INTERCULTURAL CONSCIOUSNES AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF CITIZENSHIP

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The issue of citizenship for our time is how to reconcile unity and diversity. By "unity," I mean the commonality of purpose that allows groups to compete and survive in their environments. By "diversity," I mean the variety of ways that human beings have devised to attain that commonality of purpose. As in our past, we humans continue to seek unity at the expense of diversity, since we cannot easily conceive of how commonality of purpose could be maintained in diverse ways.

Underlying our inability to reconcile unity and diversity is the ethical dilemma of relativism. One aspect of relativism is the fact that groups of human beings organize themselves in different ways – they operate in different contexts. We can refer to those contexts as "cultures" – thus the term, "cultural relativism" or more generally, "diversity." As part of maintaining their unity, people in one cultural context must agree on some general ideas of goodness, and those ideas may differ from "goodness" in a different cultural context. We can refer to that aspect of cultural relativism as "moral relativism."

The problem is that many people want to respect (or at least tolerate) cultural relativism, but they also want to reject moral relativism. In other words, they want to accept the relativist idea that humans have viable alternative ways of surviving and thriving in their environments, but they do not want to accept the concomitant idea that humans might have viable alternative ideas of truth and goodness. This uneasy dichotomy can be maintained from afar, but it deteriorates quickly when absolutist ideas of truth and goodness are imposed in multicultural societies and propagate through the interconnected global village.

At root, that is the theme of this presentation: how can we construct an idea

of citizenship that reconciles diversity and its moral ambiguity with unity and the moral commitment necessary to maintain common purpose? Of course, a complete answer to this question would constitute a grand philosophy of government. So, more modestly, I will suggest some ways that constructivist intercultural theory and practice might contribute to the reconciliation.

Intercultural Consciousness

I am here representing the Intercultural Development Research Institute, a nonprofit organization incorporated in the USA and in Italy that supports the constructivist school of interculturalism. An explication of current constructivist intercultural theory and practice and some of the original foundational articles of the school can be found in my newly revised text, *Basic Concepts of Intercultural Communication: Paradigms, Principles, & Practices*. It is available in English from Intercultural Press and in Italian (*Principi di Communicazione Interculturale: Paradigmi e Practiche)* from FrancoAngeli Press.

The primary assumption of the constructivist school is that "culture" is not a thing, but a process. It is a way of observing how people communicate – that is, how they coordinate meaning and action among themselves. Becoming conscious of that process allows us to construct ways of being that are more intentionally and sustainably adaptive to changing environments.

Another important assumption of the school is that change (adaptation) is *developmental* – it depends on constructing an underlying perceptual infrastructure to allow different kinds of experience. The developmental approach contrasts to a more *transformational* view in which worldviews can change quickly. In the latter view, we might go to an evening presentation on diversity and have a transformational experience – the scales would fall from our eyes and suddenly we would not be prejudiced any more and we would know how to live together in harmonious diversity. These transformations usually don't happen in a sustainable way. Rather, developmental change is a progressive activity where we, both individually and collectively, acquire the competence to live differently than we have traditionally lived in communities. We can do that; we have done it before, and

we can do it again. But to make this change intentionally and sustainably, we need to exercise a kind of consciousness – a self-reflexive consciousness that allows us to be aware of context and be able to modify it.

Intercultural consciousness is rooted in epistemology. The epistemological paradigm that allows the construction of a mutually adaptive living condition is not the same one that people have traditionally used to generate unity. People used to think (and still do in some quarters) there was a single truth, that one's own group had it, and that therefore one's own group was superior and justified in dominating others in the name of the truth. In these post-colonial and (more or less) post-imperialistic days, most people believe that world domination in the name of a single truth is unsustainable and unethical. Yet the alternative is not a simple matter of saying, "Well, you have your truth, I have mine, whatever…" That would be diversity without unity. In fact, we need to coordinate ourselves to survive. So the question is, "how do we coordinate ourselves in non-absolutist ways – ways that preserve diversity but also generate common purpose?"

The principles of intercultural communication that could address such a question have been developing since the mid-1950s, both in Europe and in the United States, and also interestingly in some places in Asia including Japan. The term itself, "intercultural communication," was coined by the anthropologist Edward T. Hall in his seminal book *The Silent Language.* Hall and a linguist named George Trager devised a practical strategy for identifying relevant cultural differences and improving communication in cross-cultural situations. That strategy did not have much to do with the recipes of do's and don'ts or the simplistic comparison of national groups that are sometimes encountered in so-called intercultural communication training. Rather, the implication of their work was that cultural contexts could be bridged by intentionally expanding people's repertoire of cultural behavior to include that of alternative contexts. This allowed people to experience situations in different ways, and thus to generate different appropriate behavior. The goal of this kind of intercultural development was not just more competent communication, but people who were generally more competent in living in relativistic multicultural situations.

These ideas are obviously becoming more and more relevant as we look at current affairs. It is not that they were irrelevant before, but it has come to our attention that what we are doing in the name of universal values and tolerance is insufficient for addressing the issues of living in multicultural societies. The lesson from Edward T. Hall is that intercultural consciousness can be approached as a practical communication issue – something that concerns medical practitioners with multicultural patients, social operators working with migrant and refugee populations, employees in multicultural workforces, students in international universities… in other words, all of us. Intercultural consciousness should be a central goal of lifelong education.

But as we say in the US, "don't put the cart before the horse." The cart is the application, the horse is the epistemology; practical applications should always follow a way of thinking, not the other way around. Too often we get those reversed and we say "Just tell us what to do, give us a practical tool that we can use, some recipe, and we'll think about it later." Recipes for cross-cultural behavior do not work, unless they derive from a feeling for the appropriateness of the activity; that is, from an experience of the alternative reality. That was Hall's point, but he may have underestimated the prerequisite need for intercultural consciousness. Lacking self-reflexive consciousness, practical applications tend to be, at best, incoherent. Even if they are reasonably effective in a limited context, we can make them more effective by organizing our epistemological positions coherently with the practical application.

Citizenship

Let me say a word about citizenship. Citizenship is typically defined as membership in some kind of political entity; recently, of course, the entities of nations and states. Most people agree that citizenship involves rights and responsibilities. However, there are tensions here in Switzerland notably, but elsewhere as well, between nationality in the sense of residency in a nation, and citizenship, in the sense of enjoying the privileges of membership such as voting and other forms of participation. Does one, by virtue of residing in a nation, take on the

responsibilities but not necessarily the privileges of membership of that organization, unless one is a citizen, in which case citizenship becomes a kind of a perk – a condition of relative elitism? Another issue is the notion of multiple membership in groups, such as dual national citizenship, or multiple levels of citizenship, for instance of a state, of a canton, of a nation, of a commonwealth or a union. Dual or multiple citizenship is particularly troublesome when political entities of which one is a citizen are in opposition to one another, such as when nations are at war or a state is rebelling against a federal government. When we think of ourselves as having these multiple layers of group membership simultaneously, we need some new ways of talking about citizenship.

My suggestion from the constructivist perspective is that we think of citizenship as a kind of *belongingness,* rather than as a condition that we have or don't have. By "de-reifying" the concept of citizenship, we can more easily conceive of simultaneously maintaining different kinds of membership in different kinds of groups, and that the memberships can be accompanied by different feelings of belongingness. We can think of membership in both individualistic and collectivist ways. Individual membership means that I feel *affiliated* with the group: I feel American, or I feel Italian, or I do not feel Italian, I feel Milanese, or I do not feel Swiss, I feel Italian-Swiss. The groups you affiliate with become part of your cultural identity. Also, in a collectivist sense, you are *ascribed* to membership in groups. So, whether or not I feel American, I am ascribed to be an American. The ascription may be based on citizenship (passport identity), or long-term residence, cultural heritage, or some combination of those things. So whether or not I affiliate with a group is not the only issue – it is also whether I am ascribed membership in the group. The ascription of membership may seriously advantage or disadvantage me, so the personal stakes are high in trying to negotiate this kind of identity.

Political entities such as the European Union or the United States also have a high stake in enabling multiple feelings of belongingness along with multiple citizenship. The addition of a Federal level of citizenship to the state level is relatively recent in the US, and expressions of distrust by citizens of states toward "the federal government" are still common. In the terms being used here, some of

the US Americans who are attributed membership in the federal entity by virtue of their citizenship in fact do not feel affiliated with it – their affiliation is only for the smaller entity of state or local governance. The discrepancy is more pronounced in the EU, where the long history of individual nation-states impedes affiliation with the larger regional entity. In both cases, the larger entities could benefit from stressing that affiliation with them does not conflict with more local affiliation. Switzerland, with its relatively weak federal structure and strong local structures may be one model of how multiple affiliations can be maintained.

Interculturally Conscious Citizenship

By virtue of living in increasingly multicultural societies and an increasingly connected globe, we are inevitably members of multicultural groups. We are all "global citizens" in the sense that our membership is attributed to those groups, whether we like it or not. Would there be an advantage in also feeling affiliated with such groups? To answer that question, we can look at what we know about membership in multicultural groups. In fact we know quite a bit about what it means to be a member of a multicultural group, and how that multicultural group does or does not work well under various conditions. Most of this research is based on multicultural groups in organizations, but as far as I can see, it generalizes rather well to larger societies. Here is a description of this research, based on a compendium reported in Nancy Adler's fine book, *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior (4th Edition).*

A monocultural team of people who are largely similar to one another are given a task demanding creativity – perhaps a task in which they have to come up with a number of different kinds of solutions to a problem – and their performance is defined as average. Then the groups are made multicultural by adding diversity in various forms such as age difference, gender difference, different nationalities, different regions, etc. and given them the same task demanding creativity. The multicultural groups either outperform or underperform the monocultural groups. That is, the multicultural groups are either better at coming up with multiple solutions, or they are worse than the monocultural groups. This is an important

finding, particularly as it might apply in a larger context. We usually hear about the better part: the value of diversity, the value of living in multicultural societies, and the greater productivity of multicultural societies. But this research shows that often it goes the other direction – multicultural groups are more troublesome and less productive. So, those people who complain that multicultural societies are less effective than monocultural societies are also correct, at least sometimes.

One response to this research could legitimately be, "send all the immigrants home and allow us to return to a more monocultural condition – average performance is better that taking a chance on decreased performance." However, this ignores the observation made by Marshall McLuhan when he coined the term *global village.* From his perspective in the 1960s, he observed that due to increased communication, transportation, and international trade, we would no longer be living in traditional enclaves of similarity. Instead, our neighbors – that is, the people with whom we have daily contact – would be culturally different. We are now definitely and irrevocably living in that global village. Whether we like it or not, we are members of a multicultural team. The question is not whether that's a good thing or not – it is how to adapt and thrive in that condition.

A better response to the multicultural team research would be to look for the factors that made the multicultural teams more productive, with the idea that those factors could be deployed more generally in multicultural societies. In the research, the crucial factor was *leadership*. If the leader of the multicultural group recognized and supported cultural difference, it appears that cultural difference became an asset to performance. If, on the other hand, the leader of a multicultural group ignored or suppressed the cultural differences, they didn't go away – they became obstacles to performance. In other words, the key to making a multicultural group superior to a monocultural group was recognizing the potential value of the cultural differences and establishing the conditions for their deployment in the task.

It is important to note in this research that *access* to cultural difference was not a sufficient condition for the group to be successful. Both the less successful and the more successful multicultural groups had equal access to diversity. As Rosabeth Moss Kanter, a Harvard Business School professor said in her book *World Class*,

every organization in the 21ˢᵗ century will have <u>access</u> to cultural diversity; only the organizations that can turn access to diversity into an *asset* will benefit from it. Writ large, this means that diversity itself is insufficient to create value: mandated gender diversity on corporate boards, affirmative hiring practices, or a larger immigrant population are not intrinsically valuable to a society. However, those conditions do create greater access to diversity. The trick is to turn that access into an asset.

Returning to the research, how did the leaders either encourage or discourage productivity in their multicultural groups? Based on my own professional experience with multicultural groups over several decades, I can make the following observations. When leaders support cultural difference, they make it safe to talk about those differences as assets – they create a climate of respect for diversity. In that climate, members of the group are more likely to feel they are equal members of the group, to acquire the communicative competences necessary to negotiate conflict, and to focus diversity onto the task. When leaders ignore or suppress cultural difference, frequently in the name of the common corporate culture, they make it unsafe to talk about differences at all – they create a climate of fear. Members of such groups are more likely to engage in "groupthink," to withhold their resources, and/or to fight about the one right way to approach the task. In the terms I introduced earlier, the successful leaders were ones who found a reconciliation of unity and diversity -- they maintained group cohesion and openness to difference simultaneously. The unsuccessful leaders veered too much into unity by stressing conformity to a single culture or into diversity by focusing on political correctness.

By extension in larger societies, leaders who call for group unity – we are all Swiss, we are all Italians, we are all French, we are all Charlie – may be impeding the reconciliation. By saying that we all are or should be unified by some value such as fraternity, or freedom, or allegiance to a single leader, or a particular philosophy, those leaders suppress differences in values that are also represented in the groups. Those different values probably won't go away – they just go underground and impede the effectiveness of the group, sometimes by generating organized resistance. This continues to be true even if leaders simultaneously call for

"tolerance" of the offending values. Tolerance implies, "it would be better if you were like me, but if you insist on being different, I won't immediately try to destroy you." So, the question, if we accept that we are living in multicultural societies and that we need to figure out how to do that more competently, is how to recognize, acknowledge, and respect the cultural differences that are part of the society. The competent global leader is one who can embrace the dichotomy of unity and diversity and reconcile it into a working dialectic.

One of the key issues of citizenship in multicultural groups is the thorny question of who adapts to whom. The traditional answer has been "When in Rome do as Romans do." As McLuhan might say, "now everywhere is Rome" – in the global village it is unclear who the "Romans" are. Are they the majority? The dominant group who make the rules? The people who've been around the longest? The people who've been most successful? The people who exercise the most immediate power? The question demands consideration far beyond simple behavioral checklists or equations of culture difference that populate superficial intercultural training. The deeper issue is how we can live together with different and possibly competing values, and still maintain coordination of meaning and action that allows our group to survive and thrive. The question cannot be, "whose values will prevail?" We are now too interconnected across different value systems to indulge in that exercise in ethnocentrism. The question now must be, "how can we incorporate value differences into the fabric of our societies.?

And the answer based on the research discussed above seems is that it needs to be a mutual process. The mere existence of people of culture A and people of culture B in an organization does not represent any particular value to that organization; it gives the organization access to the cultural difference, but it does not make it an asset. What does makes it an asset is when A attempts to adapt to the society including B, and B attempts to adapt to the society including A, which generates a condition that we can call *third culture*. Third culture is a virtual condition – it comes into existence when A and B are trying to adapt to one another, and it goes out of existence when A and B are not trying to adapt to one another. A society or an organization does not itself become a third culture; rather, the

organization becomes more competent in supporting third culture positions that flicker in and out of existence. And it is from these third culture that the value comes to the organization; the value does not come from A and B being around, it comes from A and B attempting to adapt to each other and the organizational context.

There are several profound implications of third culture. One is that diversity efforts that focus on the recruitment of underrepresented people into organizations are not inherently valuable. Such efforts need to be accompanied by mechanisms that allow the diverse views carried by people with different worldviews to interact with one another in respectful ways. On a societal level, cultural diversity driven by immigrant or refugee mobility is likely to be troublesome unless it becomes part of a mutual adaptation in the society; that is, newcomers adapt to the host culture, but the host culture equally adapts to the newcomers. In both cases, the establishment a climate of respect for diversity generates the conditions for mutual adaptation, and the resulting third-culture solutions add value to the activity of the group.

Developing Intercultural Consciousness

The next part of this presentation suggests a developmental process that moves toward sustainable mutual adaptation. It is the *Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity*, sometimes called the *Bennett Scale,* but abbreviated as DMIS. The model is based on Piaget and other developmentalists who suggest that building underlying perceptual scaffolding will allow us to perceive and experience particular situations in more complex ways. An example of this is becoming a wine connoisseur. One starts with a vague recognition that there is something like wine. I have an eight-year-old kid, and he knows that there is such a thing as wine, but he thinks it is yucky. He knows of the existence of the substance, vaguely, but he does not have any ability to recognize that there is the red kind, and there is the white kind, and there is that kind in the middle. But as he gets older, if he follows the lead of his parents, he will get interested, and not only in that there is a white kind and a red kind, but that there are different kinds of white kinds, and that there are different kinds of red kinds, and that there are different grapes, and that they grow

in different places, and the same grape that grows in the low hills of Piemonte becomes stressed when it grows on the steep slopes of the Alps and tastes different. What are we doing? We are building a perceptual scaffolding that allows us to engage and experience something in a more in a more complex way, in this case tasting wine. Exactly the same idea can apply to the way that we engage and experience cultural differences. The DMIS models the stages through which we can move in developing more perceptual sophistication vis a vis cultural difference, towards the end of becoming more competent in sustaining mutual adaptation.

Briefly, the movement is from *Ethnocentrism* to *Ethnorealtivism* – from the experience of one's own culture as "central to reality" to experiencing one's own culture as one of many viable ways of coordinating experience in the world. The stages in Ethnocentrism are: 1) *Denial* – failing to perceive the existence or the relevance of a thing to one's own context, such as not seeing how wine might be relevant to a dining experience, or how culture might be relevant to computer chip production; to 2) *Defense* – perceiving the existence of a thing, but negatively, such as my son thinking that wine is yucky, or in the case of culture, organizing one's experience in a polarized way such that "we are the good guys and they are the bad guys", but sometimes in Reversal where <u>we</u> are the bad guys and they are the good guys, for example as in internalized colonialism where nondominant groups exalt the superiority of the dominant culture, or when dominant culture people take on the cause of oppressed people in a polarized way; to 3) *Minimization* – focusing on shared human experience and universal values, where prejudice is reduced and tolerance increased by emphasizing our common humanity or assumedly universal values, as defined by us.

A main point of this presentation is this: moving to the end of Ethnocentrism not a sustainable condition; it is necessary but not sufficient to recognize that we are all just human. And it is both unsustainable and disrespectful of diversity to assert that there are universal values (religious or secular) that just happen to be <u>our</u> values but that we are sure apply to everyone in the world. Of course we need to recognize our common humanity overcome the worst of racism, sexism, and genocidal violence. But it is still ethnocentric to say "Ah, we're so tolerant! Oh, look

at our commonalities! Deep down everybody is pretty much like us, or at least they want to be." These ideas are deeply irritating to people who are proudly different than whoever is making the assertion of similarity. In addition to the instability caused by this irritation, Minimization does not withstand the next demagogue who comes along, or the next terrorist attack that occurs, in which case we fall back to Defense and say "Well, except for those people, they're animals, we should kill them!" And then we slowly cycle our way back to Minimization, and somebody wins the Nobel peace prize for saying, once again, "Look at our commonalities; look at how we are all just basically human." As far as I know, no one has won the peace prize for asserting that people are really profoundly different from one another in their experience of the world, and that the difference is a necessary and good thing.

We need to move on. And moving on, in terms of this model anyway, is moving into Ethnorelativism. The first of these more interculturally conscious stages is the *Acceptance* of cultural difference. Acceptance does not mean agreement with whatever the difference is – it just means accepting that there is more than one viable way of being in the world. At base, Acceptance means attributing equal human complexity (not just similarity) to people of different cultural groups. This is not an obvious or trivial thing to do, because it demands that we consciously overcome most of our species history. Up until fairly recently, and even now to a large degree, we lived in groups that tried to avoid contact with groups that were different. If we couldn't avoid the contact, we tried to convert (assimilate) them into our group, so they wouldn't be so different. If that proved inconvenient, we killed them. How far away from this history are we?

The prevailing notion of civilization at the turn of the last century was a kind of pyramidal structure. Civilized people at the top of the pyramid belonged there because of their inherent superiority or evolutionary development (culturally, socially, physically, etc.). Below them were the barbarians who, if they could be converted to civilization (through colonization, for instance), had a chance of being fully human. But the next level down consisted of savages, who were intractably less than human and who therefore could be exploited, enslaved, and, if necessary, killed. In an attempt to counteract this idea of "social Darwinism," the

anthropologist Franz Boas and his famous students Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead constructed the idea of *cultural relativism.* In that view, nobody is more primitive than anybody else; we are all equally civilized, but in different contexts. There are not more primitive or more civilized people; Picasso's painting is not a higher form of art than Native American Hopi sand painting; Beethoven's symphonies are not a higher form of music than Peruvian flute music. These are just different manifestations of equally complex worldviews, according to the precepts of cultural relativity. To move beyond Minimization and the end of Ethnocentrism, we need to accept cultural relativism. Over a century has now elapsed, and we should be at least familiar with these ideas. Yet they keep eluding us – we keep falling back into the idea that some people are really not as civilized (and by implication, not as human) as we are. I am not saying *us* more than anybody else. Cutting people's heads off on television is pretty easy to attribute to inhumanity, but so is anonymous and indiscriminate aerial bombing. None of us can make or act on the allegation of inferior humanity, and survive.

The move to Acceptance and greater intercultural consciousness is fraught with ethical ambiguity. Part of what we are doing by accepting the equal humanity of others is to accept that fundamentalist religious groups who chop off the heads of unbelievers are equally human to those of us who find that behavior reprehensible. As I said before, acceptance of equal humanity is not agreement with reprehensible behavior, but neither is it a demand for passivity and inaction. In fact, we must act in the world; failure to act is still a consequential action. So how can we act in the face of reprehensible behavior? How do we (all) do so in a way that is respectful of the equal humanity of the other, without imposing our values in the name of superior civilization? Only recently have institutions come into being whose primary purpose is to facilitate respectful but also decisive international and intercultural action, such as the United Nations, the European Union, the International Court of Justice or the International Criminal Court. These and other consenses of nations and peoples create notions like human rights and war crimes and say "this is pretty much the way things should be according to a wide range of people, and while we respect your humanity, we nevertheless collectively insist that you don't do certain

things, and here are the consequences if you do." It is not a question of choosing to make things happen or not; things are going to happen anyway, perpetrated in the name of something. The question is: how can people collectively make things happen that serve the collective interest of living in the global environment we have created? It is unlikely this will happen automatically, since it demands of us a level of consciousness and intention that we as a species have not heretofore exercised very consistently.

Building on Acceptance, the next stage of development is *Adaptation* – the ability to generate appropriate, authentic behavior in different cultural contexts. Such behavior does not result from following lists of do's and don'ts or from cross-cultural skills training. Authentic behavior is always based on the feeling of the situation – a "sense of appropriateness" of particular behavior in particular contexts. This is how we know how to act in our own culture – not from a list of correct behaviors (except maybe etiquette), but from an unconscious competence based on our cultural experience. When the goal is to generate authentic, appropriate behavior in a different cultural context, we need first to seek to move our experience into that cultural context. We need to ask questions such as, "What do people pay attention to in that culture? What status people have, or what they've accomplished? What people say, or how people act?" These and a myriad of similar questions can allow us to shift our perception into categories that are more like those of the other culture, and in so doing, to shift our experience into that context. Then, and only then, can we authentically generate appropriate behavior.

We already know how to shift our experience, since we do it every time we read a novel or watch a movie. We allow our perception to be guided into different contexts, and we then have different experiences. This is called *aesthetic empathy* and it is the basis of our joy in engaging art. We also know how to generate alternative behavior. For instance, when you talk to your grandmother, I imagine you do so differently than you do to your parents or your spouse. If you do not, you probably have a compulsive disorder. So, you are talking differently to your grandmother; does that mean you are being authentic with her and not authentic with your parents or with your partner? Probably not, probably you are being

completely authentic with her, but also authentic with your partner. We can do that because we normally have a *repertoire of behavior* that allows us to behave differently in different situations within our own culture. We are simply extending the concept to include alternative cultural behavior, much as a bi- or multicultural person is able to shift between two or more alternative sets of authentic behavior.

By applying intercultural consciousness, we can choose to expand our repertoire of cultural behavior and thus to behave adaptively in a different cultural context. If this is a one-way process, it might make us more effective in that context. However, if it is a two-way process, if it is mutual adaptation, the process generates the virtual third cultures that add value to organizations and societies. At first, this process of mutual adaptation is necessarily conscious – it is not what we do automatically, and it needs to be actively chosen and facilitated. However eventually we become unconsciously competent at making the cultural shifts, and the interculturally appropriate behavior happens automatically. In effect, it becomes part of our identity, either personally or organizationally. This is what I call *Integration* – the sustainable condition of including cultural context into decision making and being able to act ethically across cultural contexts.

Empathy and Contextual Ethical Commitment

I will conclude my remarks today with some comments of developing intercultural empathy and ethicality. Years ago I wrote an article called "Overcoming the Golden Rule" that was widely disseminated (by pre-internet standards). The golden rule is, as you recall, "do onto others what you would have done onto you", or "treat other people the way you would like to be treated". Right? Sounds good! Something like the golden rule is in most major religions. But in modern multicultural times, we need to ask, "Why would other people want to be treated the way you want to be treated?" Leave aside that you do not want to be killed so you shouldn't kill other people… ok, good idea! But beyond that, to make the golden rule work we need to assume that other people are basically like us – it is the assumption of similarity that we met in Minimization.

The golden rule encourages us to try to understand other people sympathetically, by which I mean attempting to understand another person by putting yourself in their position – "how I'd feel if I were in your shoes." For instance, if I want to understand how you are feeling about this talk so far, I could imaginatively put myself in your position, seat myself in your chair, look back at myself and exclaim "Brilliant! Fantastic! What a great presentation! I love every word." Who am I finding out about when I put myself in this position? Not you; I am finding out about <u>me</u> (in an idealized self-confident condition!). And why do I think that finding out about me is telling me anything about you? Because I am making the assumption of similarity: I am assuming that you and I are sufficiently similar to one another that I can assume that if I put myself in your position, then I would understand how you feel.

Of course, the reason the golden rule is so popular is that it often works – particularly with your friends. And why does it work with your friends? Because you chose your friends to be like you. This is consistent with *attraction studies* in psychology, where study after study shows that if you attribute ten characteristics to yourself, and those ten characteristics are given to ten fictional people, one of whom has all of the same ten characteristics, another has nine, one eight, seven, six, ... down to zero characteristics in common with you, and you would have then to rank order of those people in terms of who you want to spend time with, how do you suppose it goes? Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, ... we are attracted to similarity, except – interestingly – for the people we marry. There the studies show that we tend to select for difference rather than similarity. So the golden rule works with your friends, because they are similar to you. It also works as an alternative to bigotry and prejudice: you do not want somebody to be a bigot against you and so it works pretty well to say "well, don't be bigoted against other people." The golden rule fails, however, in marriage and at work. Why? Because you did not chose the person you are married to on the basis of similarity, and generally speaking, you do not choose the people you work with. In fact, if you are in the position of hiring workers and you choose only similar people, you may run afoul of legal sanctions! In DMIS terms, the golden rule is a Minimization strategy. It works to reduce Defense,

and it works in actually homogeneous situations. When it is used outside of these purposes, the golden rule creates or at least helps to maintain the unsustainable condition of Minimization.

In situations of difference, and for the purpose of increasing intercultural consciousness, the golden rule fails. What happens when I treat you the way I'd like to be treated and you don't respond the way I'd respond? Do I realize my mistake in assuming similarity and try a different strategy? Probably not. I am more likely to think that there is something wrong with you. I employ the lead rule: do unto others as they deserve to have done to them – treat other people the way they deserve to be treated. How you deserve to be treated depends on the explanation I have for why you don't respond well to the golden rule. If I think that you are unaware of the rule, I may seek to *educate* you – to explain how my preferred behavior is the best one for you. If you refuse to be educated in this way, I may shift to the explanation that there is something wrong with you – you must have some kind of mental problem. Then I can *therapize* you; typically that means that I can exercise patience and say things like "there, there, you'll get over it, eventually you'll see the light, etc.…". And if they do not get over it, then I can assume that you are engaged in bad behavior with a malevolent intent, and I can punish you in some way.

What we'd like to do instead is shift to the *platinum rule*. The platinum rule is: do onto others as they would have done onto them; or at least be aware of how people would like to be treated, and be prepared to explain why you are not doing it. So, if people say that they like to dress in a particular way that shows their commitment to a religious principle, but they are trying to operate in a society that has decided to have public spaces in which that dress is not allowed… OK. All societies operate by the majority or some other dominant group of people deciding what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Either formally or informally, such rules will be imposed on everyone in the society. The question is: how can that be done respectfully in the face of disagreement? In other words: how can one avoid applying the lead rule – "you stupid people don't understand how important this is!" – in favor of using the platinum rule –"I recognize how this is an important thing to you, and here is how we – together – can try to come up with a solution for this, that

is respectful to you and your custom, but nevertheless operates within this social context." The platinum rule is based on the idea that people are different and that difference is good, but recognizes that action must still be coordinated in some way. In other words, it seeks to reconcile unity and diversity.

The strategy for understanding others associated with the platinum rule is *empathy.* Empathy demands that I try to take another person's perspective, not that I merely put myself in his or her position. And that is another whole story, because when I try to take another's perspective, I cannot unconsciously project my own experience onto the event. I have to consciously try to understand how the other is potentially different from me. In other words, I need to attribute equal complexity to the other, and go through the trouble of trying to understand how her or she might be perceiving and experiencing the situation differently from me.

Obviously, when we say we want to appreciate cultural difference and engage in mutual adaptation, we need to use empathy and the platinum rule. But returning to the earlier discussion about Acceptance and action, how do we employ empathy when inevitable conflict rises? How can we act definitively in ways that are respectful of differing views? In conflictual situations that demand action, we usually have not developed any alternative to the imposition of absolute standards, either in secular or sacred terms. The absolute standards might be secular principles that are seen as the ultimate of human development, such as human rights or free speech, or they might be sacred values that are taken to be universal – God's word in one form or another. When standards are imposed in these terms, they are inherently disrespectful of the difference involved in the conflict. Yet they continue to be invoked because too often the only alternative is a kind of extreme relativism in which no definitive action is possible – "whatever." Societies and organizations cannot run on the basis of "whatever." But if the only alternative to *whatever* is the imposition of universal values, societies and organizations will be unable to reconcile unity and diversity.

William Perry's model of cognitive and ethical development, especially with Lee Knefelkamp's additions, offers a direction towards addressing this conundrum. Like the DMIS, the Perry Scheme is a developmental sequence. In the initial stages of

seeking truth, there is an absolute right and wrong that is given by an authority, frequently parents, or church figures, or others. In the face of differing truths such as might be encountered in higher education, people may develop *multiplicity*, which is the *whatever* position. It is the position of having lost absolute truth but having no alternative. As long as we are seeking truth, we oscillate between *absolutism and multiplicity* in the same way that we cycle between *Defense* and *Minimization*. To break out of these oscillations, both the DMIS and the Perry Scheme require an epistemological development – a paradigm shift that allows perception to be processed in a different way. That shift is from an absolutist position, through a relativist position, to a constructivist position. In the relativist position, what the DMIS labels as Acceptance and Knefelkamp calls *Contextual Relativism,* the assumed goodness of something is necessarily seen in context. We move towards the epistemological position that values such as freedom of expression are good <u>in context</u>. While we might think those secular ideas are the acme of human development, others are constructing the idea that following God's word is the acme of human development. We do not have to say which one of those is true, we just need to recognize that they exist in a context and are consequential to the people in that context.

Perry's stages of *Commitment in Relativism* address the question that I've posed throughout this talk: how can we act in definitive ways that coordinate meaning and action, that support unity of purpose in a way that is respectful to disagreement and thus incorporates difference into the dialectic of unity and diversity? In DMIS terms, we need to engage in mutual adaptation to create third cultures. Perry adds that to do that, we need to commit ourselves to an action <u>in the face of viable alternatives</u>. So, we encounter multiple opinions, we encounter multiple perspectives, and we encounter and develop multiple commitments to values. In other words, we construct a way of being in the world that respects the viable alternative of the other, and yet moves forward into our commitment. Assuming it is a mutual adaptation, others are also moving toward their commitment, but with equal respect for the viability of our commitment. The result

is a third culture that ideally incorporates value from both positions in a synergistic way.

Although the ideal is third culture, and in most circumstances that is a very achievable goal, some circumstances may preclude the mutual adaptation from occurring. Usually this happens when one party to a disagreement thinks they are absolutely right based on an absolute truth, and the other party is absolutely wrong. In other words, one side (or maybe both sides) denies the viability of the other position. Assuming the disagreement is consequential, judgments must be made and action taken. But judgments should be made with the recognition of contextual goodness. Religious zealots who are chopping off the heads of infidels think they are doing a good thing. Why? Before a consortium of people in the world mount a campaign to stop the zealots from doing that, we need to understand why people believe that beheading infidels is good… not why the action is an evil thing being done by animals, but why it is a good thing being done by equally complex human beings. Once we understand that we can make a commitment. In my opinion, that commitment should be to stop any form of genocide, forcibly if necessary. But if we try to stop people from doing something before we understand why they think it is a good thing, or if we deny their equal humanity, then we are engaging in the same kind of hegemonic, colonialist, imperialistic imposition we have always engaged in; we impose our truth because we have the power to do so. And then we are back to the pyramid of civilization. The alternative is to acknowledge the viability of the other's position. In this case, the world has survived under religious zealots for a lot longer than it has been run by post-enlightenment secularists, so it is at least a historically viable position. But does that mean that we should agree to the world continuing to be that way? No. By being knowledgeable and respectful of the alternative context before we try to change it, we have exercised our responsibility to be interculturally conscious. This is the road to sustainable global citizenship.