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2004

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### ScholarWorks Citation

Hassan, F. (2004). Cultural diversity and the prospect of peacebuilding through sharing a we-world. In B. N. Setiadi, A. Supratiknya, W. J. Lonner, & Y. H. Poortinga (Eds.), *Ongoing themes in psychology and culture: Proceedings from the 16th International Congress of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology*. [https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/iaccp\\_papers/273](https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/iaccp_papers/273)

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## CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND THE PROSPECT OF PEACEBUILDING THROUGH SHARING A WE-WORLD

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First of all, allow me to extend to all of you a warm welcome to the city of Yogyakarta; a city unique in its way of juxtaposing tradition and modernity, that is to say: a city in which preservative and progressive forces intertwine; indeed, a city of relatively peaceful coexistence of the old and the new. Even within the confines of this conference you may soon notice the compromising atmosphere between tradition and modernity; however, it will be more interesting to experience whenever you have the opportunity to wander through the streets and alleys of Yogyakarta. I hope that during your stay in Yogyakarta, you may find sources of inspiration to pursue further studies in issues pertaining to cultural encounters and cross-cultural manifestations.

Cultural diversity is a reality as old as mankind; more than merely a natural being, man is a cultural being; this is in essence the human reality. There is no culture-free human society; every human being is part of a society as culture bearer. It is this reality that turns human beings into an existence characterized by perpetual self-transcendence, *i.e.* a being that never settles down securely in a *status praesens* but tends to continuously project him/herself into a future, however uncertain. This is to say that a unique characteristic of being human is the ability to transcend the real (present) into the possible (future), and this is a consequence of man as a cultural being, *i.e.* a being guided by ideals and values. It is in this realm of ideals and values that the notion of development manifests itself as a human phenomenon, individually as well as collectively.

Civilization is the actualization of the development of a society within the confines of a particular culture. Human history shows that the extinction of one means that the other eventually ceases to exist too. Culture-and-civilization manifests itself not only in a relatively long time-span, but it is also space-bound, *i.e.* encompassing a certain territoriality of

human societies. Thus civilization is the actualization of human development rooted in a particular cultural matrix. Hence, there is no such reality that can justifiably be labeled "global culture" or "universal civilization", and there is neither any validity in comparing cultures and civilizations in terms of one being "inferior" or "superior" to others. Cultural encounters should, therefore, be insight-promoting experiences that will eventually enrich us with more awareness and better understanding of cultural diversity as a reality in human existence.

Since its early days human history depicted traces of various modalities of cultural encounters among distinct culture-bearers respectively anchored in the reality of cultural diversity. Cultural diversity can be a source of mistrust and misunderstandings resulting in some form of conflict, but it also may provide an exposure for the development of mutual respect and understanding. Indeed, cultural encounters provide an aperture for us to discover other ideals and values adhered to by other individuals and societies "distinct from ours". Here we find the essence of cultural awareness, *i.e.* by discovering "others" culturally different from "us". Culture is neither an individual feature nor a personal treasure; culture is a source of reference shared by members of the society concerned as culture bearers; in short, culture is a collectively shared domain. Therefore, cultural identity is also a collective awareness of being distinct from others. Cultural identity pertains to the awareness of belonging to a particular *Wirheit*, a We-mode of existence.

At this junction I would like to invite you to join me in revisiting some great philosophers of the past two centuries, who have contributed to the introduction of the We-mode of human existence. The essence of their thoughts is that no one can claim that the world is merely his or hers. The world is a shared world constituted by a union of "You" and "I", in the singular as well as the plural sense. This is the essence of Feuerbach's (1922) statement that the human world is conditioned by "*die Einbeit von Ich und Du*" (= the union of I and You, p.60). Even the individualistic philosopher of the 'wild wisdom', Nietzsche (1966) confirmed that 'the You is older than the I' (p. 60), a statement comparable to the comment of Buber (1937) that "through the Thou a man becomes I" (p.28). These statements confirm that the I is a later discovery –experienced as an *a posteriori* awareness–, namely after 'my discovery of the Other as someone distinct from myself'. Another philosopher affirming

that the human world is a shared world was M. Heidegger (1937). His basic formula of human existence is "*Mensch-sein ist Mit-sein*" (p.28), and consequently "*Mensch-welt ist Mit-welt*"; hence "*Alles Dasein ist Mitsein*." This leads us to the conclusion that human existence is always in a world he shares with others, a world of togetherness (*Mit-Welt*); in fact a We-world.

Hence being human is ontologically speaking being-in-relatedness, *i.e.* being engaged in various modes of discourses with others sharing his world, including his dialogues with a particular "You" representing a transcendental or supra-rational Being as taught by revealed religions and other belief systems. One must not overlook the possibility of being preoccupied by a dialogue with oneself, in which one finds oneself being split into an I and a You, such as in the processes of introspection or self-evaluation.

No one can escape from the fact that he/she is always part of a discourse, with himself and or with others; there is no sanctuary for an escapist to isolate himself in order to avoid being engaged with others; in his solitary state the escapist will eventually find a dialogue partner. When Nietzsche felt being disturbed by the maddening crowd he escaped it and went to Sills Maria in search of total solitude. But instead of enjoying his self-imposed exile in order to be alone and separated from the masses, he suddenly became aware of waiting to be engaged in a discourse; it is as if the solitary "I" is craving for a "You" to talk to. The introductory statement Nietzsche (1966) made in one of his major works explicitly reflects this experience: "When Zarathustra was thirty years old he left his home and the lake of his home and went to the mountains. Here he enjoyed his spirit and his solitude, and for ten years did not tire of it. But at last came a change over his heart, and one morning he rose with the dawn, stepped before the sun, and spoke to it thus: "You great star, what would your happiness be, had you not those for whom you shine?...." (p.9). While in Yogyakarta, I would like you to know, that a renowned sociologist of the Gadjah Mada University, the late Umar Kayam (1992), who passed away earlier this year, published his collection of essays under the title *Mangan ora mangan kumpul* (*mangan* = eat, *ora* = not, *kumpul* = together) which can be translated as "(Whether we) eat or not, (as long as we are) together." These illustrations can be multiplied by various other examples, and all will lead to the conclusion that the

meaning of human existence is inherent to his/her participation in a world he/she shares with others, a *Mit-welt*, i.e. a We-World.

We have had a long history of a psychology of the I; there is nothing wrong about being Ego-centered, but psychology must not overlook the fact that any Ego is an existential center, conscious of being related to others. Hence any Ego is significant only through being engaged in dialogues, and as such part of a *Mit-sein*. At this junction, I will introduce you to two Indonesian words, *Kita* and *Kami*; both meaning We. However, both refer to two distinct manifestations of togetherness, indicating two We-modes. *Kita* is used as a first person plural, the constituents of which maintain their respective individual identities. *Kita* is inclusive in nature; none of its constituting subjects are excluded. It is a manifestation of being-together in *optima forma*, with the inclusion of each and every subject and concurrently without the intention of excluding others outside it. It is a mode of togetherness without any reference to others existing outside its boundaries; it is indeed "We" or "Us" without neither reference nor regard to any existence of "They" or "Them."

In a *Kita* mode of togetherness every constituent is free to develop him/herself without being inhibited by his/her participation. This does not mean that *Kita* is a conflict-proof mode of togetherness. In fact, the *Kita* mode allows differences to develop amongst its constituting subjects; it is not a togetherness in which all constituents are always in juxtaposition to each other; it is neither a togetherness that merely can express itself collectively in unison. However, differences (of, for example, opinions and attitudes) between its constituents manifest themselves in an atmosphere of what philosopher Jaspers (1932) called *liebender Kampf*, – a "struggle" characterized by reciprocal care and mutually insight-promotion as well as self-enhancement. Indeed, *Kita* is a mode of togetherness that opens an opportunity for self-actualization of the subjects involved. It is a *Mit-sein* with an atmosphere in which genuine and creative dialogues between the engaging subjects may further develop, and it is a *Mit-welt* in which nobody of its constituents is marginalized or alienated; in short, it is an all-inclusive togetherness constituting a shared world.

Let us now turn to *Kami*. In this mode the constituents do not primarily exist as subjective entities, but are rather reduced to some shared identity. This means that self actualization in the fullest sense of the constituents in a *Kami* is inhibited. *Kami* is a mode of solidarity in which

its participating constituents are expected to reduce their personal Selves in order to affirm a shared identity. Participation in a *Kami* is only possible by the readiness of its constituents to submit to a shared identity and, consequently, being reduced as personal Selves. The *Kami* mode affirms its shared identity concurrently by excluding others outside it. In fact, the essence of a *Kami* mode is the awareness of a shared We that *per se* excludes others; in other words, the *Kami* mode is a We that maintains the demarcation separating between 'those who belong' and 'those who do not belong' to it.

*Kami* is in fact a way of affirming an "in-group" and concurrently excluding an "out-group." For example, members of a political party are rallying themselves as *Kami*, consciously excluding others who are non-members; the same is the case with a student fraternity, a labor union, a platoon of soldiers, an ethnic entity, a racial group, a religious community, a nation. However among the constituents themselves, those *Kami's* can also share an inclusive collective awareness as a *Kita*, disengaged from and disinterested in the significance of others' existence as outsiders or out-groups. *Kita* and *Kami* are indeed two distinct modes of togetherness, but they are both confirming that human existence is characterized by *Mit-sein*. Whether the We is experienced as *Kita* or *Kami* depends on the absence or presence of objectifying or objectified others.

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Indonesia consists of a multiplicity of ethnic groups with their respective languages as well as customs and traditions; Indonesians adhere to various belief-systems. Indonesia's cultural manifestation is indeed pluralistic, as reflected by the national motto "*Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*" (Diverse but One). When proclaiming our independence we say "*Kami bangsa Indonesia...*," a statement directed to all non-Indonesians, *i.e.* the community of nations. But when teaching history to his Indonesian pupils, an Indonesian teacher will say "*Kita bangsa Indonesia...*" for "We Indonesians..." The Balinese, the Madurese, the Ambonese, the Banjarese, the Buginese, the Sundanese, the Javanese, etc. are ethnic groups, each aware of being *Kami's* sharing a collective identity. However, as Indonesians they transcend the awareness of being *Kami's* into an all-inclusive *Kita* as Indonesians, which may turn in a *Kami* again

whenever it is in some way engaged to the perception of those who are non-Indonesians. This oscillation between *Kita* and *Kami* is a constant in human experience; thus human existence cannot be alienated from a We-world (*Mit-sein*), be it in a *Kita* or *Kami* mode.

Both modes of togetherness, *Kita* and *Kami*, are applicable in studies pertaining to societies as culture bearers. Culture is undoubtedly a very difficult concept to define. In some cases definitions of culture and civilization tend to overlap. Some may even consider it insignificant to delineate the distinction between the two realms, since both are just two sides of the same coin. Personally, I tend to adhere to the description mentioned earlier, namely that civilization is the actualization of the development of a society within the confines of a particular culture. No culture persists to function without people in a society as its bearers, as is evident in the rise and decline of culture in the history of mankind. Most definitions on culture cover to some extent the issue of values as reference for human social behavior and conduct. Cultural values can be described as idealized virtues worth pursuing to be transformed into reality; in this sense, value is perceived as a leading motive (*Leit-motiv*) in human conduct.

Consequent to the understanding of culture as a social phenomenon, we can as well speak of a particular culture as a manifestation of a We-world. Therefore, belonging to a cultural domain also means being part of a togetherness in which the *Kita* and *Kami* modes may oscillate, depending on whether the constituents experience it as an all-inclusive mode of togetherness or as one that *per se* excludes others. This may be one of the issues in studies of cultural encounters in the human world characterized by cultural diversity. Cultural diversity is and will continue to be a permanent feature of the human society. I am aware of ideas about the possible impact of the contemporary globalization process that it eventually might result in a universal human culture. I cannot endorse this view. It seems to me that cultural diversity will perpetuate as a unique manifestation of mankind; I cannot imagine the emergence of a monolithic culture of mankind.

There are of course exchanges of influence in encounters of diverse cultural entities; however, such reciprocities will not end up in a uniform and homogenous culture, because every culture is rooted in its long historic process of transmission from generation to generation acting as

its bearers. Global interaction and interdependence cannot be taken as a signal to anticipate the emergence of a global culture. Every culture is a historicity in itself, and this is closely linked to a collective memory of a particular society as culture bearer. Since there is no such thing that we can identify as "collective global memory" based on global collective history and experience by mankind, it follows that images of a global culture must be mere fabrication. In this context, I tend to endorse the view presented by Smith (in Clark, 1997, p.29), namely that the elements of global culture owe "their origins and much of their appeal to the power and prestige of one or other of the great metropolitan power centers", and further "any globalization of culture, induced by international politics, is skin-deep and destined to pass away with the next shift in international power. It does not have the resilience of 'true' cultures, based on memory and history."

Having said this, I would directly add, that cultural diversity is not by itself a hindrance for sharing a We-world. Cultural diversity implies cultural freedom, which provides alternative ways of living. Cultural freedom leaves us free to choose ways and means in defining our basic needs to survive as a society. Cultural freedom allows us to inject meaning to our existence; it also acknowledges the right of any society as culture bearer to choose its own way of life. It is in the atmosphere of cultural freedom that cultural diversity contributes to the actualization of creative diversity (UNESCO, 1996). It is, therefore, a fallacy to perceive culture as an inhibiting force in the process of social change and development. The dynamic of every living culture is that it is a preservative as well as progressive force.

Cultural diversity as a reality of the human society should not be perceived on a "superior-inferior" polarity scale; there is no such thing as cultural hierarchy. Every culture is dignified in its own right, and as such it commands tolerance and respect. This seems to be the ethical dimension in cultural encounters. Genuine cultural encounters must be free from prejudice and intolerance. In his book with the very captive title "The Natural History of Stupidity", Taburi (1993) explained the difference between prejudice and intolerance. He insisted that prejudice is never innate. Children are prejudice-free until their elders instill it. While prejudice is something passive, intolerance is almost always active. Prejudice is a motive; intolerance is a propelling force. A prejudiced man will



refuse to settle in an area where a particular ethnic group lives; but an intolerant man tends to deny the right of that ethnic group to live at all. Prejudiced parents may refuse to send their children to a school, which is open for all races and religions; an intolerant man will do everything he can to deny the right of such schools to exist.

Genuine cultural encounters should not only lead towards mutual understanding, but also evolve a sense of empathy and reciprocal respect. If a cultural entity is in a sense a *Kami*-world, it does not mean that a cultural encounter cannot develop into a *Kita*-world. The former is maintained by existing as an exclusive togetherness, while the latter is one in which the concerned *Kamis* readily blend together to share a common aim with others. Again and again we will notice this phenomenon of oscillation between *Kita* and *Kami* as the two basic modes of togetherness. This means that cultural diversity is neither a hindrance nor inhibition for the establishment of a *Kita*. Different cultural entities can exist in a *Kita* mode as long as they find some common goals or ideals to be pursued. This is like the case of ethnic groups as *Kamis* transcending into nationhood as a *Kita*.

Allow me for a moment to side-step the discussion of cultural diversity and invite you to contemplate on the developing realities of religions as a rallying force for a We-world. I think that we all agree that in religions human beings are viewed as part of the total realm of God's creation. In one of his major works, Ernst Cassirer (1946) maintained the view that "life possesses the same religious dignity in its humblest and its highest forms" (p.83). The essence of religious experience is the same in all belief systems, which is the experience of being transcendently related to a Supreme Being. An important characteristic of the religious experience is that it implies an act of faith, based on *pathos* rather than on *logos*. Religious belief is not structured by logical reasoning; it is pre-logical and supra-rational. Hence it may be worth examining how much truism is reflected by the statement '*una est religio in rituum varietate*'. If all religions provide guidance for transcendence toward the Supreme Being, is there no *apertura* for all religions to share a We-world in a *Kita* mode?

Let me at this junction quote the famous Lebanese poet and philosopher Khalil Gibran (1949), who expressed in one of his works his vision as follows:

I love you worshipping in your church, kneeling in your temple, and praying in your mosque. You and I are children of one religion, for the varied paths of religion are but the fingers of the loving hands of the Supreme Being, extended to all, offering completeness of spirit to all, anxious to receive all (p.83).

Gibran's appeal may be interpreted as meaning "to whatever religion you belong as part of a *Kami*, let it also be possible for us to share a *Kita* as fellow human beings." In Gibran's view, one has the full right to be part of a *Kami* based on adherence to a particular belief system, but should at the same time be able to participate in a *Kita*, sharing a We-world with others of different religions. It is, of course, right and justified to affirm our collective identity by saying who we are according to our religious beliefs, similar to affirming our national or ethnic identities. However, one must also be able to liberate oneself in order to be able to share a We-world in a *Kita* mode.

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There are today too many disturbing realities involving the entire human world. It is a world that seems to be more prone to conflicts and confrontations. One may wonder, why — at this stage of human civilization — such an absurd concept of ethnic cleansing can be adopted as a matter of policy, *like* what happened in the Bosnian conflict before the turn of the century? How is it possible that Serbians, Croatians and Bosnians have been dragged into a violent and protracted triangular conflict based on ethnic and religious differences, costing the death of thousands of innocent human lives and the deterioration of centuries of civilization? Today we are still witnessing impressions of fire and flames disrupting the serenity of the panorama of Northern Ireland, mainly influenced by religious bifurcation between the conflicting parties. We Indonesians are also shocked by the protracted communal conflict in Ambon — an area with a long history of peace and harmony amongst its multi-religious population — that now tend to split the community into distinctly delineated entities. There are still many other cases on the international scene, indicating our failure to establish a We-world in a *Kita* mode.

Why do all those disruptions of peace and harmony tend to occur in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies? Why is mankind increasingly more prone to violent conflicts and confrontations? Are there no ideals or values we can share to aspire for? Or is it so that although there are universally acceptable ideals and values, a universal consensus is hard to reach because every *Kami* perceives it from different angles. If so, can the existing differences of perspectives not be overcome by dialogues to enhance mutual understanding? In this case, is it not possible to initiate a joint undertaking for the establishment of forums in which genuine dialogues may evolve in order to enable us to go beyond existing differences and diversities? Cognizant of those realities, the UN-General Assembly (United Nations, 1998) decided to proclaim the year 2001 as the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. This was preceded by the celebration of the International Year for the Culture of Peace the year before (2000) for which UNESCO served as lead agency and for the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010).

On the eve of the UN Millennium Summit (September 5, 2000) a Round Table was organized by the UN/UNESCO in which leaders from all continents assembled to share their views, experience and visions for a world peace. A consensus seems to be reached, namely that only dialogue can lead to a long-term understanding, reconciliation and world peace. However, after the Millennium Summit events in the world do not change for the better. Signals for peace and harmony more often than not seem more remote, and we again and again keep asking ourselves what actually went wrong with humankind. Violent conflicts — latent and actual — are scattered over the global panorama. Scientific advance and technological progress as the pride of human civilization still seem incapable to contribute effectively to endeavors leading towards the establishment of global peace and harmony. The UN's appeal for mutual confidence building measures in international relations has not produced the desired results yet. So many ideas and efforts have been proposed in order to initiate steps towards the establishment of global peace, and yet it still remains a utopia.

The UN has been preoccupied by initiatives for the maintenance of global peace, in efforts towards peace-making, peace-keeping and peace-building. Peace-making involves mostly nations engaged in war or other

forms of armed conflicts. Peace-keeping has been a UN preoccupation for a long time; UN peace-keeping forces, the well-known blue-beret forces, are deployed in various part of the world to maintain peace in areas prone to armed conflicts. The prolonged duration that those forces stay in conflict-prone areas, is itself a signal of the fragility of the peace that they help to maintain. Indeed, peace-keeping forces are generally engaged in the maintenance of a "hot peace" rather than a genuine one. The billions of dollars reserved for this purpose could have better been spent on the improvement of welfare in societies still plagued by ignorance, disease and poverty. It is undeniable that the UN has done a lot in the pursuit of global peace and harmony. However, it seems that the idea of peace and harmony in interactions between nations and cultures cannot be constructed merely within the confines of the UN and other international and formal forums.

The culture of peace must find its matrix in every cultural domain. The desire for peace as a value worth pursuing should be cultivated within societies as culture bearers. In other words, the construction of a culture of peace must begin "at home." Every society must be able to go beyond its modality as a *Kami* and turn into a *Kita* by sharing an all-encompassing We-world oriented towards human virtues, such as peace. If peace is indeed a universal human value, then it should be introduced as such within every cultural domain. This is to say that the construction of a culture of peace is feasible, if it is founded on a global matrix of cultures. Cultural diversity should not lead us towards conceiving bipolar discrepancies such as the still ongoing East-West bifurcation or "the West and the rest" as discussed by Samuel Huntington (1996) in his well-known treatise concerning the clash of civilizations. It should rather invite us towards active cultural encounters aimed at the promotion of reciprocal understanding and tolerance, and above all the enhancement of mutual trust and respect. Any pattern of *Kami*-centrism (such as ethno-, socio-, religio-centrism) that tends to act as a centripetal center while considering others as inferior cannot provide the foundation for a genuine dialogue of equals. I remember a philosopher warning us, that the opposite of a profound truth is not necessarily an error, but may possibly be another profound truth. This is especially true for intercultural dialogues.

The challenge we are facing today is whether we as scientists or members of the academic community can contribute to the actualization of ideas leading towards peacebuilding endeavors. Or are we too indifferent towards present-day realities in the world and do we fail in coping with challenges presented to humanity in general, such as, for example, the quest for global peace? If the culture of peace is what we all are striving for to construct, then the challenge is not merely a matter of science, but one of ethics. Peacebuilding is a matter concerning relations between man and his fellow human being, or between societies, nations and cultures. The ethical dimension of those interactions was reflected long ago by Montague's statement: "One's relation to one's fellow man is not a matter of science...but plainly and simply a matter of humanity" (1871, p.155). This means that our aspiration for peacebuilding must go hand-in-hand with our increased awareness of being ethically responsible for the constitution of a We-world in a *Kita*-mode. Peace should be our shared value to pursue and this should be transformed to concrete undertakings that transcend cultural diversity on the global scale. Only by making a grand leap over and beyond cultural diversity can we reach a stage in which peace as a universally shared value is conceivable.

Peacebuilding should be our common goal through genuine intercultural dialogues, free from prejudices and stereotypes. Prejudices and stereotypes are reductive perceptions about others; others are reduced and distorted into caricatures, and based on such distorted images of the interacting partners a genuine dialogue cannot take place. We must create a conducive atmosphere for a dialogue to be constructive and creative, conditioned by our readiness to jointly constitute an all-inclusive *Kita* mode of togetherness, that is to say: constituting a *Mit-sein* and sharing a *Mit-Welt*. By perceiving peacebuilding as an ethical challenge for humanity, we can go over and beyond our attachment to diverse *Kami*'s and move towards inhabiting a We-world in which peace as a universal human virtue becomes a common goal. Cultural diversity as a permanent feature of the human society should eventually evolve as a phenomenon of creative diversity. This will lead to enhancement of a quality of life, in which cultural freedom will further encourage harmonious cultural encounters.

I think we all believe that peace will not just come out of the blue; peace must be set as a common goal we all strive for. The impression so far is that peace is just an interval between wars or violent conflicts. The human society seems to be trapped in various *Kamfs* and still fails to constitute a *Kita* mode and sharing a We-world. Until we all are set to initiate genuine intercultural dialogues, peace will remain a distant dream. Having discussed the need for genuine dialogues in cultural encounters, free from images deformed by prejudices and stereotypes, I like to conclude by quoting President Mohammad Khatami of Iran in his presentation at the Round Table of the UN Millennium Summit: "Today it is impossible to bar ideas from freely traveling between cultures and civilizations in disparate parts of the world far away from each other. However, in the absence of dialogue among thinkers, scholars, intellectuals and artists from various cultures and civilizations, the danger of cultural homelessness seems imminent" (UNESCO, 2001, p. 25).

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