

UNIT 10 Citizenship and culture

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Let's Work

- The importance of culture in people's lives
- The need for respect and tolerance in order to achieve a coexistence based on fairness, and this should not just be coexistence between people, but also between cultural realities
- The place of belief in the life of societies
- The complex relationship between society and religion
- The different types of state depending on the relationship between state and religion
- The importance of understanding our own culture and our own identity. It is not easy for "oneself" to dialogue with others when there is no "oneself", when he is unknown or denied.
- The definition and understanding of the attitude that encourages intercultural and interfaith dialogue: ecumenism and hospitality

Introduction

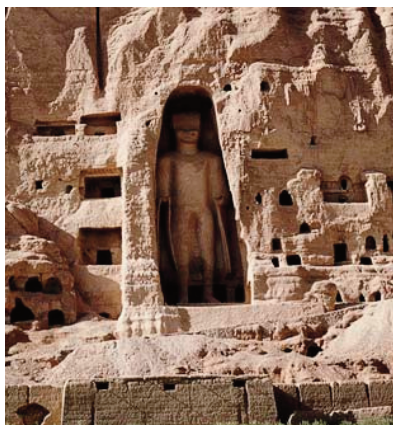
Citizenship cannot be understood without referring to culture. In the same way we say we are citizens we also say we are cultural beings. We already spoke, in the first unit, about the many dimensions that make up human life. We can't detach ourselves from any of these dimensions. That's why speaking of citizenship, of citizens, is speaking of citizenship in culture, in cultures, or of cultural citizenship and this is so because non-cultural citizenship is impossible. To state to the contrary, that an abstract citizenship is possible, beyond or ahead of culture, is to show a complete ignorance of human life.

Culture is not an add-on, an ornament that us human beings can use. It is not a touch of colour. It's what makes us human. Without culture, there would be no humans. Culture is made up of traditions, beliefs, ways of life, from the most spiritual to the most material. It gives us meaning, a way of leading our lives. Human beings are creators of culture and, at the same time, culture is what makes us human. Our citizenship is, therefore, cultural. To wonder what kind of citizenship we want is to wonder what kind of relationship we should establish with culture.

In comparison with any other time in history nobody can doubt the plurality and cultural diversity that exists nowadays. There are many ways of guiding our lives, of leading them, and society and politics must take this into account. This is not something negative; on the contrary, it is very positive, since humanity is plural. By understanding other cultures we understand ourselves better. However, recognising plurality does not mean that we must all find one way of life that makes coexistence possible. This won't happen if we forget who we are. If we accept everything, and consider all forms of culture to be equally valid just because they're cultures, we'll be acting indifferently, and all cultures will therefore become invalid. We can't despise cultures, not even our own; we must appreciate them, and this also means criticising them and ourselves.

A fundamental element of culture is the issue of religious belief and its symbolic expression. We must value religious identity and be aware of current efforts to make progress in terms of interfaith dialogue, which is actually an intercultural dialogue. As the world is becoming more and more global and we coexist on a more global level we can't just think there's only one right way of living or that any one is valid. The need for coexistence makes the coexistence of cultures and beliefs necessary. In order to not make such mistakes, the best thing we can do is get to know other cultures, while also getting to know our own. How can we dialogue with other cultures, if we don't really know what our own culture is?

In Anger: The Destruction Of The Bamiyan Buddhas



The Bamiyan Buddhas were two giant statues of Buddha sculpted into a cliff in the Bamiyan Valley in central Afghanistan, 230 km northwest of Kabul. The statues represent a classic mix of Greco-Buddhist art, sculpted around the 3rd or 4th century. Unfortunately, they were brutally destroyed by the Taliban, a fundamentalist Islamic group. It's one of the worst recent attacks on humanity's cultural heritage. It's not religions or cultures that carry out these attacks against their own or other religions or cultures; human beings themselves manipulate beliefs, in ignorance, in order to promote further ignorance.

AGENCIA EFE

La UNESCO confirma que los taliban han destruido los dos colosos de Buda de Bamiyan.

La orden de destrucción de todas las estatuas preislámicas de Afganistán había sido dada este mes por el líder supremo de los Talibán

PARIS.- El director general de la UNESCO, Koichiro Matsuura, ha confirmado la destrucción por los Talibán de los dos colosos de Buda esculpidos en roca entre los siglos III y IV en la provincia afgana de Bamiyan, hecho que ha calificado de «crimen contra la cultura».

«Me he enterado con consternación, por boca de mi enviado especial Pierre Lafrance, que la destrucción de los budas de Bamiyán ha sido confirmada», ha anunciado el director de la Organización de la ONU para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura

(UNESCO), en un comunicado. El ministro de Asuntos Exteriores del régimen islámico integrista de los Talibán, Wakil Ahmed Muttawakel, había informado ayer al secretario general de la ONU, Kofi Annan, en la capital paquistaní, de que el derribo de las dos estatuas de 55 y 36,5 metros de altura estaba prácticamente concluido.

Matsuura ha denunciado que «los Talibán han cometido un crimen contra la cultura. Es odioso asistir a la destrucción, fríamente calculada, de bienes culturales que constituyen el patrimonio del pueblo afgano y de toda la humanidad». «Los budas de Bamiyán no figuraban en la lista del patrimonio mundial, pero habrían merecido estar inscritos en ella y su destrucción constituye un auténtico crimen cultural», ha subrayado.

El director general de la UNESCO se ha lamentado de que «los Talibán no tuvieran en cuenta la movilización internacional sin precedentes (para impedir la destrucción de los budas), ni la opinión contraria expresada espontáneamente por las más altas autoridades religiosas del Islám».

Oleada de protestas

(...) A pesar de que esta pérdida «es irreparable», Matsuura ha lanzado un llamamiento para que continúe la movilización internacional para «tratar de hacer todo lo posible para parar este movimiento destructor». Ha dicho que ha pedido a su enviado especial que «continúe su misión y explore todas las vías que permitan preservar otras riquezas del patrimonio pre-islámico afgano».

Matsuura ha mostrado su deseo de que esta destrucción «inexcusable» no suministre «a otros fanáticos» un pretexto para llevar a cabo nuevas destrucciones, «en este caso, de bienes culturales musulmanes». also true that the process could be quicker and developed countries could provide more support in order to save thousands of lives. The globalisation of those illnesses requires a globalisation of solidarity and justice.

ACTIVITIES

- Do some research about this cultural destruction. What did the sculptures represent? What reasons did the Taliban give to justify their destruction? What other "great destructions" in terms of culture have happened recently?
- The groups that carry out this kind of actions are normally fundamentalists. What does fundamentalism mean?
- In your opinion, what can the international community do in order to avoid such acts?
- In the information from Agencia EFE they use the expression "crime against culture" several times. Why is it a "crime against culture"? Aren't crimes just the ones committed against other people? Explain your answer.

Contents

1. Cultural Beings

What is culture?

The term culture can be used to refer to many things: to a way of seeing and interpreting the world; to all the techniques and resources that help us live; to the institutions regulating our coexistence; to the ideas and beliefs of people and individuals; to a high degree of knowledge acquired by some members of our community; to several activities appreciated by a human group; to that which characterises our species, etc. There are many things described by the word “culture”, but it also has two fundamental meanings: personal education and insertion in a community.

1) Culture as education. Culture represents an ideal of humanity that must be reached and comes through knowledge and practices that one must possess. This ideal of humanity will depend on each people or culture in its second sense.

2) Culture as a means of belonging. Culture is a way of life, is a group of beliefs, traditions and techniques. Culture varies according to communities, societies or ethnic groups.

Through culture the human being can transform nature and survive. We can't survive without culture; it's our adaptation mechanism, our second nature. It's not an add-on or an ornament. We make culture and culture makes us. We owe culture many things. Besides constituting us as individuals, culture makes us persons. It not only makes human life possible, it also helps us find a way of fulfilling ourselves. Culture gives us a world, instead of just an environment or physical surroundings, like any other animal. Through culture we inhabit places, we dream about time and find meaning.

Two Classic Definitions of Culture

[Culture] is the integral whole consisting of consumers tools and goods, of constitutional charters that rule various social groups, of human ideas and crafts, beliefs and customs.”

Malinowski, Bronislaw. 1944. A Scientific Theory of Culture.

“(Culture) is, in an ethnographic sense, that complex whole that includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other abilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”

E.Tylor: Primitive Culture.

Culture and Civilisation

We must not confuse culture with civilisation. The word culture refers to symbolic, and in a way, spiritual content. Culture is not necessarily something tangible. Civilisation refers to the material dimension of a society. Culture is wealth of spirit, civilisation is material wealth. There have been societies that were culturally very wealthy but poor in civilisation and vice-versa. Maybe our current culture, our cultures, are diminishing as our civilisations grow.

Culture and Barbarism.

The Greeks thought that those who did not speak Greek did not have a language, did not have logos, which means reason. They were like babbling animals; they were barbarians. Nowadays barbarism is not defined by not having a certain culture, it's defined by not possessing culture, that is, lacking in sensitivity, therefore lacking in a means of growing and of controlling one's life. A barbaric action is an act against life itself, even more than just an act against culture. The barbarian is the one who breaks, annihilates and destroys. Culture is growth and vitality. To be a barbarian is to be bereft of sensitivity.

2. Citizenship in Cultural Diversity.

People are not isolated; we have bonds with each other and live our lives through relationships. This bond between people and their communities has generated several ways of understanding citizenship. And just like this bond can be understood in different ways, the same can be said for citizenship.

Basically there are three ways of understanding the relationship between cultures and also of understanding the way individuals encounter each other and their cultural diversity. We can understand it as:

a) a **MULTICULTURAL** encounter. In it people are isolated, the right to cultural diversity is recognised but there is no actual encounter between cultures, just coexistence.

b) an **INTERCULTURAL** encounter. In it cultures interact, they do not see each other as completely different realities, cultures can learn from each other, there's communication and dialogue.

c) a **TRANSCULTURAL** encounter. It goes beyond the intercultural, since it aims to find values and ways of life within the dialogue that overcome the differences between cultures.

All great religions present a huge flow of ideas and beliefs capable of structuring the lives of people. Since religion is so important in people's lives, political institutions have found in religion a way of explaining the distribution of power and its origin. In other words, leaders have used religion to legitimise their authority.

Modern society, from the Renaissance to the present day, has been characterised by a process of separation from religion. Social and political life is progressively moving away from religion and church institutions. The 20th century showed the tensions between sectors seeking an extreme separation and others who longed for the re-establishing of the relations between church and politics of the past.

Forms of citizenship (non-exclusive)	Characteristics
<i>Active</i>	The bond requires personal commitment and responsibility towards the community. Unlike legal or political citizenship, understood as passivity in the face of democracy, active citizenship stresses responsible action as the exercising of citizenship.
<i>Democratic</i>	The bond demands a commitment to democracy that is not political but rather social. Democracy cannot be limited to political power, it must reach social institutions.
<i>Differentiated</i>	In order to take the bond seriously one must take differences seriously and elaborate policies concerning difference that will make up for any exclusion.
<i>Multicultural</i>	The bond must guarantee the survival of cultures. Citizenship cannot suppress the cultural roots of each individual; that's why the bond must guarantee the equality of freedoms while recognising cultural differences.
<i>Intercultural</i>	The bond of citizenship does not suppress or create uniform cultural traditions; it can promote dialogue, exchange and enrichment between different cultural traditions.
<i>Transcultural and intracultural</i>	When ethnic, cultural or religious differences do not promote freedom and equality, citizenship can promote dynamics of change and reflection within cultures. Citizenship also has a shared common world as a future goal.

ACTIVITIES:

1. What do multi-, inter-, trans-, and intra- mean? Give examples of words where these prefixes appear.
2. Search for situations in which multicultural, intercultural and transcultural encounters happen.
3. What kind of citizenship do you think is most important? Why?

3. From Religion to Politics

On the other hand, religion offers a sense of salvation to its believers. However, religions in general are not defined just by this dimension of interior contemplation and privacy, they have a public and social dimension. Beliefs are not individual, they're also social. That's why religions affect politics. If politics mean an organisation of society and society is marked by religious beliefs, it is clear that there will be some conflict between religion and politics.

We must also point out a crucial question. We speak of religion, but there are many religions. They are diverse, just like societies, and the levels of secularisation and modernity are very different. The situation of Christianity in Europe, where there has been a long process of secularisation and dialogue with the modern world, is not the same as Islam or other religions.

Religious and secular state.

Nowadays the debate between religion and politics considers two state models, or an alternative one:

- The religious state is inspired by or based on a certain religion, which it supports and promotes.
- The secular state dispenses with religious elements when managing coexistence and plurality and is based on respect towards a diversity of beliefs. Sometimes some secular states have adopted persecuting policies towards religion, breaking with this attitude of tolerance and dialogue and becoming lay or almost totalitarian states. States cannot find their foundation and meaning in religion, nor is religion something that can be ignored by a state.

Our Constitution (1978)

It declares the freedom of conscience, religion and worship, but at the same time it points out that "no confession will represent the state". It admits the social reality that citizens may have religious beliefs, and that's why it says that the public authorities "will maintain the following relationship of cooperation with the Catholic church and all other confessions".

"1. Se garantiza la libertad ideológica, religiosa y de culto de los individuos y las comunidades sin más limitación, en sus manifestaciones, que la necesaria para el mantenimiento del orden público protegido por la ley.

[...]

3. Ninguna confesión tendrá carácter estatal. Los poderes públicos tendrán en cuenta las creencias religiosas de la sociedad española y mantendrán las consiguientes relaciones de cooperación con la Iglesia católica y las demás confesiones"

CONSTITUCIÓN ESPAÑOLA, 1978, Artículo 14, 1 y 3.

4. From Ecumenism to Intercultural Hospitality

Ecumenism and Interfaith Dialogue

Catholicism, the Orthodox Church and Protestantism are the three main manifestations of Christianity. Despite all the detachments and differences, they are all one. It is a unity reflected, for example, in the fact that all three are based on the Bible, a book that, despite being centuries old, has not lost its "contemporary" nature.

Ecumenism defends the reestablishment of the unity of Christianity, beyond the different Christian confessions (Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Protestants). One of the greatest moments of ecumenism was the Edinburgh Protestant Church conference of 1910, because that is where it was practically born. Nowadays, even though ecumenism is still important, the necessity of an interfaith dialogue, promoted by the Catholic theologian Hans Küng, is more relevant. His basic thesis is quite simple: there can't be true world peace if there is no peace between religions.

Attitudes in the Face of Cultural Diversity

Before cultural diversity there are three basic attitudes: a) an ethnocentric attitude: it judges other cultures according to one's own culture, which is considered superior; b) an attitude of cultural relativism: each culture has its own way of understanding the world which is not compatible with any other; and c) an attitude of cultural hospitality: it is necessary to respect other cultures, but it does not exclude dialogue, rather, it demands it. Cultural dialogue does not happen by us forgetting our own cultural heritage and starting an empty dialogue. It is necessary to show the content of our traditions, find common points and let other people question us, allowing us to discover ourselves through others. The two first attitudes irremissibly become racist and xenophobic.

Hospitality and Immigration

One of the brightest ideas that can be used when speaking about the relationship with others, with immigrants, with people from other cultures, is hospitality. Hospitality means welcoming someone into your home. That's why we cannot confuse a hospitable attitude with an indifferent one, or with an attitude where one denies one's own identity. When we have a guest at home we must know how to welcome him into our own home, but he also has to know how to behave, without having to stop being himself. Coexistence in intercultural hospitality demands a commitment to trust and respect, tolerance and truth.

Four Types of Tolerance

1. *The tolerance of the intolerant:* "I'll put up with you, if I have to..."

2. *The tolerance of he who has no other option:* I am right, I am saying truth, you're wrong, what you say is false... but because of the principle of equality I'll let you defend your wrong position. Since I'm fair, I'll tolerate you.

3. *Perspectivist tolerance:* there are different points of view, a plurality of perspectives, each one of us has our own truth..."

4. *Tolerance as a fight for the truth:* It's the greatest level of tolerance: from my own conviction (religion, culture) I'll admit that I don't know everything, but we can reach a higher level together, my position does not suppress yours, nor vice versa, my position is valid and seeks your recognition.

ACTIVITY:

Read the following text carefully. What does it mean? What can we learn with it about the intercultural dialogue?



which couldn't cover the totality." RŪMI, Mathnawi

"Some Hindus had brought an elephant and were exhibiting it in a dark house. Many people entered, one by one, in the dark, to see it. Since they couldn't see it with their eyes, they touched it with their hands. One of them put his hand on the trunk, and said, "This creature is like a water pipe". Another one touched its ear, and thought it was similar to a fan. Another one, who had touched a leg, said: "The elephant has the shape of a column". After touching its back, another one said: "Actually, this elephant is like a throne". In the same way, every time one of them heard a description of the elephant, they would understand it according to what they had touched. Their statements would vary depending on what they had felt. The eye of perception is as limited as the palm of the hand,

This Issue in the Press: Religión and Society

Confesionalismo, laicismo, pluralismo

“(…) El problema se plantea en países con democracia liberal (…), y se plantea en ellos justamente porque el liberalismo político, si se lo toma en serio, exige que todos los ciudadanos sean tratados con igual consideración y respeto, que la vida compartida se articule de tal forma que no se sientan unos tratados como ciudadanos de primera y otros como ciudadanos de segunda.

Es ciudadano aquél que es su propio señor junto a sus iguales en el seno de la comunidad política, y esta noción de ciudadanía resulta ser revolucionaria: exige asegurar a todos los ciudadanos una base de igualdad tal que les permita llevar adelante sus planes de vida, siempre que no impidan a los demás hacer lo propio; no cortarles a todos por el mismo patrón, sino garantizar esa igualdad cívica desde la que puedan desarrollar libremente sus proyectos vitales.

Ocurre, sin embargo, y aquí topamos a mi juicio con el nudo gordiano de la cuestión, que la ciudadanía igual se puede entender al menos de dos modos, según se interprete la idea de igualdad, como ciudadanía simple o como ciudadanía compleja. De entenderla de una forma u otra se siguen consecuencias incalculables.

En el primer caso se trata a los ciudadanos como iguales cuando se eliminan todas las diferencias de religión, cultura, raza, sexo, capacidad física y psíquica, tendencia sexual, y nos quedamos con un ciudadano sin atributos. Reconocer, por el contrario, una noción compleja de ciudadanía implica aceptar que no existen personas sin atributos, sino gentes cuya identidad se teje con los mimbres de su religión, cultura, sexo, capacidad y opciones vitales, y que, en consecuencia, tratar a todos con igual respeto a su identidad exige al Estado no apostar por ninguna de ellas, pero sí tratar de integrar las diferencias que la componen.

Entender la ciudadanía al modo simplista implica esforzarse por borrar las diferencias en la vida pública, mientras que entenderla como compleja exige intentar gestionar la diversidad, articulándola.

En lo que hace a la religión en concreto, históricamente se han ido perfilando -a mi juicio- tres modelos de Estado, dos de los cuales optan por el simplismo, por eliminar diversidades que dificultan la gestión de la vida pública, y son el modelo confesional y el laicista, mientras que el tercero asume que la realidad social es compleja y como compleja hay que tratarla. Es el Estado laico, que se esfuerza por gestionar una sociedad pluralista.

En efecto, el Estado confesional se compromete oficialmente con una religión determinada, con lo cual quienes optan por ella son tratados como ciudadanos de primera y los demás quedan relegados al papel de ciudadanos de segunda. Pero lo mismo ocurre con el Estado laicista, aunque en versión contraria, que se empeña en borrar de la vida pública cualquier símbolo religioso, como si fuera algo obsceno que hay que recluir en la vida privada, condenando a los creyentes de distintas religiones a la ciudadanía de segunda división. Ciertamente, en España hemos vivido décadas de confesionalismo y en los «Países del Este» vivieron décadas de laicismo, y la experiencia no ha sido positiva en ninguno de los dos casos, porque ambos matan la vida al intentar mutilar la diversidad de la realidad social.

Pero existe una tercera forma de Estado, el Estado verdaderamente laico, que no apuesta por una religión determinada ni por borrarlas a todas de la vida pública, sino que intenta articular institucionalmente la vida compartida de tal modo que todos se sientan ciudadanos de primera, sin tener que renunciar a la expresión de sus identidades. Es, creo yo, la forma de Estado coherente con una sociedad pluralista, en que las gentes llevan el bagaje de distintas culturas, lenguas, capacidades desde las que se identifican, pero también de distintas religiones o de ninguna de ellas. Y precisamente porque la identidad se teje desde la diversidad, el Estado laico y la sociedad pluralista asumen como irrenunciable la cuidadosa construcción de una ciudadanía compleja en lo que se refiere a las distintas dimensiones de la identidad personal. (…)

(…) La tarea del orfebre, que intenta engarzar las piedras con paciencia y esmero, es la que ha de asumir el Estado laico. El respeto activo a quien piensa de forma diferente es la virtud de una sociedad civil realmente pluralista. Pero también las religiones tienen que hacer sus deberes, y en vez de intentar avasallar o presentarse como armas arrojadizas, enterarse de una vez por todas que la opción de fe es radicalmente personal, que nadie puede imponerla. Que sólo desde la libertad puede invitarse a ella, como sólo desde la libertad puede aceptarse.”

A. CORTINA, ABC, Domingo, 4 de enero de 2004

ACTIVITIES:

1. Summarise the text and make an outline of all the important points.
2. What are the two forms of citizenship mentioned in the text?
3. Using the text, describe a confessional state, a secular state and lay state. Find examples of them all.
4. What should be the duties of the state and the duties of religions?

Let's go to the Cinema: *Babel*

Cultures are ways of living and seeing the world. They're different and their ideas and meanings are different. But we can't forget they're human creations and they answer to human necessities. Beyond the differences, there's a unity of origin. That's why we cannot defend cultural diversity or cultures as if they were endangered species. They're ways of learning about humanity. On the other hand, cultures interact with each other. An example of this is the movie *Babel*, where humanity suffers and looks for help beyond cultural differences.



Directed by: Alejandro González Inárritu

Year: 2006

Country: EE.UU./México

Script: Guillermo Arriaga

Cast: Brad Pitt, Cate Blanchett, Gael García Bernal, Koji Yakusho, Rinko Kikuchi, Adriana Barraza, Said Tarchane, Elle Fanning

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

In the far away dunes of the Moroccan desert sounds a shot which unleashes a series of chance events which will connect a US couple in their desperate fight to survive with the two Moroccan boys involuntarily responsible for the accident, a nanny illegally crossing the border with Mexico with two kids from the United States and a rebellious deaf Japanese teenager whose dad is facing arrest by the police. Despite the huge distances and the antagonistic cultures separating them, these four groups of people share a destiny of suffering.

ANOTHER FILM

"The Kite Runner"

(M. Forster, 2007)

Film adaptation of the novel by the Afghan American Khaled Hosseini, "The Kite Runner", which was one of 2005's bestselling books in the US. The story is based on how Amir (Khalid Abdalla) - who left Afghanistan many years previously - goes back to find that his best friend, Hassan, is dead and that his son needs help to escape from the Taliban.



IT MAKES US WONDER ABOUT:

- Human society and the world we're building.
 - Unity and cultural diversity.
 - The unexpected coincidences between apparently unconnected events.
- The human condition: capable of the best and the worst things.

Looking Through Images: Art and Culture - Spaces for Culture, Spaces for Worship

Temples are spaces of culture or worship. The worshipping of a certain religion is its collection of rites. Culture comes from “to culture”, to grow something, in this case, an attitude or beliefs. Temples are places of culture for two reasons: not only on the outside, but also on the inside: they are the expression of a people and people "cultivate" themselves within them.



Look Up Some Facts

- Write a short report on the four religions we present here: a) history, b) population and geography, c) rituals.

Learn to Look

- Describe all the elements in the pictures. What do the temples have in common? Do temples and religious art express religion itself or the peoples who live that religion?

Think About the Image

- Why have such places existed in almost every known culture?

- Look at the representation of Buddha. Try and put your hands in that position. What do you think this symbolises?

THINK

- If you watch the movie, make a list with the characters in it and describe them, what they are like, what they do, how they argue.

- In the movie there are several cultural references: the United States, the Mexican border, Morocco, Japan... What do you think are the biggest differences between these cultures? Are they insurmountable?

- The movie, at least in its title, mentions the Biblical myth of the tower of Babel. What is this myth about? What does it want to teach us? What does it say about our current situation of cultural plurality?

The World of Literature: Repossessing Our Identity

The way to avoid dogmatism, or the war against those who think differently to us, is understanding what we are and what our identity is. This is what Amin Maalouf proposes in his essay "In the Name of Identity". Identity is not something set in stone; it changes. We are the results of several identities and cultures.



Amin Maalouf was born in Lebanon in 1949. His father - a poet, painter and reporter - founded two newspapers. Maalouf studied Economics, Politics and Sociology. He worked for the newspaper An Nahar as the head of the international section. Through this media he travelled to countries like Ethiopia, Somalia, Bangladesh and Vietnam, where he witnessed the battle of Saigon. Among all of his interviews, the one with the Prime Minister of India Indira Gandhi stands out. In 1975 when the war in Lebanon began, he went into exile in France, where he worked as Editor-in-Chief of the magazine Jeune Afrique. Nowadays he works exclusively on his literature. He received the Maison de Presse prize for Samarkand and the Goncourt prize for Rock of Tanios.

In the Name of Identity

"The people who have followed my career will not be surprised to read that, in my opinion, this reflection should start from a central idea that every person should be able to identify himself at least a little bit with the country where he lives and with today's world. This entails a series of behaviours and habits we have to acquire, both by the person itself and by the ones he is speaking to, be they individuals or groups.

Every human being should be encouraged to assume his own diversity. To understand his identity as the sum of diverse types of belonging instead of confusing it with just one, built as a supreme possession and an instrument for exclusion, and even sometimes as an instrument of war. It is especially important for people whose culture of origin is not the same as the culture of the society in which they live to accept this "double belonging". They must be able to maintain their attachment to their culture and not feel obliged to hide it as if it was a humiliating sickness. and in parallel open up, to the culture of the host country.

Thus formulated, this precept could easily refer to immigrants, but it also speaks of those who, after having lived forever within a certain culture, still maintain emotional bonds with their culture of origin. I'm thinking, for example, of black people in America, now called African Americans, who clearly reveal their double belonging. The precept talks as well about all those who, because of religious, ethnic, social or other reasons, feel undervalued, who feel they don't belong to the only homeland they've ever had. For all of them, being able to live and feel they belong is essential for their personal development, but also for civil peace.

In the same way, societies should also assume the multiple definitions of belonging that have forged their identity throughout history and which are still shaping them. They should make an effort to show, through visible symbols, that they assume their diversity, so that all citizens can feel part of their surroundings, identify themselves with the country where they live and feel motivated to participate in it instead of remaining, as normally happens, a restless and sometimes hostile spectator.

There are some books that you would like to be never-ending that die the next day and then there are others that survive that seemed like nothing more than school entertainment. But there's always hope. In the case of this book, which is not intended for entertaining and neither is it a literary work, I want to express the opposite: that when my grandson is a man, when he discovers it in the family library, he'll take a look, turn some pages and then leave it on the dust-covered shelf where he found it, wondering about his grandfather's times, when it was still necessary to say such things.

FEELING AND THINKING WITH WORDS

- Read the text carefully. What does A. Maalouf say? Why does he say he expects this book not to be necessary for his grandson?
- Our identity is the result of several different types of belonging. Dare to sketch what you belong to, your identity. You could go, for example, from the most general to the most precise, from Europe, to Spain, to your region, your family up to your own identity.

Final and Summary Activities

1. The spirit of peace and agreement of the interfaith dialogue was shown through the document, "Towards a Global Ethics" from the manifesto of the Parliament of the World's Religions, which brought 6500 members of several religions together in Chicago in 1993. Carefully read this text from the declaration:

We know that religions cannot solve the environmental, economic, political, and social problems of Earth. However they can provide what obviously cannot be attained by economic plans, political programs, or legal regulations alone: a change in the inner orientation, the whole mentality, the "hearts" of people, and a conversion from a false path to a new orientation for life. Humankind urgently needs social and ecological reforms, but it needs spiritual renewal just as urgently. As religious or spiritual persons we commit ourselves to this task. The spiritual powers of the religions can offer a fundamental sense of trust, a ground of meaning, ultimate standards, and a spiritual home. Of course religions are credible only when they eliminate those conflicts which spring from the religions themselves, dismantling mutual arrogance, mistrust, prejudice, and even hostile images, and thus demonstrating respect for the traditions, holy places, feasts, and rituals of people who believe differently.

- What can religion give to society, to culture?
- What should the attitude of religion itself be?
- What relationship can we deduce exists, then, between religion and society?

2. Read the following words from a poster in a big city in Germany. Read them carefully. What do they mean? What things of yours/ours belong to others? What things of other people belong to you/us?

Your Christ, Jewish.
Your car, Japanese.
Your pizza, Italian.
Your democracy, Greek.
Your coffee, Brazilian.
Your holidays, Turkish.
Your numbers, Arabic.
Your writing, Latin.
And your neighbour is just a foreigner?
Poster in a big city in Germany. Autumn 1993

3. Comment on the following advertisement that appeared after 9/11 2001. The text says: "Training professionals is easy, but it is difficult to train citizens".

4. What do you think the organisers who chose this poster for the intercultural meeting and dialogue wanted to express? What image would you choose to illustrate the dialogue between cultures?



Find Out and Take Part

Look for information about immigration in Spain. Here are a series of links. We are sure you can find more information in your town or city. Is there an institution that looks after immigrants. which helps and informs them?

SECRETARIA DE ESTADO DE
INMIGRACIÓN Y EMIGRACIÓN

<http://extranjeros.mtas.es/>



NGOs that help immigrants.

<http://www.alboan.org/portal/index.asp>

<http://www.entreculturas.org>

