The Dialogical Turn:
A Review Essay of *Peacebuilding Through Dialogue: Education, Human Transformation, and Conflict Resolution*
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Peacebuilding Through Dialogue is a valuable collection of reflections on the meaning, complexity, and application of dialogue (Stearns, 2018). The collection advances our understanding of dialogue and its applicability in multiple and diverse contexts. In this review essay the general orientation as well as the specific reflections of dialogue in the domains of education, transformative personal development, and peacebuilding will be summarized, followed by a reflection on the dialogical turn in moral and political philosophy; this turn may have foundational significance for dialogue in the domains explored in the book.

Peacebuilding Through Dialogue

In his introductory chapter, the editor of the volume Peter Stearns anchors the inquiry into dialogue by situating it within historical context; he concludes that the practice of dialogue has a long history within the educational processes of teaching and learning. This educational commitment to dialogue originally emerged from within a variety of religious and philosophical traditions, which generally agreed that the practice of authentic dialogue requires internal preparation--the development of particular capacities and dispositions. Grounded in this history is an emergent revival of dialogue throughout the 20th century and into the 21st. This revival has also offered a number of innovations to the conception and practice of dialogue.

Stearns frames the book by pointing to the need to clarify the meaning of dialogue amidst multiple interpretations in various domains that are a consequence of the dialogical revival. The subsequent chapters in the book explore the importance, meaning and potential applications of dialogue in three domains: 1) the conceptions of education as an active process of learning; 2) the interrelationship between internal dialogue and social transformation; and 3) the role of theory and practice of dialogue within the fields of conflict resolution, transformation and peacebuilding. This inquiry is further grounded in the two core principles of dialogue articulated by Daisaku Ikeda (Founder of the Ikeda Center for Peace, Learning, and Dialogue): "overcoming division within our own hearts (p. ix)" and the dialogical generation of mutual understanding and solidarity (p. xi).

Section 1 includes four chapters on the importance of dialogue within conceptions of education as processes of active learning. In the first chapter *Identity, Race, and Classroom Dialogue* Steven D. Cohen provides an examination of classroom practices aimed at the facilitation of honest and open conversation regarding issues of race, identity, and power among American preservice social studies teachers. The aim of his dialogical approach is to encourage critical self-reflection regarding bias, and to develop within future teachers a sense of empowerment as classroom facilitators of critical dialogue concerning these sensitive issues. In the second chapter *Listening and Dialogue in Educators' Reflective Practice*, Bradley Siegel and William Gaudelli explore the movement of the reflective practice of teachers, from internal reflection to dialogical exchange with other teachers. Dialogical reflective practice enables teachers to construct a more authentic personal and pedagogical identity, which they in turn model in the classroom as a necessary condition for peacebuilding. The third chapter, *The*

Presence and Role of Dialogue in Soka Education by Jason Goulah, explores how and in what ways the practice of dialogue emerged in the development of the philosophy of Soka education, and central to that philosophy, how dialogue functions in the process of value creation, in particular the creation of peace as the ultimate value. In the fourth chapter, *Dialogue and Agency: Educating for Peace and Social Change*, Monisha Bajaj and Ion Vlad articulate a critical conception of peace education by examining the relationship between dialogic learning and the cultivation of the transformative agency of students. Dialogic learning entails critical inquiry into presupposed assumptions pertaining to social structures and conditions, including the distribution of power. Through this critical examination, students are empowered to become not only agents of peace, human rights, and justice, but also to become capable of transformative reflection and action; what the authors refer to as "empowering praxis." The development of such empowered agents is at the core of working towards democratic ideals, and in turn an education for peace.

Section 2 of the book explores the interrelationship between internal dialogue and social transformation; how dialogical methods can contribute to conflict transformation and building cultures of peace. In *Compassion in Dialogue* Bernice Lerner explores three meanings of dialogue - as salve, inspiration, and discovery. Dialogue as salve, expresses the power of words to help victims and those in suffering go beyond external oppression. Dialogue as inspiration, speaks to how words inform the minds of others, showing them the way forward. Dialogue as discovery, suggests the developmental enlightening power of opening ourselves to others. In *Bringing Out the Best in Oneself and Others: The Role of Dialogue in Daisaku Ikeda's Peacebuilding Practice,* Olivier Urbain articulates Daisaku Ikeda's comprehensive approach to dialogue and peace building. He explores the question: "What really happens when one person connects with another through verbal exchanges, and what is the impact of this apparently insignificant event on humanity and the world (p. 105)?" He explores four core aspects of Ikeda's philosophy that connect with the relationship between dialogue and peacebuilding: the goal, to bring out the best in oneself and others; dialogue as continuum between inner transformation and peacebuilding; and communicative creativity through the arts, and the praxis of dialogue as preventive peacebuilding.

In *The WISE Model and the Role of Self As Observer in Genuine Dialogue,* Meenakshi Chhabra explores transforming the internal essential dialogue between the "internal other" and "the self as observer" as the key to changing the dynamic of conflict with external others. Dialogues concerning encounters of deeply opposed beliefs involve the interplay between two others, internal and external, and two selves, "self on stage" and "self as observer". The internal other is the internalized and reified perception of the external other as well as one's internal beliefs regarding that other. The internal other is a source of fear, anxiety, and resistance to the external other, which the self on stage experiences, as well as being it's voice. The self as observer is the judicious impartial spectator and the source of possible transformation. It is the activation and guidance of the self as observer that is the key to opening into a transformative dialogue with the external other. *In Values, Dissonance, and the Creation of Shared Meaning,* Gonzalo Obelleiro explores the challenges of dialogue in a context of value division and polarization. He suggests that we should conceive and understand dialogue as an encounter, a shared space, for the creation of shared meanings and the reconstruction of values. This process of dialogic encounter is illustrated within an encounter of police and criminal justice reform activists in the context of an educational seminar.

Section 3 explores the role of the theory and practice of dialogue in the fields of conflict resolution, transformation and peacebuilding. In *Dignity Dialogues: An Educational Approach to Healing and Reconciling Relationships in Conflict*, Donna Hicks identifies "*the human response to violations of dignity*" as the key factor in international conflict resolution and peacebuilding. She proposes that "Conflict is rife with dignity violations"; violations of one's sense of self-worth and the healing of such "dignity wounds" are seen as the key to conflict transformation. In turn, she argues that the establishment of cultures of dignity are the foundations of peace. Hicks maintains that the exploration of dignity violations as the source of conflict, and their healing and protection, is best pursued through dialogue as shared learning.

In *Changing the Conversation: Emerging Better Dialogue Practices Through Four Lenses,* Mark Farr summarizes and explores four philosophical models of dialogue: Sustained Dialogue, religious dialogue, Buddhist dialogue, and a reconciliation model of dialogue. Based upon this exploration he concludes that a model of good dialogue should have intellectual

rigor, allow for off-line opportunities for the development of relationships, possess a strong philosophical basis (whatever that basis might be), and should generate trust.

In *Dialogue and Mutual Recognition: The Practice of Interreligious Encounters,* Andrea Bartoli and Charles Gardner maintain that mutual recognition, that is, the mutual acceptance of the *presence* of the parities to the dialogue, is a necessary condition for dialogue. However, dialogue transcends acceptance into a developmental process of becoming more fully human together. In *Modes of Peacemaking Dialogue* Susan H. Allen presents a multidimensional model of peacemaking dialogue. She surveys a number of models in order to uncover possible core characteristics of peacemaking dialogue:

- Dialogues are learning opportunities.

- Dialogues engage the moral imagination.

- Dialogues engage impartial outside facilitators.

- Dialogue honors participants as meaning makers possessing dignity.

- Dialogues will shift in focus between understanding, analysis, and planning.

These elements characterize peacemaking dialogue as a learning process. Finally, in *Dialogue and Demographic Complexity,* Ceasar L. McDowell presents an insightful conception of social pluralism as "demographic complexity", which often generates social conditions of polarization, segregation, and conflict. He asks whether, and on what grounds, a public infrastructure necessary for democracy and justice could be mutually designed and recognized under the conditions of demographic complexity. In response, he outlines the design of two types of public dialogues he considers to be essential to establishing a public, civic infrastructure: Designed Public Dialogues and Ambient Dialogues. Within these forms of public dialogue, McDowell argues that people will have greater opportunities to find their *voice.*

The insightful reflections offered in this volume suggest many common elements concerning the question of what is 'meaningful' in the dialogic revival as it relates to peacebuilding in the three domains discussed above. This reviewer would like to reflect upon an additional domain of dialogue

that is implicit in the assumptions underlying many perspectives offered in this book, a domain that could be seen as foundational to the meaningful application of peacebuilding through dialogue: the dialogical turn in moral and political philosophy.

The Dialogical Turn in Moral and Political Philosophy

In the second half of the 20th and the first half of the 21st centuries a *dialogical turn* in moral and political philosophy, in particular theoretical considerations of justice, has occurred. Dialogue is at the very center of our current understanding of ethical and moral inquiry and justification. Dialogue within this domain is arguably foundational to many other domains, for example dialogue in the domains of teaching, personal and interpersonal transformation and development, and resolution and transformation of conflict and peacebuilding explored in this book. Dialogue in these domains often involves basic ethical and moral claims, as well as being grounded in ethical values and moral principles, such as dignity, equal worth, human rights, and justice. Given that normative considerations are central to the meaning of dialogue and its application to the three domains explored in the volume, reflections upon this normative dimension of moral and political philosophy are seen to be relevant and illuminating.

The two dominant modern (Enlightenment) moral theories, Utilitarianism and Kant's deontological theory, proceed from a subjectivist orientation. Utilitarianism defines moral rightness in terms of the maximization of aggregative utility, wherein utility is defined as an individual's subjective state of affairs, such as preference satisfaction. The utilitarian calculation is thus based in the equal consideration of individual subjective states.

From a different perspective Kant also proceeds from a subjectivist perspective. He maintains that in the process of moral justification "... we merely make reason attend ... to its own principles." (Kant, [1785] 1964, p. 404). In other words, the criteria of the justifiability and validity of moral norms can be constructed from within the presuppositions of reasonable moral judgment, that is, solely within the reason of the individual; a process of internal subjective reflection.

Subsequently in the development of moral theory, there has been a shift from a subjective to an intersubjective orientation, which entails a significant dialogical turn, in the sense that dialogue has come to be understood as central to the processes of ethical and moral justification. It is recognized that the hallmark of human reason of all kinds - theoretical, practical, and instrumental - is that its validity is grounded in intersubjective mutual understanding and agreement (Habermas, 1984; Habermas, 1995; Habermas, 1996; Habermas, 2011). Justification is inherent in reason for it constitutes the offering of reasons. However, reason is not solely subjective and internally focused, it is directed outward toward others. This is true of moral justification as well. As the moral philosopher Rainer Forst maintains: "Respect for others does not rest on my relation to myself as 'making laws for myself' but corresponds to an original duty toward others … (Forst 2012, p. 55) … It is the 'face' of the other that makes clear to me where the ground of being moral lies (Forst 2012, p. 59)."

This intersubjective call of the other is the basis of the dialogical turn in various approaches to moral and political philosophy, including deontological moral constructivism, communitarianism, Walzer's interpretative approach, and capabilities theory, among others. In the following summary, the dialogical turn within each of these approaches to moral and political philosophy are highlighted.

Deontological Moral Constructivism

Moral constructivism refers to a process of justification of moral norms through a dialogical procedure of deliberation that is structured and defined in terms of *fairness* (Rawls, 1971; Rawls & Freeman, 1999). In this approach Kant's subjective constructivist procedure is *reconstructed in intersubjective dialogical terms*. The validity of the principles of justice, and thus their normative force, are constructed through a fair procedure of dialogical intersubjective justification (Forst, 2012; Habermas, 1996; Rawls, 1971). From this perspective, valid moral norms and ethical values rest upon sharable reasons exchanged in a deliberative, dialogical process (Forst, 2012, 2017; Habermas, 1996; Rawls, 1997; Rawls & Kelly, 2001; Scanlon, 2000). As John Rawls suggests: "The fairness of the circumstances under which agreement is reached transfers to the principles of justice agreed to ... What is just, is defined by the outcome of the [deliberative] procedure itself (Rawls & Freeman, 1999, p. 310-311)."

Communitarianism

A number of contemporary communitarian political theorists maintain that normative justification and political legitimacy can *only* be grounded in a substantive collective ethical identity. Communitarians in turn maintain that individual identity is ontologically dependent upon culture and community. They assert a dialogical understanding of identity as formed in the context of the particularities of comprehensive conceptions of the good life implicit in the culturally thick traditions of various kinds of communities (Sandel, 1984; Taylor, 1994). They maintain that moral rights dialogically emerge out of, and are thus grounded in, the web of human relationships which constitute communal life (Sandel, 1984; Sandel, 2009). It is maintain that valid justification of political norms is based upon collectively shared values forged out of communal dialogical relationships (Macintyre, 2007).

Michael Walzer's Interpretative Approach

Working within Communitarianism, Michael Walzer argues that morality is neither discovered in the fabric of reality (e.g., religious ethics, natural law ethics), nor is it constructed (moral constructivism) (Orend, 2000; Walzer, 1983, 1987; Walzer & Miller, 2007). Walzer argues our own communities and cultures are the ultimate source of morality; and therefore, we do not need to discover or invent morality, we need to interpret it, which entails *dialogue* with others about the *meaning* of ethical goods and values. Fidelity to the deepest meaning of our most cherished values uncovered through a dialogical process of interpretation is the ethical standard of justification.

Capabilities Theory

In Amartya Sen's capabilities theory of justice, what is just is defined as that which promotes the realization of the combined index of capabilities of members of society as determined by the methods of social choice theory, comparative assessment, open impartial scrutiny, and public reasoning (Sen, 2009). In other words, the state of affairs that ranks highest in terms of the combined index of capabilities is the most just/morally right among comparative alternatives. The process of comparative assessment proceeds through public reasoning, open and informed public deliberation,

which tests the validity of the assessment. The pursuit of justice for Sen, can therefore, only proceed in terms of open, impartial dialogue among citizens as the exercise of their public reason.

These examples highlight a significant *dialogical turn* in various approaches to moral and political philosophy, placing dialogue at the center of ethical and moral justification. Dialogue within moral theory is arguably foundational to the domains explored in this volume, as the use of dialogue within these domains often involve basic ethical and moral claims. In addition, dialogue often finds its grounding in basic ethical values and moral principles, such as dignity, human rights, and justice.

In conclusion, the collection of reflections on the dimensions of dialogue in peacebuilding offered in the book makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the dialogic revival. This volume elaborates and refines our understanding of the emerging, intersecting themes of this dialogical turn, as well as it's application and practice in basic domains of peace education, including the important foundational work of Daisaku Ikeda. These intersecting themes include: openness to diverse ideas and suggestions; a means for addressing conflict; mutual recognition and understanding; inner preparation to develop dialogic capacities; and respect for the dignity of others, among others. Although these reflections and applications manifest in a variety of ways and contexts, uncovering and elucidating these emerging unitary themes is sure to invigorate practitioners, authors and researchers; any student and/or practitioner of dialogue, including peace and justice educators, will find important value in this collection of essays from a diverse range of scholars and practitioners. This volume offers in-depth and rigorous insight into the theory and practice of dialogue in education, personal development, and peacebuilding, insight that seems of even greater ethical and political importance today.

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