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A tension in going toward global citizenship

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Contents

- 1. Why interesting?
 2. What is global citizenship?
 3. The problematic tension
 - 6800 languages/cultures – need for multilateral understanding
 4. Language/culture preservation/loss
 5. We also have a need for mutual understanding
 4. Some ways to preserve languages and cultures combined with mutual understanding across linguistic and cultural borders
 5. Four types of investigation and research which are especially relevant to appreciate the common basis we have for languages and cultures
 6. Concluding remarks

Why interesting?

- There are many problems to be solved in striving for global citizenship
- The first maybe is to try to answer the basic question of what global citizenship is and what can be entailed by the notion.
- Another key problems is
 - the tension between two globally connected desires**
 - language and culture preservation and
 - global mutual understanding.

What is “global citizenship”?



What is “global citizenship”?

- Citizenship normally implies membership in a nation state, this is linked to rights and obligations of its citizens
- Besides the UN, there is no global state
- Besides the UN list of “human rights” (which implicitly and sometimes explicitly is not agreed on by all states), there is no such list yet.
- There is no list of “global human obligations”
- “Global citizenship” therefore at present is a fairly vague normative goal
- A problem in moving toward a more concrete notion is to harmonize
- the global need for agreement and mutual understanding with the global need for diversity
- My presentation deals with some aspects of this problem

The problem – **Desire 1**

Earth has around 6800 languages and at least as many cultures
Each language codifies at least partly distinct conceptualizations, different perspectives and views of the world, in this way maintaining cultures. In fact, **this diversity is an important part of the human contribution to the world**



The Challenge of language/culture death

- Under the pressure of globalization many small languages and cultures are disappearing (see, for example, Crystal (2000), Allwood (2006) or Harrison (2007))
- Left, will only be languages and cultures that have strong financial and military resources (money and guns). Right now, it looks like English and Chinese
- Even though such a reduction could make the task of creating mutual understanding easier, since it would make the number of different languages and cultures smaller, the loss of encapsulated linguistic and cultural human creativity is so great that the advantages do not outweigh the disadvantages.
- How can we preserve our languages and cultures?

However language/culture differences are not easy to overcome

One of the challenges

- the belief in most cultures, that what has been codified in their own language is **the real and normal view** of the world - combined with the belief that their own culture is central.

This can, for example, be seen in how maps often place the country of the production of the map in the middle (compare Sino-centric with Eurocentric maps) or in names of countries like Zhong Guo (the middle kingdom).

Such beliefs often mean that other ways of experiencing and classifying the world are seen as less real, peripheral and perhaps not worthy of serious attention.



Besides preservation –

Desire 2 - We also have a need for mutual understanding

At the same time, humans with different languages/cultures are increasingly interconnected. In principle we can go from one place to another on our planet within a matter of days or hours.

Especially the internet provides us with a fantastic potential for vastly increased human mutual understanding (and also a potential for the opposite – lack of understanding, misunderstanding, fake news and hate speech).

Both transportation and communication are continuously made use of in areas like business, science, tourism, mass-media, politics and migration.



Two partly incompatible goals?

- 1. We want to **preserve the 6800 languages and cultures on Earth**. This leads to efforts and initiatives aimed at sustaining linguistic and cultural diversity but it also leads to sustaining problems of understanding between the people who use the languages and live in the cultures.
- 2. We want to have **global intercultural and inter-linguistic understanding**, in order to facilitate international peace and cooperation between people in the different language and culture groups. But this might lead to loss of languages and cultures.
- At first glance it seems as if these two goals are incompatible. They probably are - But we may ask if the tension between them can be **mitigated**? Let us consider some of the possible mitigating factors.

Languages and cultures have holistic perspectives

- This challenge is not made simpler if we realize that, in fact, every language and culture has a holistic perspective on its own way of life and relation to Nature.
- The question is **how we can gain an even more holistic perspective**, bridging over existing languages and cultures, creating a new holistic perspective out of what are already holistic perspectives (a whole of wholes) for future world citizenship.
- A further challenge, complicating the issue even more, is the fact that this has **to be done**, in one (or a few) of the 6800 languages (presently probably **English**) which will impose its (their) own ways of classification on the other languages and cultures.

“Unity in diversity”

- in brief, the challenge of creating better Human understanding, while preserving human languages and cultures
- can be described as the challenge of “unity in diversity” and of finding unity without losing diversity.

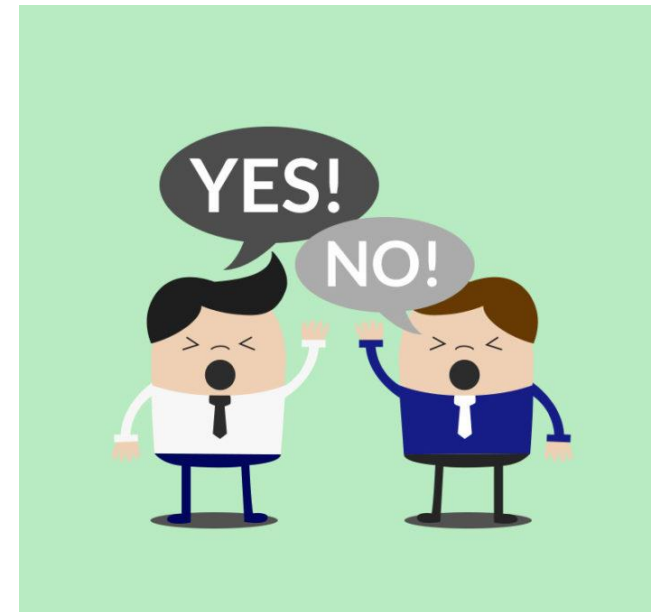
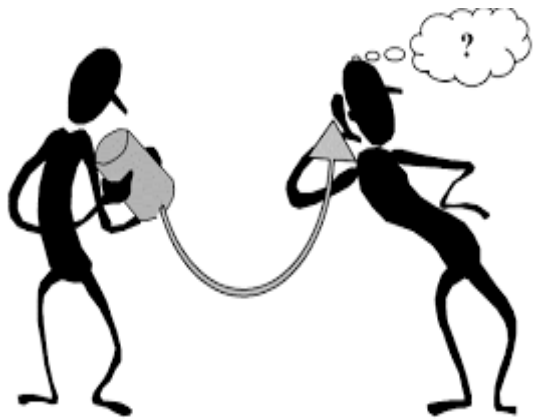


We need mutual understanding while preserving linguistic and cultural diversity

- I will base the discussion on the assumption that we try to obtain mutual understanding while preserving as many of our languages and cultures as possible.
- There is obviously **much work that is needed to be done to meet the challenge of maintaining diversity**
- but **today, I will focus on the opposite problem**, i.e. the challenge of what we can do **to increase mutual understanding** without harming our multicultural and multilinguistic diversity

One of the ways is through communication and understanding,

**We need to increase our possibilities of mutual understanding
So that we can avoid lack of understanding,
misunderstanding, conflict and loss of languages and cultures**



Combination or resignation

- So, we have an interesting and challenging tension between a great potential for a **rich multifaceted shared understanding**, where the **conceptualizations and perspectives given by different cultures are somehow combined with each other**
- **Or the opposite resignation**, where we think the differences are too great to be overcome and that we have to resign ourselves to less ambitious goals.
- Perhaps we can build on existing practices and properties that do not threaten diversity and see if a joint *modus vivendi* can be developed

Some ways to preserve languages and cultures combined with mutual understanding across linguistic and cultural borders

- **1. Translation and interpretation** – Translation and interpretation allowing preservation of differences.
- To some extent this can also be achieved through machine translation (e.g. like Google or Deep L). Together with AI this will probably get successively better and cover more and more languages.



3. Training of ICC based on experience

- A. Availability of **training in ICC** covering orientation, experience and ability is important (e.g. visits to other countries, role play etc.)

- B. Opportunity for **influence and education** given by experienced **people, especially with multicultural and intercultural experience.** Today these influences are insufficient and not known well enough.

Profitting from the Ability of (interculturally, multiculturally experienced persons)



- **Persons who have multilingual and multicultural competence are essential. They are bridge builders between persons who have different languages codifying different conceptualizations and views of the world.**
- **They can in themselves provide a good basis for mutual understanding**
- **A human resource for mutual understanding (without loss of languages & cultures)**

4. Becoming Interculturally, multiculturally experienced persons ourselves (global citizens)

- We should try to become such bridge builders by becoming persons who have multilingual and multicultural experience and/or interlingual and intercultural experience. We should try to not only have a cognitive understanding of different conceptualizations and views of the world but **also an emotional-attitudinal tolerance and appreciation of life in other cultures**

”Cultures meet in music”?

or food?

Or?



More generally - How can we as individuals ourselves increase preservation of languages and cultures combined with possibilities to achieve mutual understanding?

We can do this by

- 1. Orientation and information** about differences and similarities between different nations, cultures and languages of Earth
- 2. Experience and appreciation** (becoming interculturally, multiculturally experienced and somewhat flexible and still inquisitive persons)
- 3. Ability** – becoming interculturally and multiculturally as well as interlingually and multilingually competent

Reflection

- Will translation, interpretation, shared beliefs, training of ICC, ability and experience of multilingual/multicultural persons

preserve languages and cultures only in the **short term** but in the **long term** still lead to cultural change and homogenization?

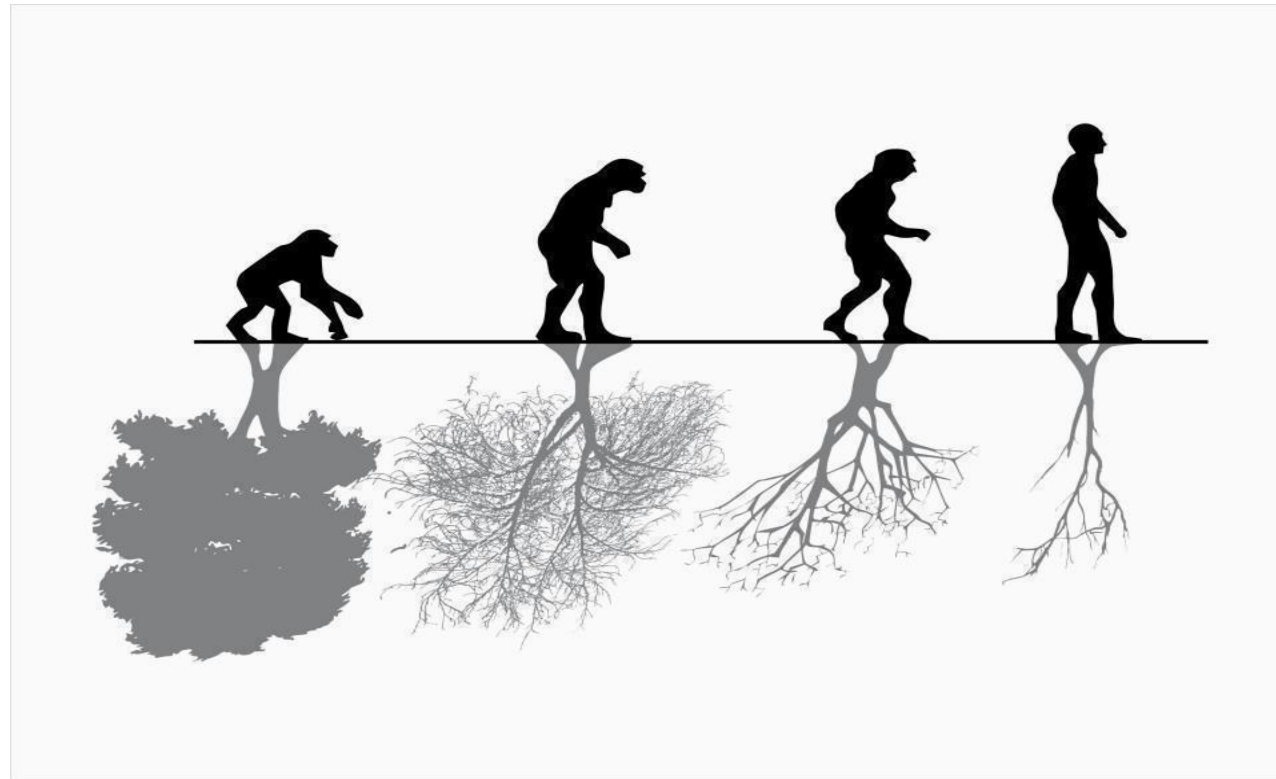
To deepen our understanding maybe we should try to find out more about the differences **and similarities** between human cultures **to appreciate to what extent we are already similar, without threatening diversity.**

This would **help mutual communication**/understanding as well as help us appreciate the nature of the differences and what they contribute

Four types of investigation and research which are especially relevant **to understand the common basis we have for languages and cultures**

1. Investigations and Research on **Human nature and biology** provides us with many shared features - basic needs, emotions, perception, intelligence, ability for language etc
2. Investigations and Research on the **ecology and environment of Earth**
3. Investigations and Research on **beliefs we could have in common**
4. Investigations and Research on **cultural and linguistic universals**, which we can use as a basis for increased mutual understanding

1. Investigations and Research on **Human nature and biology** provides us with many shared features- basic needs, emotions, perception, intelligence, ability for language etc.



Similarities between Humans

1. Basic similarities in perception, cognition, emotion and communication
2. Motivated rational agency
3. Basic needs
4. Certain ethical norms
5. Need to organize special stages of life (birth, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, old age, death)
6. Similar foci for values (culturally different evaluations)
7. Basic ways of producing food
8. Basic ways of providing shelter
9. Basic means and instruments for 7-8
10. Need for social organization

2. Investigations and Research on the **ecology and environment** of Earth

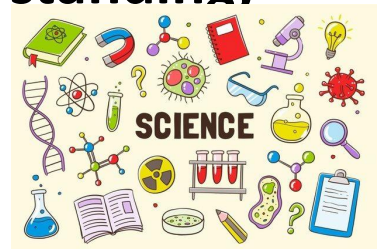
How can we achieve agreement on what to do for a common sustainable future?



3. Investigations and research on **beliefs we could have in common** – **what beliefs could we have in common?**

- 1) **Research on Religion** - most religions believe they are universal - the right way for everyone. However, they often don't accept each other, so they end up increasing differences. **Mysticism** – perhaps a hope
- 2) **Research on Political Ideologies** - most political ideologies also believe they are universal - the right way for everyone. However, they often don't accept each other, so, they also end up increasing differences. **Agreements** – perhaps a hope
- 3) **Biology** – Human nature provides us with many shared features- basic needs, emotions, perception, intelligence, ability for language etc.
- 4) **Agreements** – Human beings can meet and create agreements for how they should interact, e.g. The UN charter of Human rights. Hopefully without preceding wars.
- 5) **Science and research** – some research is universally accepted, especially natural science research and thus provides a basis for common human understanding.

but there are **interesting challenges** connected with achieving **interdisciplinary understanding** of most areas.



6. Research on and investigations of cultural and linguistic universals, which facilitate communication and we can use as a basis for increased mutual understanding

How similar are we without threatening diversity?

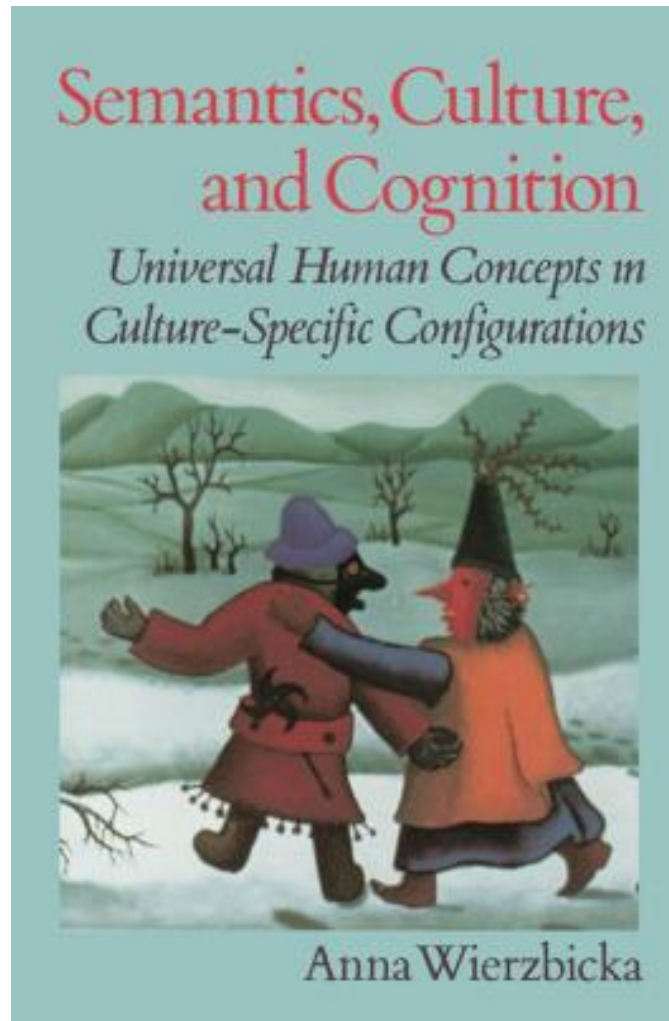


Research on cultural and linguistic universals

– Some examples of theorists of universals

- 1. George P. Murdock (1897 - 1985) – empirical cultural universals
- 2. Donald Brown (1934 -) – empirical cultural universals
- 3. Joseph Greenberg (1915 - 2001) – empirical, universal typology and implicative linguistic universals
- 4. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908 – 2009) – less empirical cultural universals
- 5. Noam Chomsky (1928 -) – theoretical linguistic universals
- 6. Anna Wierzbicka (1938 -) – empirical and theoretical linguistic universals

**Research on cultural and linguistic universals,
which we can use as a basis for increased mutual
understanding without threatening diversity**



Donald Brown (1934-

Anthropologist



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_Universals

Presents universals, he believes to be unique to humans and still compatible with diversity:

age-grading, athletic sports, bodily adornment, calendar, cleanliness training, community organization, cooking, cooperative labor, cosmology, courtship, dancing, decorative art, divination, division of labor, dream interpretation, education, eschatology, ethics, ethno-botany, etiquette, faith healing, family feasting, fire-making, folklore, food taboos, funeral rites, games, gestures, gift-giving, government, greetings, hair styles, hospitality, housing, hygiene, incest taboos, inheritance rules, joking, kin groups, kinship nomenclature, language, law, luck superstitions, magic, marriage, mealtimes, medicine, obstetrics, penal sanctions, personal names, population policy, postnatal care, pregnancy usages, property rights, propitiation of supernatural beings, puberty customs, religious ritual, residence rules, sexual restrictions, soul concepts, status differentiation, surgery, tool-making, trade, visiting, weather control, weaving

Brown, Donald E. (1991). Human universals. Philadelphia, PA, US: Temple University Press. (1991).
x 220 pp.

<http://don.chubrown.com/curriculum-vitae>

<http://condor.depaul.edu/mfiddler/hyphen/humunivers.htm>

Back to global citizenship

Rights and **obligations** of global citizenship

- Should persons who claim global citizenship **be obliged to feel responsible** and perhaps even feel accountable to the planet of Earth?
- Should we increase such feelings by thinking of Earth might a little more spiritually in terms of **“Gaia”** (Greek) or **“Terra”** (Latin) (the goddess of Earth) or **“Pachamama”** (Quechua) (Mother Earth) (See Lovelock, 1979)?
- This responsibility should be connected to the resources of Earth, **including not only material resources but also ecosystems with plants, animals (including humans) as well as cultural/linguistic and spiritual resources.**
- **The responsibility could be worked out in ontological, epistemological, ethical and aesteical terms**

Inclusion in global citizenship

- Is it enough to be an inhabitant of Earth. Can other other beings than humans, like other animals or plants be global citizens?
- Easier to be a recipient of rights than it is to also accept obligations as a condition for having those rights.
- Should some sort of commitment to, for example the rights and obligations suggested above be required for citizenship?
- **Do all global citizens have equal value?**
- Normatively – **yes**
- Actually – descriptively – **no** , because of demography and military-economic power differences
- If we believe in normative equal rights for global citizens - should we- **must we accept** that some global citizens actually-descriptively will be more equal than others?

Concluding remarks – **Balance between unity and diversity**

The more we **appreciate and understand both differences that enrich us and what makes us similar**, the greater potential we have both for language and culture preservation and for successful intercultural communication/understanding.

Probably the **process towards both goals will be gradual and incremental**

It will not lead full satisfaction of both goals. There will have to be adaptation to **demography and military-economic strength.**

In some sense it will be **Optimality of the whole**

at the price

of **suboptimality of the parts**

Striking

- a **balance between unity and diversity.**



Concluding remarks -

In constructing a notion of **global citizenship**

we need to move

towards a balance between enriching cultural and linguistic differences and universal shared understanding

The main message is encouragement not to give up,

even if problems occur both with language/culture loss and mutual understanding

