

Key words: pluriverse, a world where many worlds fit, zapatista's, Indigenous wisdom, capitalist critique

Meta-description: The pluriverse asks us to consider each others fundamental differences and approach them with an open heart, empathy, and curiosity. How can we do so?

Why There is more than one Reality: Introducing the Pluriverse



Folk and Tribal Art of India and the people at Aadi Mahotsav 2021 at Delhi by Sumita Roy Dutta, 2021, via

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Folk_and_Tribal_Art_of_India_and_the_people_at_Aadi_Mahotsav_2021_at_Delhi_DSCN1223_13.jpg

Introduction: To a larger or lesser extent, the world has always been globalized. It's arguable, however, that contemporary technology has made us more interconnected than ever. Whether that's a good thing is a topic for another day, but it definitely has implications for how communities and societies treat and depend on each other. Unfortunately, this doesn't always have good implications. While global policies define our dependence along concepts like 'development' and 'universality', implying that there is a univocal pathway for all and everyone on this earth, the concept of the 'pluriverse' begs to differ. Or rather, it takes into account how we differ. And rightfully so. After all, can we really expect that the [Hijra population](#) in Nepal has the same needs, life objectives, desires, and moral virtues as a white man from Europe?



Hijra Dancer at Lumbini Pilgrim's Park – Lumbini – Nepal – 02 by Adam Jones, 2014, via https://www.flickr.com/photos/adam_jones/13870615623/

More Than One World in the Pluriverse

The fact that we differ is clear. However, simply diversity is not the focus of the pluriverse. In order to understand what the pluriverse means, we need to understand what our own beliefs and convictions encompass. Or rather, we need to understand that different beliefs and convictions scattered over different places and spaces are based on different metaphysical groundings. In more academic terms, this is referred to as our 'ontology', [which relates](#) to the kinds and structures of objects, properties, events, processes, and relations in every area of your own reality. In the case that you're more familiar with [the work](#) of [Aristotle](#), an 'ontology' is similar to his concept of 'first philosophy'.



El Beso by Manuel Crespo Villanueva, 1897. Source: Biblioteca Museu Victor Balaguer. Via:

<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-kiss-manuel-crespo-villanueva/gwFraeNHTID4AA?hl=es>

So why does that matter in relation to the pluriverse? Let's take the two most followed religions in our world to explain: Christianity and Islam. In [Christianity](#), humans are created in the image of God, which grants them inherent dignity and a special status among created beings. The belief in the original sin of Adam and Eve's disobedience suggests that humans are in a sort of 'debt' which can only be paid through redemption through Jesus Christ. On the other hand, in Islam, humans themselves are considered the pinnacle of creation. They are honored for their unique position as representatives of Allah on Earth. So while in Christianity humans are only humans because they are indebted to Jesus Christ, in Islam humans are humans because they themselves are representations of Allah.

The Universe Versus the Pluriverse



American Progress by John Gast, 1872, via

<https://picturinghistory.gc.cuny.edu/john-gast-american-progress-1872/>

Nuances can still be made, but the idea is clear: because of their ontological beliefs, different followers of the aforementioned religions will have a different sense of being in the world. The pluriverse stands as a testament to exactly these fundamental differences. Not merely the differences that are visible, quantifiable, and superficial, but rather the ones that are fundamental to the belief that such visibility and quantifiability are needed to inquire into our reality in the first place. The pluriverse represents a multifaceted nature of reality, which is unlike [the hegemonic](#) Western view that continues to shape the world according to universal principles.

When reasoning from this Western world view, there is an emphasis on material, science, and unity in diversity. The belief is that we can understand *anything*, as long as we try hard enough. Our current tools, or the tools that will arise later on this same track we're on, are capable of explaining all complex phenomena through laws and principles. All entities, no matter how distinct they are, are ultimately connected through a shared existence that can be explained through these laws and principles.

The pluriverse, on the other hand, is relational in nature and emphasizes interconnectedness between all beings and elements. It therefore naturally aligns with ontologies that consider themselves relational. Relational worldviews take on a more holistic and inclusive understanding of existences, taking into account spiritual, cultural, and ecological dimensions as well. While the 'universe' claims that

reality can ultimately be explained, a pluriversal approach [acknowledges](#) the existence of diverse worldviews contributing to the tapestry of reality. Each worldview has its own significance and value, and acknowledging the interconnectedness between all worldviews allows for the connection of your own well-being with the well-being of other beings with other perspectives.

Sure, the universal perspective recognizes that Islam and Christianity are different. However, in politics, they are treated based on the very same principles. The pluriverse surpasses this, asking us to allow for different expressions and policies to arise from different bases.

Where Does the Pluriverse Come From?



Zapatistas Territory Sign in Chiapas, Mexico by Matthew Rader, 2006, via <https://matthewtrader.com/san-cristobal-de-las-casas-palenque-and-agua-azul-in-chiapas-mexico>

It's not the case that the universe and the pluriverse are two distinct concepts that can co-exist simultaneously with each other. The concept of the pluriverse is a critique and asks us to break out of the dogmatic convictions that are [at the root](#) of our world's most pressing problems.

While the cornerstones of the pluriverse have long been present in Indigenous ontologies worldwide, the concept only gained greater significance from the 21st century onwards. In contemporary philosophical discourse, postcolonial and decolonial thinkers have explored the pluriverse as a counterpoint to the Western hegemony. It is a result of cooperation in the so-called Global South and the

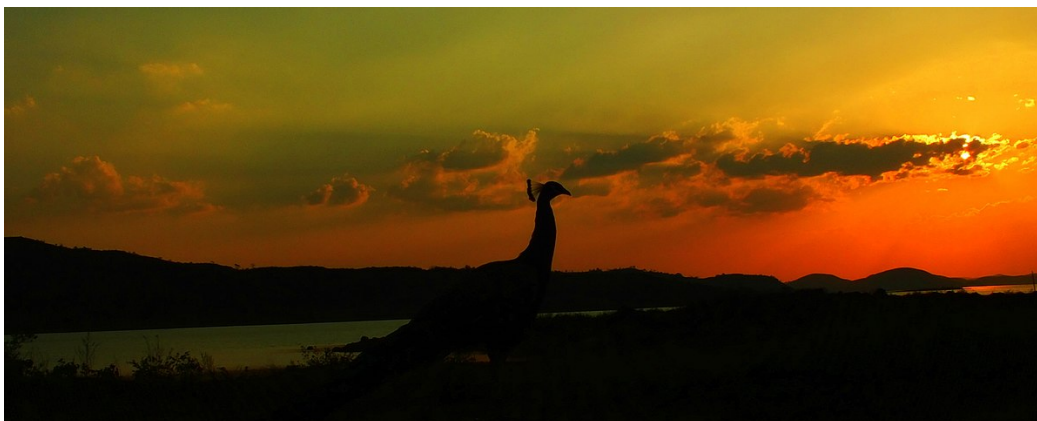
creation of movements that are against the unjustly claimed authority of the Western and Eurocentric worldview.

One of the most prominent groups when thinking and talking about the pluriverse are the Zapatista's; a revolutionary and autonomous leftist movement that is currently living in the southern region of Chiapas – a Mexican state. Key features of the movement [revolve around](#) building 'a world where many worlds fit', therefore focussing on Indigenous rights, peaceful resistance to neoliberalism, autonomy and self-governance, as well as global solidarity and collaboration – amongst others.

The Pluriverse and (Human) Identity

Because of the acknowledgement of a myriad of interconnected worlds, the very fabric of our human identity also changes through the lens of the pluriverse. For example, we don't have a fixed and isolated [identity](#). Across cultures and dimensions, individuals find themselves embedded in a complex interplay of narratives, values, and communal bonds. By exploring other interpretations of existence – whilst not necessarily fully comprehending them – a profound sense of belonging in relations to these interpretations arises. Because you start to understand your differences with the worldviews you encounter, you will be able to reflect on your own worldview and why it is unique in comparison to the others. An [open heart](#), empathy, and curiosity are obligatory for engaging in such an exploration.

Ecological Implications and Other Beings



National bird wondering near Kerandi River in simliguda of Koraput at the time of Twilight by Shiv's fotografia, 2015, via

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:National_bird_wondering_near_Kerandi_River_in_simliguda_of_Koraput_at_the_time_of_Twilight.jpg

Not only does a pluriversal perspective ask us to address interpersonal differences on a fundamental level; it also embodies a profound shift in how we perceive and

address ecological challenges. As we widen our lens to encompass the diverse worlds that coexist, a new paradigm emerges which transcends the boundaries of ecosystems and species. Because of this, the Western reductionist approach can be overcome.

What does that mean?

Mainly, it means that there cannot be an isolated focus on one single environmental issue. Again, rather the interconnectedness of all the ecological problems that are currently present has to be the focus. Indeed, the theory is that there is an underlying cause to all of our environmental problems: the Eurocentric and universal worldview. Through acknowledging every living being, from the smallest microorganism to the highest trees and the biggest whales, the interconnected web of life can flourish and resolve its problems.

As we delve into the ecological implications of the pluriverse, we discover a call to action that transcends the conventional boundaries of environmentalism. It invites us to envision a world where our stewardship extends beyond our immediate surroundings, encompassing the intricate connections that binds all life.

The Pluriverse in Practice: Implications for Problem Resolution

The beauty of the pluriverse is that, in some form or way, it's tangible. It is a concept that is based on the realities of many people in this world. While the killing, silencing, marginalization, and annihilation of other knowledge systems by the Eurocentric worldview (or, '[epistemicide](#)') continues, it has never been a hundred percent successful – and never will be. The sheer scale of the oppression by the Western worldview informed the necessity for conceptualizing the pluriverse. However, it was already lived before it was ever conceptualized. Therefore, it is not hard to imagine possibilities for applying it in practice.

The Climate Crisis and Indigenous People

For starters, the pluriverse emerges as a catalyst for inclusivity. It calls upon us to recognize that our differences are not divisional steps on an hierarchical ladder. Rather, they are the cornerstones of our shared home. By doing so, new possibilities emerge.

Take, for example, the climate crisis. Current solutions [are technocratic](#) and based on market mechanisms. However, whose technology is allowed to be part of these 'technocratic' solutions? As expected, the ones that are found in the universal

reductionist approach. This means that the 5% of people which protect 80% of the biodiversity on earth are not even recognized for having any valuable insight regarding a solution. Indeed, Indigenous people [make up](#) 5% of our world's population, yet protect by far the most biodiversity than any other group will ever be able to do. Since our current solutions are rooted in Eurocentric interpretations, Indigenous people are in no form or way recognized for their efforts; let alone accommodated through funding. In fact, [less than](#) two percent of global climate finance reaches small farmers and Indigenous Peoples.

It's not hard to see that this can be overcome if our policies are designed in a more pluriversal manner. If so, worldviews aren't marginalized but equally respected and acknowledged, allowing for a more adequate response to the problems that affect us all.



Araucanian man in a graveyard in rural Chile, in the 1920s by Harriet Chalmers Adams, 1922, via:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/40000-mile-journey-was-nothing-for-19th-century-female-explorer>

Concluding

It's no secret that the concept of the 'pluriverse' is in stark opposition to the current processes that shape many policies and actions worldwide. The pluriverse asks us to overcome polarization through acknowledging our interconnectedness, accepting that my value judgment is different from yours. Now, just acknowledging that we *are* interconnected with each other and other beings isn't all that there is to it. Rather, respecting our differences and expressing empathy and curiosity towards these

differences are really at the heart of the pluriverse. Only then, the tapestry of life can be designed equally by each and every worldview among us.