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WORLDVIEWS AND INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY¹

ABSTRACT

Having a better understanding of what worldviews are and how they function may be able to contribute to the resolution of conflicts which arise when people from different cultures holding different worldviews interact with each other. This paper begins by examining the nature of worldviews and how they might be approached from the perspective of intercultural philosophy. The paper then turns to meta-philosophical questions regarding the disciplinary boundaries, goals, and methods of intercultural philosophy with respect to worldviews. Attention is given to the possibility of adopting a constructivist, dialectical approach to cross-cultural dialogue on worldviews.

Key words: worldviews, intercultural philosophy, metaphilosophy, intercultural dialogue, constructivism

WHAT ARE WORLDVIEWS?

Many personal beliefs are freely chosen, but when individuals participate in social groups they may be expected to share certain beliefs about the world and the society they live in. Philosophy concerns itself with how such beliefs are reasoned about and justified, and has traditionally been conducted from a normative perspective: rather than simply offer a sociological description of existing beliefs, philosophers try to offer persuasive arguments in favor of one belief or another. A *norm* is a belief not about what *is* the case, but about what *should* be the case. Norms can be applied equally to beliefs (what should or should not be believed), values (what should or should not be valued), and actions (what

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should or should not be done). Norms involve expectations about what beliefs, values, and actions should be adopted when people interact with each other and, thus, provide the basis for social coordination.

Norms can be constructed at a variety of levels, from individuals to groups to nations. Following Marshall Singer (1987), a distinction can be made between norms constructed at the intrapersonal/interpersonal, intragroup/intergroup, and intranational/international levels. Karl-Otto Apel (1980) similarly distinguishes between micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of norm construction. Norms that are not purely individual but shared with others are *cultural norms*. It is, thus, possible to speak of norms that are constructed within cultures (*intra-cultural norms*) and those which are constructed between cultures (*intercultural norms*). While intracultural norms tell persons how to think and act within a given culture, such norms may have no validity whatsoever in intercultural situations in which people are obliged to interact with others whose norms may be different from their own. Rather than regard existing norms within various cultural traditions as being beyond criticism and inviolable, it is possible to construct entirely new norms to govern interactions between people from different cultures.

At least two types of norms are relevant to intercultural philosophy. *Social norms* are the informal and formal rules that govern the actions of individuals, social groups, and nations. Widely construed, social norms can be applied to all areas of human behavior, from norms about fashion or marriage to norms concerning the economic and political relations between nation-states. *Worldviews* include norms about beliefs and values, and may also be either informal or formal, individual or widely shared within and between cultural groups. In the same way that social norms involve expectations about how people should behave in a given culture, worldviews involve expectations about what people should believe and value.

In the past it was common in the field of anthropology to make a distinction between an *ethos*, comprised of those moral, aesthetic, and evaluative aspects of a culture that define its spirit, character, and quality of life, and an *eidōs*, or *worldview*, comprised of those cognitive aspects of a culture that help it to order and conceptualize reality (Bateson, 1936; Kroeber, 1963; Geertz, 1973; see also Naugle, 2002 and Hiebert, 2008). The function of an *ethos* is to guide the behavior of a culture's members, while the function of a *worldview* is to help them understand themselves, others, and the world (self, society, and nature). An *ethos*, thus, includes beliefs about "what ought to be done," while a *worldview* includes beliefs about "how the world actually is." On the basis of this distinction, worldviews can be seen as providing the intellectual scaffolding on which a culture's folkways, mores, and laws are constructed.

In contemporary discussions worldviews are usually defined in a more inclusive sense to refer to the beliefs that individuals and cultures have about both how the world is and how it should be acted in. From this wider perspective,

a worldview can be defined as a set of presuppositions, or assumptions, which provide a conceptual framework for both interpreting and interacting with the world. Worldviews attempt to answer questions related to the nature of reality and the origin of the universe, the meaning and purpose of life, and the relations individuals have with both the natural world and others in society. While people from different cultures may come up with different answers, the fact that people from all cultures raise similar questions suggests that worldviews can be discussed not only intraculturally (within cultures), but also interculturally (across cultures).

Worldviews may be based on religion, science, philosophy, or other less formal belief systems (see Smart, 1999b; DeWitt, 2004; Aerts et al., 2009). Worldviews may be comprehensive or narrowly focused, grounded in facts or purely imaginative. Most people have a large number of beliefs on a variety of issues, which are often compartmentalized and sometimes even inconsistent with each other. Worldviews, however, are not simply a jumble of unrelated beliefs, but rather systems of interrelated beliefs that fit together to give the persons who hold them a relatively coherent picture of the world as a whole.

The idea of using *themes* as a way to characterize worldviews has been promoted in anthropology as an alternative to the essentialist idea that each culture has a single *ethos* which is shared by all of its members. Rather, themes may be multiple within cultures and shared among cultures. Attempts have been made to find themes that are universal to all cultures (Redfield, 1953; Kearney, 1984). Examples include attitudes towards nature, religion, morality, society, and politics. While some researchers stress the manner in which multiple themes are integrated into logical, structured wholes (e.g., Hoebel, 1954), others contend that worldviews are never perfectly integrated (e.g., Opler, 1945). Instead, there can be multiple themes and counter-themes within worldviews, which prevent cultures from going to one extreme or another. For example, no culture is purely individualist nor purely collectivist; instead, these two themes form a continuum with each other. While opposing themes may come into conflict, such conflicts may nonetheless lead to the creation of a new worldview. Worldviews change as a result of the dynamic interplay between a culture's dominant and minority themes. Acquiring the ability to consider multiple points of view can lead to the creation of a wider, more comprehensive perspective, which may also be able to contribute to the resolution of conflicts that arise as a result of cross-cultural differences in worldviews.

PHILOSOPHY AND INTERCULTURAL NORMS

The themes that make up worldviews roughly correspond to the areas studied by philosophy at their most general level: What is reality and how should it be categorized (metaphysics/ontology)? What is knowledge (epistemology)?

What is rationality (logic)? What is value (axiology)? What is beauty (aesthetics)? How should we live as individuals and in relation to others (ethics/morality)? How should society be organized and who decides (social/political philosophy)? This list could be greatly extended by adding more specialized branches of philosophy (philosophy of language, mathematics, science, religion, history, law, and education) and areas of practical and applied philosophy, particularly in the field of ethics (bioethics, environmental ethics, and sexual ethics, as well as various types of professional ethics, such as medical ethics, media ethics, and business ethics).

Each of these branches of philosophy is concerned with normative issues, and, as has been suggested, there can be a great deal of variety among both individuals and groups about what is regarded as real/unreal, true/false, valid/invalid, good/bad, beautiful/ugly, right/wrong, and just/unjust. Virtually any area of philosophy can be approached from an intercultural perspective. Whenever people participate in discussions about the assumptions that different cultures make about reality, truth, ethics, and so on, they are in effect engaging in cross-cultural philosophical reflection. If someone from a given culture says, "This is what should be done" or "This is what should be believed," it is always possible to ask "Why?" Trying to provide an answer to that question is precisely what it means to think philosophically about cultural norms. In attempting to justify a cultural norm, it is not enough to simply say: "because it is part of our culture." Rather, reasons must be given for why particular norms are held and subscribed to.

The emerging area of intercultural philosophy attempts to look at philosophical problems from the perspective of two or more cultures in an attempt to overcome the often ethnocentric positions arrived at by philosophers who are only familiar with their own philosophical traditions. By engaging in intercultural dialogue (or *polylogue* when the participants are from more than two cultures; see Wimmer, 2004) with others on philosophical topics, it may be possible to arrive at a better understanding of cross-cultural differences and, in some cases, even to overcome them. Several different approaches to intercultural philosophy can be identified, which will be examined next.

"Common ground" approaches

Ram Adhar Mall (2000) approaches intercultural philosophy from both an Indian and a Western perspective, developing a hermeneutical theory of the "analogous," which rejects the polarity between total difference and total identity. Assuming the existence of a *philosophia perennis* (one universal, "true" philosophy), which different philosophical traditions comprehend in different ways, Mall argues that no single tradition can lay claim to having articulated the whole. Nonetheless, different traditions overlap in many ways and similarities between them provide the basis for cross-cultural understanding. In effect, this

approach involves looking for preexisting common ground between the participants in intercultural dialogue. Indeed, it is possible that the participants in any intercultural dialogue may be able to find points in common, but these should not simply be assumed *a priori*. Moreover, it is usually differences rather than similarities that are a source of conflict, and the "common ground" approach may be unable to deal with conflicts that arise in areas that do not overlap (i.e., areas in which there are outstanding differences). The approach also offers little concrete guidance with respect to emergent cross-cultural problems (the ethics of climate change and biotechnology, for example), which existing norms may not address, regardless of how commonly shared they are. If solutions to problematic areas cannot be *found*, perhaps it is necessary to go beyond "least-common-denominator" solutions toward the imaginative construction of entirely new norms that are able to govern relationships among people from different cultures and help them work together towards the resolution of mutually shared problems.

"Stand your ground" approaches

An opposite approach is taken by Raúl Fonet-Betancourt (2000), who writes from a Hispanic, African, and European perspective and suggests that the goal of intercultural philosophy is to revitalize cultural perspectives that have historically been ignored or oppressed. Rather than attempt to assimilate or integrate various perspectives into a cosmopolitan "world culture," cross-cultural dialogue should proceed on the basis of a fundamental respect for difference. This approach rejects the modernism implicit in attempts to arrive at a universal set of philosophical norms in favor of a postmodern stance, which allows for a plurality of philosophical perspectives. Certainly fostering a plurality of perspectives allows for a healthy measure of philosophical creativity and avoids the myopia of thinking that one's own philosophical tradition has a monopoly on truth. Nonetheless, the pluralist view does not seem to go much beyond the laudable goals of promoting mutual understanding and respect for cultural differences. As with "common ground" approaches, "stand your ground" approaches do not really provide any insight into how people from different cultures can effectively interact with each other or work together towards the resolution of mutually shared problems. Even if there is no preexisting common ground, as the pluralists contend, it is still plausible to consider possible ways in which common ground might be *created* (constructed) through the dialogical process itself.

"Construct new ground" approaches

In contrast to both Mall's search for preexisting similarities and Fonet-Betancourt's amplification of difference, Friedrich G. Wallner (1997; see also Wallner, Schmidberger, Wimmer, 2010) develops a constructive realist ap-

proach to intercultural philosophy which queries how different philosophical traditions can inform and enlarge each other. From a constructivist perspective intercultural philosophy involves not simply a sharing, but a widening of perspectives in which it is possible to actually learn something new by considering the views of other cultures. Rather than looking for common ground or defending our own ground, we seek out and explore new ground. In doing so, there is also the possibility of moving beyond cross-cultural comparisons towards a more genuinely dialectical approach that is able to critically engage different traditions, thus allowing us to incorporate ideas from different traditions into our own way of thinking. The result, when successful, is not a mere eclecticism or bricolage of incongruous ideas, but a genuinely new integrated theory. Moreover, once the dialectical process has been initiated, it is possible to go beyond simply integrating existing ideas into a new synthesis towards the active generation of entirely new concepts and theories. Integration is not a panacea, of course, since there may be cases in which it is unnecessary, undesirable, or impossible to achieve.

INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY AND METAPHILOSOPHY

While cross-cultural conflicts over differences in, say, table manners can, in most cases, be rather easily resolved, conflicts over differences in philosophical perspectives and worldviews pose much greater difficulties. Such difficulties raise the question of whether it is possible to formulate more general criteria by which worldviews can be evaluated, especially when the worldviews of different cultures turn out to be inconsistent with each other. One possibility is the development of a *metaphilosophy*, which can be defined simply as philosophizing about philosophy (Williamson, 2007; Overgaard, Gilbert, Burwood, 2013). Well-established subfields of metaphilosophy include meta-ontology, meta-epistemology, meta-aesthetics, and meta-ethics. In the field of intercultural communication, there have been calls for the creation of a meta-ethic that could be applied to communication across cultures, which would involve taking the total situational and cultural context in which an action occurs into account (Barnlund, 1979; Ting-Toomey, Chung, 2005, chap. 13). Metaphilosophy concerns itself with the disciplinary boundaries, goals, and methodologies of philosophy. Each of these concerns will be examined next from an intercultural perspective.

Disciplinary boundaries

The boundaries between religion, philosophy, and science are often blurred, a tendency which needs to be taken into account if our aim is to make cross-cultural dialogue on norms as inclusive as possible. Social norms and

worldviews are often embedded in traditional beliefs and religious precepts, which vary from culture to culture. To the extent that such beliefs are held as a matter of faith or dogma, they cannot be questioned or subjected to critical reflection, which is often what makes dialogue between people holding different religious views so difficult. Perhaps the best that can be hoped for in a dialogue between participants who are insistent on their own beliefs and not open to the beliefs of others is that they will come away with a better understanding of each other. Of course, some religious traditions (and individuals) are less doctrinaire and more open than others to different perspectives, which provides increased opportunities for the participants not only to share their views with each other, but also to learn something new from the views of others. One current trend in inter-religious dialogue is in fact a move away from the competitive rivalry of the past towards a more respectful, cooperative attitude—at least among those who are talking (Cornille, 2013).

To the extent that science concerns itself solely with discovering facts about the world, it has little to say directly about norms, although norms can certainly be informed by science. Questions about values and meaning are, as a rule, intentionally bracketed out of scientific inquiry. Unlike dogmatic approaches to religion, science is willing to subject its claims to critical reflection and debate. Much of the conflict between science and religion is due to the fact that science restricts itself to understanding the world in its physical, psychological, and social dimensions, while religion often posits the existence of realities that in some way transcend those dimensions. The methodology of science is based on empirical observation and theoretical explanation, which suggests that if all people observe and reason about the world in the same way, they should be able to reach agreement about how the world actually is. Science, so understood, transcends particular cultures and aims at universality. Nonetheless, science itself is embedded in particular cultures and social practices, and the model of Western science is by no means universal. Recent studies of traditional and indigenous knowledge systems suggest that all scientific traditions, whether European or non-European, are local knowledge systems embedded in particular cultures that sometimes converge and sometimes conflict with each other (see Harding, 1998; Dei, Hall, Rosenberg, 2000; Aikenhead, Michell, 2011).

Philosophy incorporates elements of both religion and science in its own practice. With science, philosophy is willing to subject its claims to critical reflection and debate, and with religion, philosophy is willing to consider topics related to values and meaning that are methodologically excluded from science. Philosophy is open to all questions, but also open to submitting any answers it arrives at to public scrutiny and dialogue, rather than simply accept them dogmatically. The starting point for philosophy is simply asking questions and trying to answer them, and, as has been suggested, many of these questions are normative questions related to how people should think and act. Intercultural

philosophy has both a critical and a constructive side. In its critical dimension intercultural philosophy attempts to examine cultural norms in terms of criteria that may themselves be contested and revised. In its constructive dimension intercultural philosophy attempts to generate new, more comprehensive perspectives that enable people from different cultures to interact more effectively both with each other and with the world they inhabit.

Goals of philosophy

Should the aim of philosophy be to arrive at ultimate truth, to pursue knowledge for its own sake, or to help us understand ourselves better and get along with others in the world? Karl Jaspers (1953) famously claimed that the foundations of both religion and philosophy were developed relatively concurrently, but independently, in India (Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism), China (Confucianism, Taoism), the Middle East (Zoroastrianism, Judaism), and ancient Greece (the origins of the Western philosophical tradition) during an *Axial Age* lasting from approximately 800 to 200 B.C.E., a period that has been described by Armstrong (2006) as constituting a “great transformation” in the history of human thought. While there are certainly overlaps in these ancient traditions, as Mall has suggested (see above), each of them nonetheless has different lines of development, making it difficult to discern any *philosophia perennis* running throughout the history of human thought and across cultures. The views of a contemporary scientific materialist have very little in common with those of an ancient Confucian scholar, and it is questionable how a *philosophia perennis* might be able to resolve the differences between them.

Given the wide range of differences among philosophical traditions (well-documented in Smart, 1999a), the goal of arriving at ultimate truths that can be agreed on by the whole of humanity has proven elusive. Rather than look for ultimate truth, a more plausible goal for intercultural philosophy may be to look at what various philosophical traditions have to offer, to identify similarities and differences, to critically examine them, and then to possibly integrate perspectives from different traditions into a more comprehensive way of thinking. The result would not be ultimate truth in any universal sense, but simply a wider point of view that would enable people to create, or *construct*, common ground where none existed before.

As we have seen, norms involve making judgments about the rules and standards that should be adopted by individuals and social groups. The various norms that people subscribe to may be held either consciously or unconsciously, rationally considered or not. *Implicit norms* are norms one holds “without thinking.” They are so much a part of our lives that we rarely acknowledge having them and may only become aware of them when we interact with someone whose norms are different from our own. *Explicit norms*, on the other hand, are norms that are openly recognized, understood, and talked about. One goal of

intercultural philosophy is to bring the norms that people may hold unconsciously to a level of conscious awareness, so that they can be recognized and reflected upon. When such norms are studied formally, they become part of the subject matter of philosophy, where they can be subjected to critical reflection.

Philosophical methods

Philosophical methodology can be characterized in at least five different ways, all of which are relevant to a philosophy of intercultural norms. *Descriptive philosophy* uses empirical research methods to discover what people from different cultures actually think about a given topic. Examples include different cultural attitudes towards a range of bioethical issues (Macer 2006). The philosophical traditions of various cultures have also been seen as providing conceptual resources that can be utilized in contemporary discussions of environmental ethics (Callicott, 1994; Callicott, McRae, 2014). The goal of descriptive approaches is not to reconcile all of these different perspectives into a single set of first-order (*a priori*, foundational) philosophical principles or norms, but rather to see what each might be able to contribute to intercultural dialogue aimed at resolving mutually shared problems. Although agreement on first-order principles may be unachievable, agreement on shared forms of action may still be possible.

A rapidly emerging field closely aligned with descriptive philosophy is *experimental philosophy* (Knobe, Nichols, 2008; 2013). Instead of relying solely on the “intuitions” of armchair philosophers, experimental philosophy involves posing hypothetical philosophical problems to research subjects to determine not only *what* they think, but also the reasoning processes that underlie *how* they think about such problems. Nisbett (2003), working in the area of social psychology, provides an interesting case study of cross-cultural differences in how Asians and Westerners think about the self, perception, causation, logic, and other topics. For example, Asians tend to see the self in relation to others, to think holistically, and to acknowledge contradictions (both-and logic), while Westerners tend to see the self as independent from others, to think analytically, and to avoid contradictions (either-or logic). Experimental philosophers have also conducted actual experiments to see how people from different cultures reason about epistemological issues, which show that Asians and Westerners tend to have different, even opposite, responses to questions about whether they can really know or only believe something to be true (Weinberg, Nichols, Stich, 2001). There can also be statistically significant differences in how Asians and Westerners think about semantics (Machery, Mallon, Nichols, Stich, 2004).

Metaphilosophy in an intercultural context concerns itself with the process by which standards and norms are arrived at. One task is to consider how it might be possible to arrive at mutually shared “ground rules” for conducting

cross-cultural dialogue and evaluating perspectives held by people from different cultures. Elmar Holenstein (2003) has suggested “a dozen rules of thumb” that can be used to avoid misunderstandings in cross-cultural dialogues, which address, among other things, issues of equity, rationality, racism, personality, homogeneity, and polarization. Clément Vidal (2012) has considered possible standards that can be used to evaluate worldviews, including objective, subjective, and intersubjective criteria. *Normative philosophy* is concerned with which norms should actually be adopted in cross-cultural situations and how these norms can be justified, while *practical* and *applied philosophy* proceeds to use these norms and principles in an attempt to resolve concrete problems faced by people across cultures (May, Wong, Delston, 2011). The emerging field of global ethics, for example, is specifically concerned with developing normative theories that can be used to address such problems as poverty, war, conflict, terrorism, gender discrimination, and climate change across cultures (Widdows 2011).

A CONSTRUCTIVIST METAPHILOSOPHY

The outline presented above suggests a research program for an intercultural philosophy of worldviews. It is clear that different cultural traditions often provide very different answers to philosophical questions, and evidence is accumulating which suggests that the thought processes people use for arriving at these answers are also subject to historical and cultural variation. Further work in descriptive and empirical philosophy would likely produce additional support for the claim that people neither think nor reason the same way across cultures.

Normative philosophy is useful in making suggestions for how norms can be arrived at and justified. Nonetheless, there can also be differences with respect to the normative positions held by people from different cultures. Not only within, but also between cultures, people often start from completely different premises and arrive at completely different answers to normative questions. Dialogue (and polylogue) between individuals holding different normative positions is often hampered by the fact that arguments are typically made *within* a given position and, thus, can only be validated by those who accept that position in the first place.

Hence, as we have suggested, there is a need for metaphilosophy, which is essentially the reflexive process of submitting both our own views and the views of others to critical reflection. While it is possible to regard metaphilosophy as a second-order discipline, which is able to evaluate philosophical claims from a position above and outside philosophy, it seems clear that metaphilosophy itself is open to conflicting views, which themselves must be evaluated. There is no ultimate objective, *a priori*, foundational position from which philo-

sophical claims can be justified, at least none that is universally agreed upon. Hence, metaphilosophy cannot function as a “referee” in intercultural dialogue but is something that itself must be negotiated. The bottom line is that *how* intercultural dialogue on philosophical topics should be conducted is itself a topic that can only be addressed by those actually participating in a dialogue. If, as we have suggested, the starting point for philosophy is simply asking questions and trying to answer them, then *everything* is open to discussion.

Constructivism is simply one metaphilosophy among others, but it may nonetheless offer useful insights into how cross-dialogue on the norms which support worldviews might be conducted. To say that a norm is *constructed* simply means that since the world itself underdetermines how it should be thought about, valued, and acted in by humans, judgments must be made about what are regarded as appropriate forms of knowledge, values, and ethics. Norms are not given by the world itself but are rather constructed in different ways by different individuals and cultures. If the world did determine how it should be thought about, valued, and acted in, then everyone would think exactly the same regardless of culture and there would be no disagreements. The fact that disagreements occur, however, suggests that there are no universally agreed on norms for determining what is true and false, good and bad, right and wrong, and so on. Rather, there are a variety of ways in which norms can be constructed, and these are often historically and culturally variable. Nonetheless, differences in norms are often a source of conflict both within and between cultures.

How, then, can people from different cultures get along with each other in a globalizing world? Universalist approaches to this question attempt to ground norms on foundational principles held to be applicable to everyone regardless of culture. Relativist approaches contend that since there are no foundational principles which can be agreed upon across cultures, the norms of different cultures must simply be accepted and respected as they are. Constructivism concurs with the relativist position that norms cannot be grounded on universal, foundational principles, but nonetheless argues that relativism fails to show how people from different cultures might be able to work together and successfully interact with each other in the absence of mutually shared norms. Rather than attempt to ground norms on foundational principles, however, constructivism sees norms as being created, or *constructed*, through dialogical processes, both within and between cultures (Evanoff, 2004; 2006). By engaging in intercultural dialogue with others on philosophical topics, it may be possible to arrive at a better understanding of cross-cultural differences and, in some cases, even overcome them.

As a metaphilosophy, constructivism acknowledges that we are all situated in particular cultural traditions, which to some extent limit the views that we are able to entertain and hold. Certainly it is possible for individuals to transcend those traditions by engaging in reflective thought on their own, but it is also possible to widen the scope of our understanding by engaging in dialogue with

others about our differing views and the arguments we use to support them. In doing so, it may also be possible to adopt a more dialectical, constructivist approach, which allows us to reflect critically on both our own and other traditions, and to integrate what we take to be positive elements from each into our own way of thinking, while discarding negative elements (Evanoff, 2009). Nicholas Rescher (2006) adopts a specifically dialectical approach to metaphilosophy, which suggests that while the world is too complex to be fully understood, by placing different views in dialectical tension with each other we may nonetheless be able to gain a wider, more comprehensive perspective.

A constructivist metaphilosophy enables the participants in a dialogue to, first of all, clarify whatever similarities and differences there are in the views being discussed and the methods used for arriving at them. It also encourages the participants to step back from their own perspectives, to gain a wider perspective by considering alternative points of view, and to be open to the idea of changing their own views in light of arguments they find persuasive. Even if one side is not persuaded by the other side's arguments, the two sides may nonetheless gain a better understanding of each other. It is also possible, however, for the participants in an intercultural dialogue to jointly integrate perspectives from each of their respective cultures, leading to the construction of an entirely new, more comprehensive perspective, a process referred to as *third culture building* in the field of intercultural communication (Casmir, 1999; Evanoff, 2000). There are no prerequisites for engaging in these processes other than a willingness to participate in the dialogue itself, and no pre-existing guidelines to inform us how intercultural dialogue should be conducted other than those which the participants themselves create. We are obliged to construct not only the final positions we arrive at but also the methods we use for reaching them. We build the road as we go.

Finally, practical and applied philosophy begins when individuals and groups, whether intraculturally or intercultural, face a problem that must be solved and it ends when a solution to that problem has been found. The standard for success, ideally at least, is when people who are interacting with each other are able to effectively resolve mutual problems in ways that are agreeable to all sides.

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Andrew Fiala

TRANSFORMATIVE PACIFISM IN THEORY AND PRACTICE: GANDHI, BUBER, AND THE DREAM OF A GREAT AND LASTING PEACE

*The great peace is something essentially different
from the absence of war.*

Martin Buber,
Genuine Dialogue and the Possibilities of Peace (1953)

Pacifists imagine a "great peace," to borrow a phrase from Martin Buber. This great peace will uphold justice and respect for humanity. It will not efface difference or negate liberty and identity. The great peace will be a space in which genuine dialogue can flourish—in which we can encounter one another as persons, listen to one another, embrace our common humanity, and acknowledge our differences. The great peace is much more than the absence of war. It is holistic, organic, dialogical, and thick with human relation.

The dream of the great peace runs aground on the reality of petty conflicts, dehumanizing institutions, selfishness, egoism, arrogance, murder, war, and psychopathology. While ordinary selfishness poses a mundane obstacle to the great peace, genocide appears to create a *reductio ad absurdum* argument against the dream of the great peace and against pacifism itself. Critics will argue that *in extremis* a pacifist would be either mad or immoral to remain committed to nonviolence. This idea has been explored by a number of critics who argue that pacifism is primarily for dreamers and idealists, who are not willing to do what is necessary to confront evil and atrocity in the real world.

This paper argues that a moderate commitment to pacifism and nonviolence remains plausible despite the atrocity objection. Some may argue that the term "pacifism" is not applicable to a position that admits that there are exceptional cases in which violence can be justified. But as I have argued elsewhere, there are varieties of pacifism (Fiala, 2004; 2008; 2014a; 2014b). The type of pacifism described here is transformational or transformative pacifism. Transforma-