part: the Dutch do not really know how to amuse themselves with dancing; folk dances are dull and without fantasy. So not much room for sharing here.

Central European clapping and whirling would do good to get people awake down here, or not to forget the Turkish tradition and Middle Eastern belly dancing. We still have some important borders to erase, it seems.

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