

SITUATED COSMOPOLITANISM, AND THE CONDITIONS OF ITS POSSIBILITY TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGUE AS A RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGE OF DIFFERENCE

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ABSTRACT: The challenge of accommodating difference has traditionally proved highly problematic for cosmopolitanism proposals, given their inherently universalistic thrust. Today, however, we are acutely aware that in failing to give difference its due, we stand to perpetrate a significant injustice through negating precisely what differentiates diverse groupings and confers on them their identity. Moreover, in an increasingly pluralistic and multicultural world it has become clear that doing justice to difference is an essential prerequisite for the internal flourishing as well as peaceable coexistence of diverse cultural and other groupings. Accordingly, as a corrective for the homogenising presuppositions of highly a universalistic and decontextualised template like the Habermasian, the present paper defends the need for a situated, dialogical approach that can not only accommodate difference but also treat it as a resource for promoting mutual understanding and potentially transformative learning. In thus defending the merits of a situated, dialogical template, the present paper also seeks to shed light on the conditions of its possibility. To this end, I argue the need to transcend significant structural limitations inherent in the Habermasian discourse model, while aspiring to preserve and enhance its distinctive strengths. Accordingly, I press the case for a thoroughgoing reappropriation of such core Habermasian tenets as the symmetrical reciprocity requirement, the anticipation of consensus as outcome, and a one-sided emphasis on argumentative deliberation as the sole acceptable means of achieving this. Proceeding thus, I defend the merits of a situated cosmopolitanism grounded in plurivocal transformative dialogue as a counterbalance to an unqualified universalism. Correlatively, I defend openness to otherness under appropriately structured dialogical conditions as the primary prerequisite for a viable cosmopolitanism capable of meeting the needs of an increasingly pluralistic and globalised world. In the process, some notable points of contrast with Richard Shapcott's dialogical template are identified.

KEYWORDS: Cosmopolitanism, Dialogue, Difference, Habermas, Gadamer

Following Kant, cosmopolitan proposals have traditionally been highly universalistic in conception. As such, while they have the merit of highlighting what all peoples share in common, they correspondingly neglect what differentiates diversely situated others. In thus emphasising our common humanity to the extent of neglecting significant national, cultural, or ethnic differences, they unwittingly perpetrate an injustice by negating precisely those factors that confer on diverse groupings their identity.¹ The Habermasian discourse model, centring on a discursive reappropriation of Kant, is a case in point. Nonetheless, as discursively grounded, it embodies distinctive strengths worth preserving.

Most notably, following Kant, it empowers us as citizens to be the authors of the laws and policies by which we are governed, while, departing from Kant, it valorises deliberative discourse as the basis for underwriting this possibility in a 'postmetaphysical' era.² Moreover, in that it conceives of us, as participants in discourse, as truly global citizens with the potential to transcend cultural and ethnic as well as national boundaries, the Habermasian template is genuinely cosmopolitan. Through its commitment to inclusiveness, it further reinforces its cosmopolitan credentials. But herein lies the rub. In promoting an unqualified universalism as the basis for inclusiveness, the Habermasian discourse model cannot do justice to difference in its concrete particularity. On the contrary, we shall see, it emphasises the homogeneity, uniformity, and hence interchangeability of participant standpoints so heavily that it cannot take account of what differentiates these and renders them distinctive. In thus emphasising the standpoint of the 'generalised other' to the extent of neglecting the standpoint of the 'concrete other', it discounts their specific histories, identities, and life experiences, thereby negating the distinctive contribution that diversely situated others could make to the deliberative process. The present paper contends that a thoroughgoing dialogical reappropriation of the discourse model is needed to enable it to live up to its pluralistic and inclusive intent. Moreover, far from being an external imposition, such a reappropriation serves to liberate the dialogical

¹ As epitomised by Shapcott, the problem is that cosmopolitanism 'is seen as championing universal justice and membership of the human community at the expense of cultural diversity and membership of particular communities, with the result that 'universal cosmopolitan justice' continues to be seen 'as in conflict with the goal of maintaining cultural diversity and justice to difference' (see Richard Shapcott, *Justice, Community, and Dialogue in International Relations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 31).

² Robert Fine and Will Smith, 'Jurgen Habermas's Theory of Cosmopolitanism', *Constellations*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2003, pp. 469-87, p. 481.

potential inherent in the deliberative template from the outset but masked by its undue emphasis on homogeneity, uniformity, and consensus.³

In thus highlighting the importance of situatedness, contextuality and difference, the present proposal shares much in common with other recent cosmopolitan proposals that could qualify as 'situated'.⁴ It also has affinities with 'critical'⁵ and 'emancipatory'⁶ cosmopolitanism. Of these it has the closest affinities with Shapcott's dialogical cosmopolitanism, in that both have been strongly influenced by Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics. Nonetheless, the aim of the present project differs significantly from Shapcott's. Thus, while Shapcott undertakes a systematic extrapolation of the significance of Gadamer's dialogical hermeneutics for contemporary cosmopolitan theorising, the present paper seeks to vindicate the contention that a commitment to doing justice to difference in a manner commensurate with the inclusiveness requirement of the discourse model calls for its dialogical reappropriation. In the process, it seeks to clarify the conditions of the possibility for genuine dialogical engagement with others. As we shall see, notwithstanding a common hermeneutico-dialogical affiliation, these differences in guiding orientation give rise to some significant differences in how the dialogical template is conceptualised.

As a first step, let us consider how the case for a dialogical reappropriation of the discourse model receives impetus from the need to transcend the traditional universalism/particularism divide.

TOWARD SITUATED OPENNESS TO OTHERNESS

Of their very nature, then, traditional cosmopolitan proposals suffer from the significant limitation that they tend to exclude difference. In discursive terms, the problem is that while committed to affording all participants a voice, they nonetheless perpetrate an injustice through overlooking or negating the very factors that differentiate diverse traditions or standpoints from others and that confer on them

³ Hence, while, as we shall see, in its standard formulation the discourse model fails to live up to this potential, commentators nonetheless routinely to attribute dialogical attributes to it. In the debate about cosmopolitanism, Andrew Linklater is a case in point (see further Shapcott, *Justice, Community, and Dialogue in International Relations*, e.g., pp. 87, 94, 95, 169).

⁴ E.g. Shapcott, *Justice, Community, and Dialogue in International Relations*, Werbner, 'Vernacular Cosmopolitanism', *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 23, no. 2-3, 2006, pp. 496-98.

⁵ Gerard Delanty, 'The Cosmopolitan Imagination: Critical Cosmopolitanism and Social Theory', *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 57, no. 1, 2006, pp. 25-47.

⁶ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, 'Emancipatory Cosmopolitanism: Towards an Agenda', *Development and Change*, vol. 37, no. 6, 2006, pp. 1247-57.

their identity. In other words, the problem is that traditional cosmopolitan proposals perpetrate an injustice by valorising universalism at the expense of particularism. This problem is compounded by the ever-present threat that universalism will degenerate into an ‘ethnocentric universalism’, whereby one culture or tradition becomes the standard to which all must conform and with reference to which they are judged.⁷

Benhabib’s distinction between the ‘generalised’ and ‘concrete’ other provides a helpful reference point for further conceptualising what is at issue.⁸ Briefly stated, the point is that, as inherently universalising, cosmopolitan proposals promote the standpoint of the ‘generalized other’ at the expense of that of the ‘concrete other’, and correspondingly discount the specific histories, identities, and life experiences of diversely situated others.⁹ In thus valorising the standpoint of the generalised other at the expense of the concrete other, not only does the discourse model perpetrate an injustice by discounting what differentiates us in our situated particularity, it also negates the distinctive situated knowledge that diversely situated participants could bring to the discursive process, to the detriment of participants’ ability to come to understand the issues needing attention in their multifaceted complexity and hence to contribute effectively to their resolution. Another way of making this point which has important implications for what follows is that, in valorising the standpoint of the generalised at the expense of the concrete other, heavily universalising orientations, like the Habermasian, promote a presumption in favour of the homogeneity, uniformity, and hence interchangeability of participant standpoints, at the expense of a concern with what differentiates them and renders them distinctive.¹⁰ To counteract

⁷ Thus for example, in the debate about the cross-cultural implementation of human rights an unqualified universalism can all too easily degenerate into what has been termed a ‘parochial universalism’, which inadvertently valorises Western liberal values and standards at the expense of those of other cultures (see further Paul Healy, ‘Human Rights and Intercultural Relations: A Hermeneutico-Dialogical Approach’, *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, vol. 32, no. 4, 2006, pp. 513-41.).

⁸ Seyla Benhabib, ‘The Utopian Dimension in Communicative Ethics’, in David Ingram and Julia Simon-Ingram (eds.), *Critical Theory: The Essential Readings*, New York, Paragon House, 1991, pp. 388-99, pp. 395-6..

⁹ Thus, as Benhabib puts it: ‘The standpoint of the “generalized other” requires us to view each and every individual as a rational being entitled to the same rights and duties we would want to ascribe to ourselves. In assuming this perspective, we abstract from the individuality and concrete identity of the other.’ (‘The Utopian Dimension in Communicative Ethics’, p. 395)

¹⁰ Notably too, as Benhabib recognises, in the case of the Habermasian discourse model, this is no mere contingent by-product but is directly related to Habermas’ early endorsement of the concept of an ‘ideal speech situation’. While this idealization fulfils the important function of providing a concise summary of the conditions needed to render discursive interaction between participants open and equitable, it does so in a way that effectively neutralises differences in participant standpoint and renders

this kind of abstract universalism, what is needed is the incorporation of a standpoint which

requires us to view each and every rational being as an individual with a concrete history, identity, and affective-emotional constitution. In assuming this standpoint, we abstract from what constitutes our commonality and seek to understand the distinctiveness of the other.¹¹

Equally clearly, however, the problem cannot be resolved simply by reverting to a one-sidedly particularistic orientation as this would simply perpetrate an imbalance in the opposite direction, emphasising difference to the point of excluding commonalities and hence precluding the possibility of real contact and communication between diversely situated others. Instead, a viable contemporary cosmopolitanism must strike a better balance between universalism and particularism,¹² and hence between the generalised and the concrete other. As already noted, a full resolution of the problem presupposes undertaking a thoroughgoing dialogical reappropriation of the discourse model and elucidating the conditions of its possibility. As a first step in this direction, the present paper valorises adoption of a stance of ‘situated openness’ to otherness, akin to the ‘world openness’ lauded by Delanty as a constitutive necessity for an appropriately post-universalistic cosmopolitanism.¹³ As we shall see, it thus seeks to combine an openness to engaging with the generalised other with a commitment to engaging with concretes others in their situated particularity.

From this starting point, we need to go on to reassess other taken-for-granted presuppositions of the discourse model with a view to testing their credentials for inclusion as constitutive features of a viable situated cosmopolitanism. In particular, it is now time to reappraise the ‘symmetrical reciprocity’ requirement which enjoins us to put ourselves ‘in the shoes’ of the other as a prerequisite for experiencing the situation from their perspective, with a view to making the case that, in the interests of doing justice to difference, it needs to give way to a more textured and responsive dialogical reciprocity.

them interchangeable, thereby promoting the illusion of mirror imagery, as discussed further in the next section. For more on this idealisation and its limitations, see Paul Healy, *Rationality, Hermeneutics and Dialogue: Toward a Viable Postfoundationalist Account of Rationality*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2005, pp. 21-4.

¹¹ Benhabib, ‘The Utopian Dimension in Communicative Ethics’, p. 396.

¹² Delanty’s (2002) exploration of models of European identity provides an interesting case study on the need for reconciling universalism and particularism (see Gerard Delanty, ‘Models of European Identity: Reconciling Universalism and Particularism’, *Perspectives on European Politics & Society*, vol. 3, no. 3, 2002, pp. 345-59.) As Delanty notes and as considered further below, cosmopolitanism has both universalistic and a particularistic ‘moment’, and the core challenge is to reconcile ‘thick particularistic identities’ and ‘thin universalistic ones’ (e.g., p. 346).

¹³ Delanty, ‘The Cosmopolitan Imagination: Critical Cosmopolitanism and Social Theory’.

TOWARD DIALOGICAL RECIPROCITY

At first sight, the symmetry requirement, which enjoins us to put ourselves in the shoes of the other and experience the situation from their perspective, would seem to be an unqualified asset in promoting respect for difference.¹⁴ On closer analysis, however, it too can be seen to embody strong presuppositions of homogeneity and uniformity which prevent it from doing justice to difference. To correct for this presumption of ‘mirror imagery’, Iris Young has defended the substitution of asymmetrical for symmetrical reciprocity. However, taking a cue from Simpson,¹⁵ the present paper contends that instead of a simple inversion a dialogical reappropriation is called for. A brief review of key themes in the Young/Simpson ‘exchange’ will help vindicate this contention.

As Young has it,¹⁶ notwithstanding its positive intent, the symmetry requirement is not only impossible to fulfil but counterproductive as well. It is impossible to fulfil because the injunction to trade places with the other embodies a presupposition of mutual identification that cannot stand up to critical scrutiny. Essentially, this is because far from being a mirror image of oneself, the other’s standpoint embodies distinctive features that cannot be vicariously experienced by a differently situated other. In particular, significant divergences in life experiences and personal histories prevent us from directly stepping into the shoes of the other and experiencing the situation just as they do. In addition, there are numerous other situational variables that differentiate our standpoints and that thwart the possibility of interchangeability. Importantly, however, the symmetry requirement also proves to be counterproductive because in perpetrating the illusion of interchangeability, it effectively desensitises us to crucial differences between standpoints. In thus inadvertently negating the very awareness of difference that it is intended to promote, it actually precludes the possibility of truly understanding the other, and simultaneously forecloses invaluable opportunities for mutual learning by impeding the ‘creative exchange’ these differences could produce in the interactions between differently situated others.¹⁷ Young contends that what is required as a corrective is that we invert the standard

¹⁴ The symmetry requirement, deriving from Habermas’ insistence on the need for mutual respect and reciprocity, is an especially prominent feature of Benhabib’s reappropriation of the Habermasian template (see, e.g., Seyla Benhabib, ‘Toward a Deliberative model of Democratic Legitimacy’, in Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1996, pp. 67-94)..

¹⁵ Lorenzo Simpson, *The Unfinished Project: Toward a Postmetaphysical Humanism*, London, Routledge, 2001..

¹⁶ Iris Marion Young, ‘Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought’, *Constellations*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1997, pp. 341-63.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 347.

requirement by substituting *asymmetrical* for *symmetrical* reciprocity, thereby acknowledging that, surface similarities notwithstanding, ultimately ‘each position and perspective transcends the other, goes beyond their possibility to share or imagine’.¹⁸

Challenging Young's assumption that a simple inversion will suffice, Simpson highlights the limitations of a one-sided emphasis on *asymmetry*. In particular, by over-accentuating the differences between standpoints, it could easily mislead us into thinking that we could never really understand an other, construed as so very different from ourselves. To correct for the deficiencies of both *asymmetrical* and *symmetrical* reciprocity, Simpson defends the need for dialogical engagement as the requisite basis for coming to understand the other in a manner that is genuinely attentive to, and respectful of, difference. In particular, he highlights the potential for gaining an increasingly attuned and enriched understanding of the other's situation through engaging in a ‘reversibility of perspectives’ grounded in ‘the back and forth of hermeneutic dialogue’.¹⁹ Importantly, a dialogical commitment to achieving a textured understanding of the other's position does not presuppose trading places with them or even bracketing our own standpoint. Rather, what the ‘respectful understanding of another’ calls for is a willingness to embark on ‘a mutual dialectic of recognition’, whereby each side ‘strives to attain ‘an understanding of what the other takes herself to be doing’, and where each ‘can raise critical questions about the other's position’, and issue ‘reciprocal rejoinders’.²⁰ Not only does this mode of dialogical interaction with the other hold open the prospect of acquiring a textured understanding of how others experience their situation, it also enhances the prospects of learning from them about new possibilities for thinking, doing and being. Elaborating, Simpson points out that as we engage in the requisite ‘reversibility of perspectives, our experiential horizon, composed of background assumptions and values that shape our interpretation of the world, can be broadened in such a way that those assumptions and values can be situated as just one possibility alongside the different assumptions and values of a formerly unfamiliar [viewpoint]’.²¹ In other words, as hermeneutic theorists have it, appropriately structured dialogical engagement with the other can result in a productive ‘fusion of horizons’,²² whereby in the process of attaining a more textured understanding of the other's situation, we

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 351.

¹⁹ Simpson, *The Unfinished Project: Toward a Postmetaphysical Humanism*, p. 105.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 80.

²¹ Ibid., p. 79.

²² Cf. Healy, *Rationality, Hermeneutics and Dialogue: Toward a Viable Postfoundationalist Account of Rationality*, p. 46, Darren R. Walhof, ‘Bringing the Deliberative Back In: Gadamer on Conversation and Understanding’, *Contemporary Political Theory*, vol. 4, 2005, pp. 154-74, pp. 164-68.

can attain insight into an expanded range of possibilities for collective action, beyond those initially envisaged by any of the participants. Notably, Young also envisages concerned interaction with the other having an outcome of this kind,²³ while mistakenly assuming that a simple inversion of the symmetry requirement will suffice to achieve it.

Notwithstanding its contribution to advancing the case for a dialogical reappropriation of the discourse model, the foregoing brief sketch of what dialogical engagement with the other entails clearly leaves much still to be worked out regarding the conditions of its possibility. Reinforcing and extending Simpson's insights, in the first instance it calls for endorsement of 'dialogical equality' and 'comparable validity' as postulates.

TOWARD COMPARABLE VALIDITY AND DIALOGICAL EQUALITY

Elaborating on the requisite conditions for productive dialogical interaction, Simpson highlights the need to take the other's position seriously enough to count it as a potentially valuable response to a genuine concern that we and they both share, instead of dismissing it as having no identifiable relationship with our own concerns and interests. This in turn commits us to investigating 'the possible value of construing reality in its terms', to the extent that, as 'the addressee', we assume the 'obligation of taking the claim seriously enough to enter, along with the sender, a dialogically constituted space of reasons and reasoning'.²⁴ Intended to counteract a tendency peremptorily to dismiss the apparently unfamiliar or foreign, this injunction commits us to interpreting the other's position in light of 'the strongest case' that can be made for it, mindful that 'it is through discovering the real strength of [another's] position that I can learn' from it.²⁵ Ultimately, then, participants in dialogue need to be prepared 'to proceed as if they could learn from, and be challenged by, the other'.²⁶ Reinforcing and extending Simpson's assessment, a productive process of dialectical learning would seem to entail endorsement of 'comparable validity' and 'dialogical equality' as postulates.²⁷

Briefly stated, these postulates stipulate that if the potential for enlarged understanding and transformative learning inherent in our engagement with

²³ Young, 'Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought', see especially secs V, VI.

²⁴ Simpson, *The Unfinished Project: Toward a Postmetaphysical Humanism*, p. 103.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

²⁷ Cf. Paul Healy, 'Self-Other Relations and the Rationality of Cultures', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, vol. 26, 2000, pp. 61-83, pp. 65-8, 71-3.

difference is to be actualised, we need to allow others to articulate their own positions in their own terms and accord them the status of equal partners in the conjoint exploration of a topic, to the extent that we are prepared to allow their views actively to challenge our own 'settled opinion', to modify our preconceptions when they are found wanting, and to learn from what they have to tell us rather than simply asserting the superiority of our own viewpoint. In short, commensurate with Simpson's reversibility of perspectives, the point of these postulates is to enjoin us to stop treating those who occupy different discursive standpoints either as mirror images of ourselves or as denizens of a deficient socio-cultural standpoint who need to prove themselves to us before we will accord them a respectful hearing,²⁸ and instead recognise that they represent a position comparable in value to our own from which we can productively learn. Equally importantly, however, according to the other's position the status of comparable validity does not entail its equal validity. On the contrary, as considered further below, the tenability of each party's views needs to be held open to critical intersubjective appraisal in appropriately structured discursive forums. Hence, a commitment to these postulates also presupposes an accountability requirement whereby each side remains committed to holding its beliefs, values and practices open to principled comparative evaluation by others who occupy different discursive standpoints and to effecting needed modifications when they are found wanting. This requirement derives from a dialogical awareness that in our interaction with diversely situated others, we inevitably issue criticisable moral as well as epistemic claims which these diversely situated others are entitled to contest and challenge. In short, the real point of these postulates is to open up a conceptual space for the principled comparative evaluation of proffered claims with a view to generating an enhanced and more finely tuned understanding of issues of mutual concern. Indeed, the overall intent is to promote transformative learning through a commitment to finding and building on common ground while respecting and preserving difference. From a dialogical perspective, it is in this way that we appropriately carry through on the cosmopolitan ideal of participating in the formulation of the laws and policies that regulate our lives while demonstrating a genuine respect for difference. In other words, it is in this way that we truly contribute to the creation of a 'cosmopolitan public sphere'.²⁹

²⁸ Notwithstanding its intent to be egalitarian and inclusive, it is difficult for the Habermasian discourse model to altogether avoid something of this condescending attitude to other cultures given its belief in what Simpson terms 'the developmental superiority of the standpoint of modern procedural universalism' (*The Unfinished Project*, p. 75).

²⁹ Hans-Herbert Kögler, 'Constructing a Cosmopolitan Public Sphere: Hermeneutic Capabilities and Universal Values', *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2005, pp. 297-320.

Moreover, as we shall now consider, taking a commitment to dialogical equality and comparable validity seriously also entails reconceptualising the anticipated outcome of the deliberative process in terms of enlarged understanding and transformative learning rather than consensus, as the discourse model stipulates.

TOWARD ENLARGED AND POTENTIALLY TRANSFORMED UNDERSTANDING

As is well known, the ideal of a 'rationally-motivated consensus' represents another cornerstone of the Habermasian discourse model. But while few would deny consensuality its merits, from a situated dialogical perspective, the problem is that the anticipation of an idealized consensus, which correlates closely in the original Habermasian template with the postulation of an ideal speech situation and a 'universal audience', perpetuates the illusion of homogeneity, uniformity, and hence interchangeability of participant standpoints that pervades the discourse model and renders it unresponsive to difference. Hence, although an orientation toward agreement does have an important role to play in giving impetus and direction to the deliberative process, an undue emphasis on consensus reinforces the impression that difference is 'something to be transcended' in the interests of achieving (or preserving) unity, and thus inadvertently functions as 'another mechanism of exclusion'.³⁰ Moreover, in sidelining difference as an obstacle to unity, a heavily consensual orientation fails to factor in the crucial role that disagreement and difference have to play in promoting enlarged understanding and transformative learning and hence the indispensable contribution these can make to the emergence of creative new solutions to complex global problems. Given these deficiencies, an unduly consensual orientation could be said to diminish rather than enhance the rationality as well as the moral legitimacy of the deliberative process. As a corrective, endorsement of enlarged understanding as the primary guiding orientation has many advantages over consensus, and is altogether more compatible with the requirements of dialogical equality and comparable validity. Let us consider further why this is the case.

In the first instance, in reinforcing the homogenising presuppositions of the discourse model, a heavily consensual orientation accentuates the problems that we have seen to arise from valorising the generalised other at the expense of the concrete other. In particular, a consensual orientation reinforces the homogenising presuppositions of the discourse model by focussing only on what we have in

³⁰ Iris Marion Young, 'Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy', in Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1996, pp. 120-35, p. 126.

common, while the concept of a 'universal audience, its Habermasian correlate, accentuates the assumed interchangeability of participant standpoints. Through thus excluding from consideration the beliefs, values, and concerns of situated concrete others, a heavily consensual orientation reinforces this failure of the discourse model to live up to its own inclusiveness requirement. The exclusionary tendencies of the Habermasian discourse model are further augmented by its restriction of participation to 'postconventional agents' who have eschewed particularist beliefs and values in favour of an exclusive concern with abstract norms, and who are both capable of and committed to making their case purely in argumentative terms.³¹ Furthermore, in thus focussing only on what we have in common to the exclusion of what differentiates us, the discourse model is epistemically as well as ethically flawed. In particular, in excluding from consideration the situated knowledge that diversely situated participants could bring to the debate, the discourse model effectively precludes the possibility of achieving a textured understanding of the issues under consideration in their multifaceted complexity. Here the problem is that in presupposing the homogeneity and interchangeability of participant standpoints, a heavily consensual orientation dispels the potential inherent in the encounter with difference to challenge entrenched presuppositions and fuel a productive learning process. As Iris Young perceptively puts it, in thus one-sidedly focussing on 'what discussants all share' rather than engaging with difference in a way that allows the beliefs and values of the other to pose a challenge to our own settled opinions, it negates the very stimulus needed to cause participants 'to revise their opinions or viewpoints in order to take account of perspectives and experiences beyond them'. Likewise, by reinforcing our tendency to view others as mirror images of ourselves, it obscures recognition of the situated and perspectival character of each participant's viewpoint, thereby blunting our awareness that precisely because 'the perspectives are beyond one another', there is something important to be learned from proponents of other standpoints 'as they communicate their meanings and perspectives'.³² Consequently, an unduly consensual orientation cannot account for the fact that 'people's ideas about political questions often change when they interact with other people's ideas and experiences', still less that their ideas 'about the conclusion to collective problem solving are also sometimes transformed by listening to and learning about the point of view of others'.³³

³¹ Cf. Shapcott, *Justice, Community, and Dialogue in International Relations*, pp. 122-23.

³² Young, 'Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy', p. 127..

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

As a corrective, the primary regulative orientation needs to be reconceptualised in terms of a commitment to attaining an enriched and potentially transformed understanding of issues of mutual concern through engaging in appropriately structured processes of dialogical interaction, whereby each side strives to achieve a well-grounded understanding of the other's animating concerns and their supporting rationale. As Young has it, through thus 'listening across difference', 'each position can come to understand something about the ways proposals and claims affect others differently situated'; and 'by internalizing this mediated understanding of plural positions', participants can gain 'a wider picture of the social processes in which their own partial experience is embedded.' Moreover, engagement in such a process of mutual learning is by no means a mere optional adjunct, since, as Young points out, the 'greater social objectivity' that results is a necessary prerequisite 'for arriving at just solutions to collective problems'.³⁴ Notably too, this outcome can not be achieved simply by endeavouring imaginatively to trade places with the other nor even, as we have seen, by favouring asymmetrical over symmetrical reciprocity, but only by engaging in what Simpson terms 'genuinely symmetrical' learning processes,³⁵ grounded in active critical engagement with the other in appropriately structured dialogical forums. Embarked on under these conditions the encounter with difference becomes a major stimulus to the development of enlarged understanding through revealing one's own construal of the problem domain as perspectival relative to that of differently situated others. In so doing, it alerts us to the need to factor in their perspective alongside ours if we are to respond to the situation in a way that can do justice to the needs, values, and interests of all concerned. Moreover, provided participants are truly committed to finding creative and inclusive solutions to the problems confronting them, these dialectical exchanges can support an interactive learning process that can transform their whole way of thinking about the problem domain. Indeed, as indicated earlier, under these conditions participants can undergo a 'fusion of horizons' whereby, as Taylor puts it, they learn 'to move in a broader horizon, within which what [they] have formerly taken for granted as the background to valuation can be situated as one possibility alongside the different background of the formerly unfamiliar [position]'.³⁶ As thus conducive to promoting a fusion of horizons incorporating the best insights deriving from multiple perspectives, a dialectical exchange of views embarked on under appropriate dialogical conditions

³⁴ Ibid., p. 128, Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 111-17.

³⁵ Simpson, *The Unfinished Project: Toward a Postmetaphysical Humanism*, p. 75.

³⁶ Charles Taylor, 'The Politics of Recognition', in Amy Gutman (ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1994, pp. 25-73, p. 67.

enables participants to develop a new 'situation definition', an 'enlarged' mode of understanding, embodying creative new possibilities for responding to a problematic situation, possibilities that transcend, and indeed transform, those initially available to any of the participants.

The revised orientation also incorporates several other notable advantages. Most importantly from the perspective of present concerns, an orientation toward enlarged understanding has the decisive advantage of embracing difference as a resource rather than excluding it as barrier to the consensual validation of universal norms. Specifically, it achieves this outcome by challenging the presumed interchangeability of participant standpoints in favour of engaging with difference in a manner compatible with the postulates of comparable validity and dialogical equality. In so doing, it demonstrates a clear recognition that genuine understanding can only be achieved by engaging with participants in their situated particularity. Correlatively, it corrects for a one-sided preoccupation with the consensual validation of abstract norms, by allowing the full range of issues of concern to the parties to the debate to be opened up for consideration. Notably too, disagreement and difference are valorised at the end of the process as well as the beginning. Thus, while the forging of a new situation definition signifies the achievement of a shared, more adequate framework of understanding to which diversely situated participants can subscribe as best articulating the parameters of the problem situation to the extent possible under current discursive conditions, differences may still persist about specific issues as well as about the overall adequacy of the interpretive framework arrived at.³⁷ At the same time, endorsement of enlarged understanding over consensus does not preclude reaching agreement when agreement is possible and desirable.³⁸ However, it does alert us to the fact that, contrary to the guiding presupposition of the discourse model, enhanced understanding is likely to be a prerequisite for achieving a tenable and enduring consensus.³⁹ Accordingly, the revised *telos* has the decisive advantage that, instead of being rejected as an obstacle to consensus, the persistence of disagreement and difference is embraced as a stimulus to ongoing dialectical interaction aimed at achieving an increasingly attuned and textured understanding of the problem domain

³⁷ Importantly, however, as Walhof points out, any residual disagreement is 'of a different sort than that which existed prior to dialogue', given that participants now 'view the subject differently than before by virtue of having engaged in dialogue'. It is the type of disagreement that eventuates when we 'agree to disagree', such that 'we now have a better and deeper understanding of its nature and what it might take to resolve it' ('Bringing the Deliberative Back in', p.165).

³⁸ Cf. Shapcott, *Justice, Community, and Dialogue in International Relations*, pp. 147-48.

³⁹ Cf. Charles Taylor, 'Conditions of an Unforced Consensus on Human Rights', in Joanne Bauer and Daniel Bell (eds.), *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 124-44, pp. 137, 138.

under consideration, thereby paving the way for a response that it is better attuned to the complexities of the situation.

SOME CONTRASTS WITH SHAPCOTT

As noted early on, while the dialogical model here being delineated has considerable affinities with the version defended by Shapcott in virtue of their shared allegiance to Gadamerian hermeneutics, there are some significant points of differences as well. In the present context, the following are especially noteworthy.

(1) Although Shapcott also defends the merits of reaching understanding with diversely situated others over the one-sided consensuality of the discourse model, he significantly underestimates its transformative potential. Specifically, in failing to differentiate reaching understanding sharply enough from coming to stand in the other's shoes, he does not do justice to the possibility of developing a new, and potentially transformed, framework of understanding through conjoint dialogical interaction with the other.

(2) While Shapcott emphatically defends the characterisation of the dialogue model as 'thin' as opposed to 'thick', acknowledgement of its hermeneutic underpinnings and of the distinctive strengths that differentiate it from the discourse model requires that it be characterised as 'thick' *as well as* 'thin'.

Brief elaboration on these significant points of contrast with Shapcott will provide the opportunity to further clarify the distinctive strengths of the dialogue model here being delineated and to further differentiate it from the discourse model.

On the need to accommodate transformative learning

Firstly, while Shapcott explicitly acknowledges the centrality of the concept of a 'fusion of horizons',⁴⁰ he significantly underestimates its transformative implications, due to equating reaching understanding with attaining comprehensibility through putting ourselves in the other's shoes. Thus, on the one hand, he acknowledges that the 'shared meaning' arrived at through a fusion of horizons is 'in an important sense, something new that exceeds and transforms the previous horizons'.⁴¹ But, on the other hand, he undercuts this transformative potential by maintaining that 'understanding oriented towards agreement' 'means simply that the self can "understand" the other's' point of view and has successfully "stood in the other's

⁴⁰ Shapcott, *Justice, Community, and Dialogue in International Relations*, see especially pp. 143-44.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

shoes”⁴² In so doing, he overlooks not only Young's critique of symmetrical reciprocity, but also Gadamer's own strong reservations about our ability to put ourselves in the other's shoes.⁴³ Moreover, in failing to differentiate the kind of enlarged understanding achievable through a fusion of horizons from mere comprehensibility, Shapcott effectively discounts the possibility of transformative learning. For as we have seen, genuine dialogical interaction with the other culminating in a fusion of horizons signifies much more than simply coming to appreciate the other's' viewpoint; it also—and indeed primarily—entails a willingness to learn from it to the extent of having one's understanding of the situation transformed. Accordingly, what is lost sight of by settling for mere comprehensibility is the realisation that through open and sincere dialogical engagement with the other, we can become 'transformed into a communion in which we do not remain what we were'.⁴⁴ As elaborated by Walhof,⁴⁵ the crucial consideration here is that, on dialogical principles, 'once we are drawn in, we do not escape without being changed in some sense. In a genuine conversation, we cannot assert our views and continue to hold them in the same way that we did upon entering the dialogue. Rather, the act of engaging in conversation transforms these views or leads to the articulation of new truths of which we were previously unaware', ie. to a depth of understanding, not previously available to any of the (diversely situated) participants. Importantly, then, in overlooking this factor we negate the possibility of attaining the kind of multiperspectival social knowledge that Young valorises as necessary to transcend the situated knowledge initially available to any of the participants and which, because of its more textured attunement to the problem domain, is a necessary prerequisite 'for arriving at just solutions to collective problems'. Since this would be to the detriment of the dialogue model's ability to function as an effective template for situated cosmopolitanism, it is crucial that this distinctive transformative potential is preserved.⁴⁶ As we have seen, however, to render this outcome possible, we have to

⁴² Ibid., p. 171; cf. also pp. 144, 145.

⁴³ Compare Walhof: 'Gadamer represents this as a fusion because he wants to distinguish his approach from the idea that understanding is achieved by transposing oneself into the other's' point of view' ('Bringing the Deliberative Back in', p. 164; cf. also p.173, n. 4: 'Gadamer thinks this kind of transposition [i.e. 'putting oneself in the position of another'] is impossible').

⁴⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald Marshall, 2nd ed., New York, Continuum, 1989, p. 379.

⁴⁵ Walhof, 'Bringing the Deliberative Back In: Gadamer on Conversation and Understanding', p. 166.

⁴⁶ For an independent defence of the importance of such a transformative 'moment' in a contemporary cosmopolitanism context, see further Delanty, 'The Cosmopolitan Imagination: Critical Cosmopolitanism and Social Theory', especially pp. 35, 42, 44; cf. also Delanty, 'Models of European Identity: Reconciling Universalism and Particularism', p. 351.

go beyond aiming at mere comprehensibility or even symmetrical reciprocity towards engaging with the other on a basis not only of dialogical equality--and hence in a manner commensurate with 'having their truth claims recognised' (as Shapcott stipulates⁴⁷)--but also of comparable validity, such that we take the others' truth (and rightness) claims seriously enough to allow them to challenge our own settled views about the matter, thereby paving the way for the achievement of an enlarged understanding through a productive fusion of horizons.

On the need to construe the dialogue model as 'thick' as well as 'thin'

Likewise, while Shapcott is emphatic in defending the thinness of the dialogue model, the foregoing analysis underscores the need for it to be characterised as *both* 'thick' and 'thin' if it is to live up to its commitment to engaging with situated others in a manner conducive to learning from them. Since the issues at stake here go well beyond the semantic, the matter warrants further consideration, beginning with a brief reprise of Shapcott's rationale for preferring 'thinness' over 'thickness'.⁴⁸

In keeping with Linklater's characterisation of the discourse model, Shapcott is emphatic that the dialogue model must be construed as thin because, in foregrounding the commonalities that unite us rather than the particularities that separate us, thinness is a necessary prerequisite for genuine openness to otherness.⁴⁹ In contrast, for Shapcott, 'thickness' designates a strong communitarian-style attachment to shared beliefs and values which constitutes a barrier to open engagement with otherness. On this analysis, since thickness is construed as being at odds with the openness that is rightly deemed a *sine qua non* for genuine dialogical engagement with others, thinness must be valorised to the exclusion of thickness. But while openness to otherness is indeed a necessary prerequisite for genuine dialogical engagement with others, a one-sided emphasis on thinness fails to do justice to the factor that primarily differentiates the dialogue from the discourse model, namely, its commitment, on both epistemic and ethical grounds, to engaging with concrete others on a basis of comparable validity and dialogical equality in a manner conducive to learning from otherness in its situated particularity. To rectify this shortcoming, instead of being taken as the exclusive benchmark, procedural thinness, appropriate

⁴⁷ Shapcott, *Justice, Community, and Dialogue in International Relations*, p. 172.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, see especially ch. 6

⁴⁹ The advantages of procedural thinness noted by Shapcott include: 'openness to conversational engagement'; being 'consistent with a variety of different forms of association' (*Ibid.*, p. 220); not legislating 'the dimensions of the cosmopolitanism community that it aspires to', nor 'the outcome of conversation itself' (*Ibid.*, p. 221).

only for characterising relations between generalised others,⁵⁰ must be counterbalanced by *thick* engagement with concrete others in their situated particularity. Moreover, the whole thrust of Shapcott's own hermeneutic defence of the dialogue model supports this assessment.⁵¹ Crucially, then, it must be acknowledged that it is only through thick engagement with situated others that real learning of the sort valorised on a hermeneutic analysis and epitomised in terms of a fusion of horizons can occur. Accordingly, we may conclude that while procedural thinness is indeed a necessary prerequisite for genuine engagement with difference, on a thoroughgoing dialogical analysis it will not suffice to settle for thinness. Instead, while incorporating procedurally thin ground rules conducive to facilitating dialogical interaction with diversely situated others on an equitable basis, the dialogue model must likewise reflect a strong commitment to engaging with and learning from concrete others in their situated particularity on a basis of comparable validity as well as dialogical equality. Hence, to do justice to what differentiates the dialogue from the discourse model, it must be construed as thick as well as thin.

Finally, by way of consolidating the case for a dialogical reappropriation of the discourse model, let us now consider why, and how, transformative dialogue can provide a more fitting template for situated cosmopolitanism than can discursive deliberation.

⁵⁰ As Delanty aptly puts it, 'the disadvantage' with such an approach is that it is 'a minimal identity of form rather than of content in that it expresses only a common denominator' ('Models of European Identity: Reconciling Universalism and Particularism', p. 348); and hence needs to be counterbalanced by a thick particularism.

⁵¹ In particular, this is epitomised in his hermeneutic analysis of 'the historicity and linguisticity of human experience', and of the (situated) I-Thou relationship that it supports and which functions as a precondition for a meaningful and productive 'fusion of horizons' (see especially Shapcott, *Justice, Community, and Dialogue in International Relations.*, 136f). In this connection, Shapcott systematically documents the reasons why dialogical interaction must be construed as taking place between situated agents in their concrete particularity (ie. as embedded in their socio-culturally constituted lifeworld) and as actively engaging their distinctive prejudgments and prejudices--and consequently as a 'thick', and not just as a 'thin' mode of interaction between generalised others regulated only by procedural ground rules that abstract from their lifeworld particularities, as the discourse model specifically enjoins. Repeated at several junctures (e.g., pp.150-52, 161f), this hermeneutic recognition of the need for a textured I-Thou relationship between situated participants involving their particularity, their concerns, their horizons of meaning is pivotal for Shapcott's analysis. It is epitomised in his acknowledgment that, unlike the discourse model, the dialogue model 'preserves the emphasis on the abstract other while being more inclusive of concrete otherness. It is abstract in that it is oriented towards the possibility of understanding *any* and all linguistically constituted agents and yet concrete because understanding requires an engagement with all the particularity of agents and their concerns, their horizons of meaning' (p. 173; emphasis in the original).

TOWARD TRANSFORMATIVE DIALOGUE

As contended throughout, the *raison d'être* for a dialogical reappropriation of the discourse model is to rectify the injustice done to diversely situated others by denying them the right to have their distinctive voices heard and factored into deliberations about matters that affect their well being. As we have seen, to remedy the deficiencies of the discourse model, the dialogical template valorises the need not only to treat diversely situated others as equal partners in dialogue but also to accord their views comparable validity to our own. To complete the picture, a further step is needed, namely, to motivate the case for valorising transformative dialogue over deliberative discourse as the more appropriate template. Here again, Young perceptively pinpoints the rationale for this reformulation.

In addition to the factors already considered, a further defining feature of the discourse model is its commitment to the formulation and vindication of proffered claims and proposals in purely argumentative terms. Indeed, for Habermas, it is this unequivocal commitment to the 'unforced force of the better argument' that renders the deliberative process rational and confers on it its authority. But whatever its merits, Young's overarching concern is that as thus defined, deliberative discourse is too formal and rigid a means of communication to enable a diversity of cultural, and other, groupings to articulate their needs and interests effectively. Since an unqualified focus on such a delimited and exclusive style of self-presentation inevitably disadvantages the multiplicity of socio-cultural groupings to whom this style of communication is unfamiliar or foreign, it runs counter to the discourse model's inclusiveness requirement,⁵² and does little to promote mutual understanding or transformative learning. Hence to ensure that a diversity of voices genuinely gain a hearing, this one-sided preoccupation with argumentation needs to be reconceptualised so as to accommodate more informal, narrative styles of communication which can enable participants to articulate and effectively communicate their distinctive experiences and perspectives in their own terms to others who occupy different socio-cultural standpoints. To this end, Young advocates the need to include 'greeting', 'rhetoric', and 'narrative' as important modes of communication, needed to ensure that participants gain a hearing as equal dialogue partners and that their views are not just heard but appreciated on their merits and correspondingly factored into the deliberative process.⁵³ In addition to enhancing

⁵² Young, 'Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy', pp. 123-4, cf. Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, pp. 37-40.

⁵³ Young, 'Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy', pp. 128-32, Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, ch. 2

inclusiveness, acknowledgment of the legitimacy of diverse narrative styles significantly enhances the prospects for transformative learning through making available from each perspective ‘the situated knowledge’ available to differently situated participants, such that ‘the combination of narratives from different perspectives produces the collective social wisdom not available from any one position’.⁵⁴ This paves the way for a fusion of horizons and the emergence of a new situation definition embodying creative new possibilities for thought and action, along the lines heretofore delineated. Indeed, through thus facilitating the interplay between diverse viewpoints, the liberalizing of permissible modes of communication has a crucial role to play in facilitating a thoroughgoing transformation in outlook whereby ‘participants can come to see one another in new ways; problems can be redefined and reformulated; opportunities can be clarified; priorities can be reordered individually and collectively’.⁵⁵ In contrast to argumentatively grounded deliberation in its more restrictive Habermasian sense, these more inclusive, informal and loosely textured modes of communication are more appropriately conceptualised as ‘structured conversation’, or dialogue, with transformative potential. But notwithstanding their significance, Young initially overstepped the mark in calling for ‘an equal privileging of any forms of communicative interaction where people aim to reach understanding’.⁵⁶ Instead, as she now acknowledges, it needs to be recognised that ‘argument is a necessary element of public discussion that aims to make just and wise decisions’ through enabling participants to ‘question one another, test one another’s claims and opinions through discussion, and have an account of why they assent’.⁵⁷ A fortiori, a commitment to transformative learning entails that we cannot simply dispense with argumentative ground rules, designed as they are to ensure that contending positions are evaluated on their merits rather than endorsed on merely arbitrary or strategic grounds.

But if argumentation thus cannot be dispensed with, given its inherently if inadvertently, monological character on the Habermasian template,⁵⁸ the operative conception nonetheless stands in need of dialogical reappropriation so as to render it more genuinely responsive to difference and correspondingly conducive to mutual

⁵⁴ Young, ‘Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy’, pp. 131-2, cf. Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, pp. 70-7.

⁵⁵ John Forester, ‘Beyond Dialogue and Transformative Learning’, in Stephen Esquith (ed.), *Political Dialogue: Theories and Practices*, Amsterdam, Rodopi, 1996, pp. 295-333, p. 323.

⁵⁶ Young, ‘Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy’, p. 125.

⁵⁷ Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, p. 56.

⁵⁸ Healy, *Rationality, Hermeneutics and Dialogue: Toward a Viable Postfoundationalist Account of Rationality*, pp. 23-

learning. As already noted, Simpson epitomises the need for such a reappropriation in pointing out that what the ‘respectful understanding of another’ actually calls for is a willingness to embark on ‘a mutual dialectic of recognition’, whereby each side ‘strives to attain ‘an understanding of what the other takes herself to be doing’, and where each ‘can raise critical questions about the other’s position’ and issue ‘reciprocal rejoinders’.⁵⁹ At a minimum, what is needed to underwrite this outcome is a style of argumentation that allows for a process of ‘cross-arguing’ and ‘cross-justification’ grounded in a principle of ‘symmetrical mutuality’, whereby contending parties ‘play the same double role as a protagonist/antagonist’ and ‘bear the same burden of justification’,⁶⁰ and indeed the same responsibility for mutual learning. Only genuinely dialogical ground rules of this sort have the potential to underwrite ‘reciprocal learning processes guided by critical evaluations’, which can both apprise us of ‘the nature and limits of our own presuppositions’ and challenge us ‘to *re*view the world we had taken for granted’.⁶¹ This is because only such ground rules can ensure that participants remain genuinely responsive to critical feedback emanating from a diversity of standpoints, and hence remain open to the emergence of potentially transformative new ways of conceptualising the issues at stake, along the lines heretofore delineated.

As noted at the outset, far from being an external imposition the reforms here argued for are aimed at liberating the dialogical potential already inherent in the discourse model but typically masked by its undue emphasis on homogeneity, uniformity and consensus. Given its altogether more interactive, inclusive and conjoint character, a mode of dialogical interaction incorporating the needed reforms is more appropriately conceptualized as structured conversation with transformative potential than as consensually oriented deliberation, as envisaged on the discourse model. Such a dialogically reconfigured template has a far greater capacity than the discourse model to achieve a primary desideratum of truly worthwhile cosmopolitanism discourse, namely that of not simply ‘throwing together a group of rational decision-makers’, but of ‘changing these decision-makers into a more deliberative political body’, grounded in a ‘deliberative political rationality, in which means and ends and self and other are transformed’.⁶² Given its capacity to exemplify a genuine respect for difference and in the process enhance the prospects for the emergence of creative new solutions to collective problems, transformative dialogue

⁵⁹ Simpson, *The Unfinished Project: Toward a Postmetaphysical Humanism*, p. 80.

⁶⁰ Yameng Liu, ‘Justifying My Position in *Your* Terms’, *Argumentation*, vol. 13, 1999, pp. 297-315, pp. 309-12.

⁶¹ Simpson, *The Unfinished Project: Toward a Postmetaphysical Humanism*, p. 75.

⁶² Forester, ‘Beyond Dialogue and Transformative Learning’, p. 324.

can judiciously claim to provide a more fitting template for a situated cosmopolitanism capable of meeting the needs of an increasingly pluralistic and globalised world than does the Habermasian discourse model, notwithstanding the latter's pivotal role in spurring our reflections on the need to undertake such a dialogical turn.

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