

2.2 Vincent Joseph F. Sandoval
Psychology, Third Year
University of San Carlos
Cebu City, Philippines

Borders Without Boundaries

“A large egg emerged from the five primordial elements. On the outside, the white rock of the gods formed on the shell of the egg. Inside, a white lake, like a conch, swirled around clearly in the liquid of the egg. In the center the beings of the six categories made their appearance on one part of the egg and eighteen eggs came from the yolk of this egg.” (*Po ti bse ru*, Tibetan Writing)

It fascinates me to no end, as it always does, to discover from ancient lore – whether in the Tibetan writings, Japanese *Sinai* or the Bible’s Genesis – how the world was first conceived to be one solid, compact entity which spawned forth humanity, dramatically connected in geography, both physical and spiritual. The story’s primordial egg, for example, depicts a perfect totality without distinction or difference.

Cosmogony myths have blessed human existence with such architecture: Despite our present differences (and the petty bickerings that sprang up), one can take comfort in the mythical contention that we were, are one. It might be argued that such belief in the power and omniscience of these fictional inventions belong to a time more naïve and ingenious.

Or that is what the more cynical among us believe, and recent history – warranted by violent wars, genocides and other human atrocities – seems to support this claim. Just as the old world may have been informed and animated by a spirit of solidarity, of kinship; now it is pervaded by a keen, brutal sense of boundaries and limits. Just as many civilizations have sprouted from this wellspring, so have bridges been burnt – a reality punctuated by the existence of dictionaries translating one language, one culture, and one people into another.

Regrettable, such a troubling diagnosis is fleshed out in the treacherous, oppressive ruins of the World Trade Center. The series of condemnable terrorist attacks on the United States last month seems to punctuate the animosity and bigotry among nations, and the tolls of which, not only a single nation, but on the whole world. The events that consequently unfolded in different parts of the globe make clear to every individual, whether a native of the Philippines or of Serbo-Croatia, the costly tolls of such a tragedy in our lives.

Why, then, do some nations refuse to believe that differences can be reconciled? Why do many of us subscribe to the hysterical, ungrounded idea that differences are a contest – one where supremacy is figured arbitrarily – and that these ultimately make us vulnerable?

The terrorist attacks on the United States of America – a catastrophe that has shocked and moved not only its people, but the rest of the world – should not be taken as the final, irreparable nail for international diplomacy or, at the very least, appreciating cultural diversity. Rather, it should bring home to every one of us the urgent and pressing need for a Dialogue among Civilizations. And it figures: We have come a long way to become civilized peoples, cognizant of democratic practices and liberties, and not one assault, however ruthless and heinous, could exterminate its robust foundations. As sentimental as this may sound, humanity is now put to the test – not of efficient armament and weapons technology. The test entails the preservation of, more than the superficial veneer, the inviolable essence of peace, justice and democracy.

The lesson of the WTC tragedy is not to dissipate the thinning hopes for diplomatic breakthrough. Rather, the historic incident serves as a powerful reminder of the expensive costs of a conflicted, discordant world.

As the world's youth could not but witness in bewilderment, the terrorist acts will have only strengthened our resolve to combat the same, inasmuch as we have learned to recognize and appreciate how much can be shared, inasmuch as we have learned to recognize and appreciate how much can be shared and discovered from the experience of kin nations, and redefine the dynamic membership of the cosmos. Wars – and the violence and bloodshed they conjure, will now be properly categorized as glitches in a highly sophisticated communication process; a technical problem resolved by similarly technical troubleshooting. By that auspicious time, young people groomed to be the world's movers and shakers, should be channeling their energies into more consequential matters – expanding their cosmopolitan horizons while remaining deeply attuned to the richness of their cultural heritage.

The Dialogue among Civilizations does not prescribe instantaneous cures for the ills among nations; the youth should not expect it to. But it is a conscientious, painstaking process that would lay bare the wound hurting nations – the economic, political, cultural and religious issues that have caused these divisions – and pave the way for mutual healing and restoration.

The future promises to be one of a globalizing trend, where slowly, the marketplace is not only localized to one's province or country even but the whole world. Economic boundaries, facilitated by advanced technology, will have become more fluid. Yet for nations to willingly and sincerely accept other nations, boundaries more fundamental and deeply rooted than business and commerce have to be resolved. This is where the Dialogue among Civilizations comes in.

It will be ultimately beneficial for young people who, aided by modern technology, communicate to someone from the opposite hemisphere in lightning speed and finally understand not only the message, but the messenger as well. That they are able to talk not only about business or commerce, transactions included towards life's superficial fringes, but are able to make their persons and minds converge, and together,

come up with solutions to global problems adding the environment or discriminative national policies.

A bohemian dream it need not be to envision a world, in the near future, where diplomacy is at home in each and every nation, where cultural diversity is seen as an occasion for complementary integration. Nations begrudge no longer their want, but see in other nations the opportunity to share that which is theirs, in the spirit of giving.

It will be ideal that, in a world so full of color, we learn to become color-blind. Not color-blind, that is, to the exciting aspects of novelty that remain unraveled in our sibling nations, but that in every flamboyant stroke of the socio-cultural paint brush, we will finally discover, with each intense, lively hue the essential oneness of these colors. How, through their superficial resemblance of contrast, the picture that comes out in the end is a harmonious, vibrant image.