

Globalization, Mundialization and the Development of the Self

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Philosophy as source and solution to world problems

It is fitting that the theme of the first scheduled World Congress of Philosophy in the 21st century is Philosophy Facing World Problems. The phrasing implies that this is a head-on approach. We are not sneaking in the back door with this theme. And that is as it should be. The most pressing problems of the world are philosophical in nature. They have to do with the age old questions of philosophy such as, what does it mean to be a human being, what is “real” and what is not. In today’s world we are especially aware of different philosophical worldviews and how they conflict. Daily, world media reports on the disparate views of heads of state. And daily, through media and through our lives, we witness the physical and spiritual devastation that result from the clash of ideologies at governmental levels.

Certified philosophers are, let me hasten to say, not to be held chiefly responsible for this state of affairs. We human beings are rational beings and we are all philosophers in the most general and broadest of terms. But philosophers or, as they are more often called, thinkers or intellectuals, have a special role in societies. They have long influenced government policies as advisors and, as history records; there have always been intellectuals who challenge governments’ policies or legitimacy. From time to time, such challenges spawn revolution and chaos. This is not always the case, however, and, especially in the latter part of the last century and into this one, aided by communication technology, many intellectuals have been able to join together in what we have come to call a network of global civil society. They have been able to exert influence for change and remedy a wide variety of issues all of which center on the notion of human rights. Moreover, global civil society concerned with human rights extends well beyond the intellectuals who first propagated it. Indeed, passionate members of a human rights guided global civil society are found in every walk of life in every sort of culture. This trend is cited by some historians and critics as nothing short of miraculous in an era which is also distinguished by its brutality and genocide. The importance of this trend cannot be underestimated for it indicates a growing faith in the power of rationalization for the good of all humankind. Whether it be in the form of communicative reasoning or in the rigorous examination of our understandings of the world, the prominence assigned to this capability of our rationality should give us heart as we tackle the world’s problems at their core: that is, the ideas that have made or contribute to those problems.

I have chosen to look closely at cultural identity and globalization, two broad conceptualizations that, for at least the last few decades, have posed several serious, even world-threatening, problems. The first of these has developed under a worldview which posits the notion that individual cultural identities are pervasive, deep and immutable. According to this view, certain cultures are destined to always be in conflict with those that do not share similar ways of viewing material and spiritual life. To survive, similar cultures must band together and consciously reaffirm their shared values. Only in this way can they ward off the

challenges of those individual cultures or, more probably, constellation of cultures which will also be banding together to try to impose their views on the world order.¹ For those who subscribe to this notion, not only are cultural values immutable and pervasive throughout any given culture, as well, clashes between dissimilar cultures are inevitable.

When this view is carried to its logical extremes, the second conceptualization, globalization, is always a villain. One might argue that the term globalization itself should be considered innocuous, not villainous. After all, it simply refers to the processes by which knowledge and ideas, including customs and values are introduced to one place from another. To be sure, a particular process, like colonization, is nefarious in nature and compromises even the most humane of introduced changes, such as improved medical care, for example. But should the globalization, that is the introduction of certain medical technology in this case, be considered evil, or, at best, undesirable? The answer is yes if culture is immutable, and must only develop out of its own traditions. In that case, any changes are undesirable if they can be attributed to another culture's influence.

Such globalization and cultural identity theories are appealing because the evidence they provide is compelling. None dare dispute the losses endured and destructive changes wrought in any culture that has been oppressed by another culture through the most infamous routes of globalization such as, occupation and colonization, or the present day atrocities perpetrated upon vulnerable populations through the practices of unregulated economic globalization. Assuredly, the interactions involved in various globalizations and cultural identities are reasonable causal factors for the ills of the world. Nonetheless, to argue that cultural identities are immutable, that globalization exists outside the realm of human agency, and that interaction between the two is the inevitable cause of world problems is to give them an invincibility and omnipotence that neither possesses when they are seen in relationship to other variables of the human condition.

In this paper, I am going to place them in that relationship and examine them from a modern perspective of the development of self. This more comprehensive perspective allows room for competing theories of co-existence because it encapsulates more of reality. Indeed, in this perspective, we need not see the globalization of human rights and civil society as 'miraculous.' Rather, some of us may even be tempted to see that particular globalization as, at the least, an inevitable plausibility in a worldview perspective which goes beyond static determinism and, instead, encompasses the human capacity to reason, imagine, empathize, communicate and act.

The social dynamics of individual and collective lives

The narratives played out by individual and collective lives are shaped by complex social, experiential interactions with and within the dynamics of history, cultures, cultural identities, globalizations, self and selves. And no one of these can lay claim to the complete sculpting of humankind's

¹ This view from a Western perspective is best articulated by the Harvard political theorist Samuel Huntington in his 1966 book *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

destiny. Neither can any one of them exist without the others. If we could but consult an oracle as to which is the most powerful of them all, I suspect the oracle would answer in true oracle fashion that “Neither one nor all combined are as powerful as the common glory and bane of all humanity which interprets and drives them all.” And what is that common glory and bane, humanity’s blessing and curse? It is human rationality and, some would insist, the power that rationality wields. Thus, in order to explore these entities which shape our lives in terms of the one which names and drives them all, let me begin with examining the formation of that ubiquitous s rationalist, the self. After all, powerful as ideas potentially are, they do not exist without thinkers. Nor do narratives exist without narrators.

The lifeworld

With the notion of dynamic and constant flow of interaction among self, selves, history, globalization, cultures, cultural identities and more, the stage is set to present the development of the self in the phenomenological and hermeneutical terms of the lifeworld. Lifeworld owes its name and essential essence to Edmund Husserl, the father of phenomenology, though it moved out of the orbit into which he placed it long ago. For him, the lifeworld, (Lebenswelt) of every individual was prescientific. But for phenomenologists today, science is very much a part of virtually every individual’s lifeworld. The world one is born into, and in which and with which one constantly interprets, interacts and reconstructs meaning, is imbued with history and therefore, certainly, with science at every level. Every contribution of science to the lifeworld changes it and influences not only how we view things but also even what things we will view. Those of us who wear spectacles or contact lenses are aware of the power they confer upon us when we remove them. But such awareness is not afforded us by other technological phenomena. Nor are we always aware of the limitations technology places upon us. What is it that we do not see, for example, in our media based realities? Are we as blinded by media’s selectivity as is a king who sets his spies throughout his kingdom to see who speaks for him and who against him, but who chooses not to ask about the visible effects of his policies and laws of those who speak one way or another, or, for that matter, on those who are silent?

The interpretive and interactive relationship of the self to the experiential environment that is the lifeworld is impossible to encapsulate. Its gestalt is, perhaps, best grasped through art and intuition. For me, the gestalt of the lifeworld is romantically and grandly, but deftly, described by a great proselytizer for democracy and inclusivity, the 19th century American poet Walt Whitman. “There was a child went forth everyday/ ” he tell us, “and the first object he looked upon, he became,“ and more than that, “that object became a part of him.”

What Whitman’s wondrous child sees, he acts upon, and in turn, those objects, people, places and ideas, act upon him. The child both takes unto himself and leaves a part of himself in his lifeworld. It is always a lifeworld of contrast and complexity. Even in the bosom of the family it is a world of “affection,” replete with the grace of “mild words,” but it also a world of the “mean, anger’d [and] unjust.” It is a world steeped in historicity wherein, even in the child’s earliest days, he learns from “the family usages, the

language, the company, the furniture, the yearning and swelling heart” a “sense of what is real” and even, “the thought of what if after all, it should prove unreal.” In sum, he learns how to think, to doubt, to question even in the bosom of his family culture. Each day that the child goes forth he carries his sheltered, first lifeworld, that is, his homeworld, with him and returns to it from the broader lifeworld with that broader lifeworld also now a part of him. And thus, the going out and coming back to the seeded values of the early and intimate homeworld continues. It is not only that early formative homeworld that is carried back and forth, for that homeworld changes, expanding itself into the lifeworld that goes out each day. All that the child sees and interprets and interacts with becomes “part of that child who went forth every day, and who now goes, and will always go forth every day.”² I cannot improve on Whitman’s visionary depiction of change, continuity and interaction in the lifeworld. Nonetheless, my thesis here depends upon explication of some of the parts in the whole, and I leave Whitman to do just that.

All of us are born into particular communities, inheriting, simply by the accident of our births in time and place, a language and a culture infused with ways of interacting with members of our respective communities and environments. Our communal environment itself is dynamic, ever shaped by flowing, changing histories of countless generations, countless interpretations and reinterpretations of past and present. Our first environment is heady enough, to be sure, but it is a sheltered one in the sense that, as infants, we are generally confined to interactions within a set circle of caregivers. Into the micro-community that surrounds our birth we arrive, equipped to connect to each other as human beings and to develop our individuality through various modes of human existence.

The role of innate emotions, instincts, and impulses: how nature meets nurture

The activities of communal existence, centering upon such modes as work and play are infused and propelled by emotions, instincts and impulses such as love, hate, fear, will to power, and the need for intimacy. I doubt that I could ever name all of these impulses. Every philosopher who tackles this aspect of the self strives to provide more and more nuances into these innate human traits which unfold only in human society. William James, much concerned with the formation of the self, compiled a long list that includes empathy and sympathy, sociability, greed and more. I find that it is instructive to make one’s own list from that which one knows of self and others from both the present and from history. All of the impulses, motives and emotions that one can imagine are likely inherent in every human being and brought to the fore through interaction with others very early on. We do not learn these traits and impulses. Rather we learn how to express them in our particular cultures through the modes of our activities. These modes too, it must be noted, are far more nuanced and textured than terms such as “work” or “play” can reveal. Some phenomenologists suggest many more categories. Others place an infinite variety of societal modes under but a few headings. Should art and worship be combined, for example? Can both be categorized under “play” in some broad sense? But it is not the numbers of rubrics we use in categorizing the various modes of existence that is important here. Of far more import to our theory is the knowledge that within

² Whitman, Walt. *There was A Child Went Forth*. To read this poem in its entirety, type in its name and the poet’s in your favorite computer engine and it will appear.

these modes, at least in part, we learn upon what to focus our innate traits and impulses. That is to say, through our interactions in these various modes, we learn our particular culture's patterns of rationalization regarding the focus and expression of innate universal human traits.

I am a great believer in giving examples to make our ideas more clear. So I thought to inject at least a simple, surface example here. I have settled upon the gesture of looking another person in the eyes. In some cultures, this is a sign of respect, of paying attention, and of openness, declaring one's honesty. In others it is a gesture of defiance, disrespect, even of cursing the person so looked upon. The patterns of rationalization that prescribe the use of these gestures are culture bound and individualistic. However, ways to show respect and ways to show disrespect can be found in every culture. Individuals in any culture are capable of learning how to follow cultural prescriptions for behavior and thought, how to appear as if they are following them but not to be doing so, and how to defy and rebel both openly and surreptitiously. Each of these things is learned as part of a given culture's patterns of rationalization. Even so, we cannot say that individuals are somehow programmed to learn how to follow the herd in their respective cultures. It is more complicated than that. Individuals are programmed to learn the rules of their respective cultures. They learn how to unconsciously function with those rules.

Each individual is born with unique genetic and biological wiring, so to speak. Even in the unlikely event that two infants might be treated in exactly the same manner, those two infants would invariably respond to the treatment differently. Moreover, we know that even in the smallest, most seemingly uniform of communities, there are varied expressions of emotions and ways of thinking. Furthermore, individuals respond to these models out of their own unique genetic, biological make-up in addition to their past experiences. We do not know the combination of nature and nurture that contributes to the continual development of the self. But we do know that the ideas which govern an individual's behavior develop in socially communicative, experiential contexts. Each of us interacts with the understandings others express in their actions and interactions. Each of us constantly interprets the interplay of understandings and expressions so that meaning itself is constantly being reorganized and changed. Thus we might say that ideas beget ideas. Moreover, all ideas are influenced and nuanced by changing contexts and the ways in which individuals respond to those contexts. If individuals are programmed to do anything, it is to become active agents in the changing of social contexts. For the self is always an active player in the lifeworld.

Another player with which the self interacts is globalization, in its many and complex manifestations. In its most literal sense, globalization is the processes by which ideas are spread from one part of the globe to another. As such, it has always played a tremendous role in the nuancing of ideas that takes place when they move from one global context to another. We are told, for example that many of the indigenous people of what came to be known as the Americas did not have a concept of land ownership. Instead, they saw themselves as part of a harmony of land, sky, water and animals. From the eloquent speeches of conquered chiefs, we know that they came to understand the concept of land ownership as a notion originating with Anglo/Europeans. Alien to them, they came to see the concept as a source of conflict, and could fit it into their worldview only as a notion that motivated the Anglo/Euro other.

Individual land ownership has never really been incorporated into Native American value systems. However, their rejection of this globalized notion in the form presented to them adds to the total global understanding of land ownership: if nothing else, it can be argued that the notion of ownership of place is not innate to all human beings.

Globalization and mundialization

Ideas which come from the outside, that is which are globalized from a culture outside our own may be recognized as different and analyzed as different and/or similar, but they become our own only if they connect in some way with the deep structures and schemata of our own culture's value systems. When a connection can be made, the concept is transformed so that it takes on the features of our own culture. Many indigenous North American tribes now live on land reserved for them by the US or Canadian governments. Instead of sharing all land with other living beings, they have accepted a parceled out place in which to practice their belief of living in harmony with land, sky and living things. An outsider can see a transformative accommodation to the ownership concept only dimly here because property ownership does not enter into this accommodation. Nonetheless, that individual aboriginal people collectively share community life on 'allotted' land is a transformative accommodation to the worldview they once held with the worldview globalized by the invading settlers several centuries ago. On the surface, they assume a Euro-centric concept of ownership to the extent that they refer to the land as belonging to their tribe, their space in which to live in non-ownership harmony without interference. For example, in negotiating fishing and hunting rights in terms of season and the like, tribal authorities argue that federal laws do not pertain to tribal members living on allotted tribal land since their tribal relationship with the environment is based on a concept of harmonious sharing with all living creatures and therefore cannot be regulated by human made laws.³ Humans, after all, are only one set of living creatures among many.

Transformative accommodation of the schemata of what is alien to our own schemata of orientation toward the world goes far beyond globalization, which is simply the method of transfer of ideas or the product of ideas from one part of the globe to another. The method of transfer is certainly important and does indeed play a central role in transformative accommodation. The slave trade, colonialism, war, the internet, and travel are but a few of the ways globalization occurs. But, transforming globalized ideas into our own schemata and making them our own is accomplished through transculturation. By transculturation, I mean the mediation of elements in one culture's conceptual schemata that are compatible with elements in the conceptual schemata of another culture. When transculturation occurs, the schemata in question is transformed all the way around.

This taking in of the broader world into our lifeworld is what I have come to call the mundialization of the home world. And I mean to equate home world with lifeworld here. Globalization refers only to method of movement from one locality on the globe to another. Mundialization, derived

³ I am recalling here articles I read some years ago about fishing rights on an Indian reserve in Canada. However, some of the speeches of famous Chief Seattle (of the US) speak eloquently of the Native American relationship to land as well.

from the Latin word, mundus, or, in English, “world” connotes far more than physicality of place. “To be worldly” is to be experienced and knowledgeable on a broad scale. Thus, for me, mundialization of the lifeworld signals a transformation of the lifeworld by making what is strange and alien in the schemata of others familiar through experiential mediation. Once we are able to fit the strange idea into our own schemata, then the mediated concept becomes objectified in our lifeworld. We can interpret with the concept, reconstructing other schemata as we do so and certainly reconstructing the new concept in the process.⁴ Mundialization, like globalization, is a natural product of the societal nature of humankind.

The role of culture in the formation of the self

With rare, if any, exception, each of us is born into a particular culture whose varied and nuanced patterns of thinking have undergone countless transformative mundializations. Any pattern of schemata must be understood as being influenced by the historicity embodied in a particular society’s institutions and traditions, and in the varied reconstructions of interpretation and meaning derived within the contexts of coexistence. The more pluralistic a society, the more pluralistic will be the individual’s lifeworld. The more varied the ways of thinking and interacting that one can engage in, the more flexible are one’s means of mundialization. The dynamics of the lifeworld concept are best understood in terms of these transformational possibilities inherent in the relationships of the many developed innate capabilities of the self to the elements of the lifeworld. However, the innate capability of reason is the crux in realizing those transformational possibilities. And again, I must reiterate, we cannot posit rationalization without a rationalizer. Nor indeed, can we posit a rationalizer without other rationalizers. Reasoning, like all else in the lifeworld, is in the domain of co-existence.

Allow me here to indulge my penchant for citing simple examples to clarify this generalization. I will posit a negative scenario for the realization of transformational possibilities, simply because Whitman’s poem conjures up a grand sweep of positive images. I want very much to insist that the transformational possibilities may be more negative than positive for many of the world’s individual. So let us imagine Whitman’s child going forth into a world that views him as inferior for one reason or another. How will the child interpret the world and himself now? What can he leave in that world? How does such a self expand in those comings and goings? Surely, that self will not expand in any wondrous, glorious way. Reason is crucial to our human enterprise but it operates only in interactive association with the other sculptors of our destiny. One might well say that reason is nurtured by them.

How cultures change

It is the nature of societies to interact with other societies and to communicatively experience them from their respective worldviews. Every culture owes some measure of its makeup to other cultures, just as our lifeworlds do. Cultures travel and so do ideas. Like lifeworlds, cultures are always transcending and widening their boundaries via globalization and mundialization with its transformative accommodation, its

⁴ Alfred Schutz developed this notion in two essays, “The Stranger” and “The Homecomer” to be found in *Collected Papers II* (The Hague: Nijoff, 1964).

transculturation of schemata. Amartya Sen, arguing that globalization is not a “new Western curse,” reminds us that a millennium ago, paper, the printing press, the crossbow, gunpowder, the iron-chain suspension bridge, the kite, the magnetic compass, the wheelbarrow and the rotary fan were in extensive use in China, but not known or little known elsewhere. The outcomes of their globalization across the world continue to resonate to this very day. In another persuasive example, Sen notes that the decimal system emerged and was well developed in India by the 6th century. At that point Arab mathematicians took it up. However, the system did not reach Europe until the last 25 years of the 10th century. What was its impact when it did? Think about the Scientific Revolution that changed the face of Europe for an inkling of an answer.⁵ And then think of how Europe’s Scientific Revolution affected the Arab world and so on and so forth.

Mundializing rationalizations of inclusivity

Worldview rationalizations have to do with the deepest and most basic human capacities connected to co-existence. Like rationalization itself, those capacities are universal and, again, like rationalization they are realized through co-existence. Earlier in this paper I mentioned some of the impulses, emotions, or instincts that characterize human beings. I was and am still deliberately vague in defining these traits as impulses, or emotions or instincts because I am not sure precisely which of these they are, or if they are not all of these and something more besides. At every turn, scientists now find a new defining context for them. Recently, some geneticists have even speculated that there are genes for selfishness and generosity. We simply do not quite know the material essence of these traits. But they are real enough, and it is the capacity to develop and to express them in societal living that marks us as human beings.

One trait basic to humanity and most directly related to the self in society is one I did not list earlier and that is the trait of “being free.” It is not often listed as a human attribute such as the ability to love or to hate or to be generous and the like. Yet the notion of being free, of knowing that one should be free, is perhaps the oldest of all human traits. It is not simply that human beings are born free in a primitive state only to have their freedom fettered by the necessary constraints of society. Society indeed must place limits on freedom. However, the hard truth of the matter is that it is only through society, and the constraints inevitable to co-existence, that freedom can be understood in any meaningful sense of the word. And that is the case with every conceivable impulse inherent to humankind.

In his ruminations upon what he perceived as the ubiquitous human impulse for freedom, Freud speculated that its origin might rest “in the primitive roots of the personality, still unfettered by civilizing influences.”⁶ Freud acknowledged that civilization, of necessity, must place restrictions on individual liberty. He maintained that the processes of civilization evolve. As each stage becomes more refined “justice demands that these restrictions apply to all.”(Freud, p.60). But there are precious few if any

⁵ Sen, Amartya. 2002. “How to Judge Globalism,” *The American Prospect* vol.13.1 January 1, 2002. See *The American Prospect* online.

⁶ Freud, Sigmund.1951. *Civilization and its Discontents*. New York. Simon & Schuster.

civilizations that have ever achieved the justice of which Freud speaks because the inclusivity demanded by justice, if freedom is to exist for more than a few, has been extremely slow in its conceptualization. It is small wonder then that justice itself has gone through so many crude and bizarre stages. Bear in mind that some of the most civilized nations of the world imprisoned their poor and hungry for stealing bread. Freud is right, of course, that a developed sense of justice must demand inclusivity in the notion of freedom. The concept of justice is still in a process of development. One can but hope that it will continue to develop until the end of humankind.

The inclusivity of freedom has, of course, been rationalized in the past, even in ancient times. Most religions, for example, are founded on an inclusive spiritual freedom. But the inclusivity of freedom in a political sense was only sporadically expressed before the mid 20th century. The United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights of 1948 is credited with being the first to lead toward serious rationalizing on the specificity about the inclusiveness of freedom. And in roughly the same period, history records two activist thinkers who came to terms with the nature of political and spiritual inclusivity as they deliberated upon the means with which to achieve freedom for oppressed peoples. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., who was much influenced by Gandhi, both came to the conclusion that political freedom had to be conceived of as inclusive in the same manner in which spiritual freedom is. Their work stressed this dimension of inclusivity that had not been previously recognized in the political realm: they made clear that the oppressors of freedom are as unfree as the oppressed because, by their acts of oppression, they become demoralized and dehumanized to an even greater degree than the oppressed can. This insight into the true nature of inclusivity was proclaimed in the United Nations Declaration and given historical authority through the personal convictions and actions of such figures as Gandhi and King. It now propels the countless peaceful strategies for change that are initiated and practiced by global civil society groups in the name of human rights all over the world.

Inclusivity and the theories of the world

The recognition of freedom as basic to human nature is by no means a theory of how the world operates. Nonetheless, it must be accounted for in any worthwhile theory. The inclusivity of freedom and the globalization of a civil society, bent upon realizing that freedom for all, point to the fallacies in the notion that cultures are isolated from one another in the most fundamental of ways. Furthermore, it is global civil society that keeps protesting the neo-liberal claim that democracy and prosperity follow on the heels of development, no matter how that development is initiated and carried out. Not only do NGO's and other civil society groups and individuals protest, they offer viable alternatives and remedies. Yet, despite movements, protests, activist and diligent NGO's and the numerous successes which they enjoy, incomplete and dangerously exclusionist theories persist. They appear to be guiding governmental policies and heads of states, sweeping us all toward disastrous conflicts. Can reason and comprehensive theory truly save us?

The Preamble to the UNESCO Constitution offers insightful hope here. Most of us recall that the Preamble begins with these words "...since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed," but we seldom recall a later passage in that same Preamble which speaks directly of governments. It reads,

...a peace based exclusively upon the political and economic arrangements of governments would not be a peace which could secure the unanimous, lasting and sincere support of the peoples of the world, and that peace must therefore be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind.

This passage should remind us of how difficult it is for governments to hold an agenda for peace, freedom and equality in balance with politics and economics. The day may come, of course, when such balance may be achieved. Certainly we must believe that it can come. We can hope for it and work for it. We can push our governments. However, mindful of how long it took for the words of that Preamble to come into being, if, indeed, we are not to fail, we must always look to the minds and hearts of individuals, for it is they-those myriad, miraculous selves- who make up cultures, nations, and civilizations. And, in the end, it is they, -rationalists all- who will nudge, push, badger and guide governments into accepting, developing and practicing the true tenet of justice: the inclusivity of freedom and human rights do.