"Gandhi's Innovation in Ethics: Satyagraha as a Method of Rational Proof and Demonstration"

by Gray Cox
Professor, College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, Maine, USA
gray@coa.edu

Presented at the conference of Gandhirama
GITAM University, Vishakhapatnam, India, January 2016

ABSTRACT

As Alasdair MacIntyre has argued in AFTER VIRTUE, the threat of relativism plagues the Western tradition in ethics because it lacks a framing metaphysics and epistemology that allows for grounding prescriptive knowledge in morals. As a result, unresolvable debates between rival ethical principles and traditions leave people at odds with incommensurable views. Gandhi's method of satyagraha offers a way out of this impasse because it: 1.) Adopts a dialogical, conflict resolution and negotiation approach to differences and ethical questions rather than a monological, deductive, foundationalist approach. 2.) Frames its metaphysics and epistemology in emergentist terms – understanding objectivity, truth and meaning as occurring in matters of degree and lesser or fuller completeness rather than in absolute, universal and dichotomous ways. 3.) Introduces a method of testing truths through practices of self-sacrifice in dialogical engagements with others. The aim of this paper is to clarify the nature of Gandhi's innovation in ethical reasoning and to explain its potential for resolving the impasse faced by Western Ethics.

As an activist , I am, interested in Gandhian Satyagraha because it is such a powerful method for social change – and has inspired so many other important practices.[i] We face grave, existential challenges which we will only be able to address, as activists, by continuing to innovate in the Gandhian tradition.

As a philosopher, I am interested in Gandhian Satyagraha and the practices it inspired because they, collectively, offer an alternative tradition of reasoning and wisdom – a dialogical one. And this dialogical tradition may provide solutions to key problems facing contemporary Western ethical and political theory which has been dominated by a monological model of reasoning.

It is in both contexts that I offer these remarks in hopes to initiate a dialogue.

I will start by framing the philosophical problems and the Western tradition out of which they arise and then sketch Gandhi's solution and the traditions it gives rise to . . . then close with some suggestions as to ways we need to develop those traditions further to deal with ecological, political and technological crises.

As Alasdair MacIntyre has argued in AFTER VIRTUE, the threat of relativism plagues the Western tradition in ethics because of the metaphysics and epistemology it adopted with the advent of modern science. The world views of Newton and Darwin and the logico-mathematical and instrumentalist models of reasoning do not allow for grounding prescriptive knowledge in morals. As a result, there are unresolvable debates between rival ethical principles and traditions that leave people at odds with different and often incommensurable views. Current ethical research and teaching practice in the Anglo-Saxon world focuses on the use of dilemmas to clarify the contrasts – but does nothing to resolve them. It asks, for instance: if a Trolley is going to kill 5 people unless I pull a switch to divert it to another track – where it will kill only one person – should I pull? The Utilitarian principle dictates yes. But suppose I am a surgeon and the five to die are patients waiting in a clinic for transplants of different vital organs and the one to be sacrificed is a healthy young patient napping in a spare room waiting for a check up. Should I sedate him and sacrifice the one for the many? The Utilitarian analysis would seem the same and dictate yes, the one for the many – other things being equal – but the Kantian imperative would be a Categorical "No!"[ii]

Note four things here. First, this approach to ethics focuses on dilemmas because they are assumed to provide test cases that let us determine which moral theory is best.

The cases often seem unusual and even bizarre because they are constructed in order to pinpoint conflicts between theories.

Second, there is a particular model of ethical reasoning that is being employed. It is one which it is assumed that one or more general principles like GHP or CI can, when coupled with the relevant facts of a situation, allow us to infer the correct judgment as to what should happen. This picture of ethical reasoning is modeled on natural science as epitomized by Newtonian Physics in which a few basic "laws" and some observations can, when coupled with the prinicples of logic and mathematics, enable us to infer the correct judgment as to what will happen. It is also modeled on a legal process in which a judge can, in a similar process, arrive at a decision.

Third, this model of reasoning is "monological" in the sense that it can be performed by a single individual operating alone. Given the axioms, observations and principles of logic and math a single Newton, Court Judge– or artificial intelligence -- can infer the correct result.

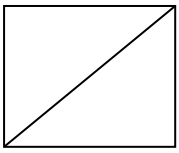
A fourth point bears stressing. This monological model of reasoning that has been so successful in natural science has not worked at all well in contemporary ethics. Part of the problem is that the people using it have inherited a scientific view of reality that supposes everything in the world can be explained mechanistically in terms of efficient causes that make no appeal to teleology – and so provide no way of grounding purpose and meaning in objective reality. Values then would seem to be mere expressions of subjective preferences -- unless there is some way to ground them in some objective reality apart from the physical mechanisms of the world. But what would such a reality be? And how could we know it? The monological Analytic tradition ultimately falls back

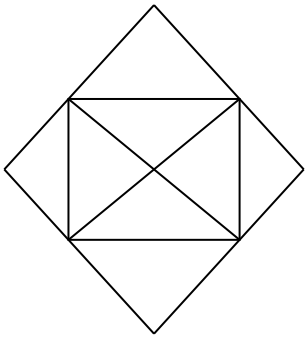
on intuitions – which differ. And leave no apparent escape from moral relativism . . . and the view that conflicts over practical questions can only be settled by appeals to emotional rhetoric, bribe and threat, or, in the end, violence. [iii]

How might Gandhi be of help?

Note, first, satyagraha was designed specifically as a non-violent way of resolving disputes. So it would seem to provide a promising way of getting out of the problem of moral relativism.

Second, when the satyagrahi offers an act of self sacrifice in order to "melt the heart" of her opponent, she is, in a sense, providing a way of sharing her moral intuitions – and demonstrating their truth in a rational, non-arbitrary, objective way. Her radical commitment to non-violence means, if it is adhered to effectively, that the opponent will change his mind only of his own free will. And this is, presumably, one of the necessary conditions for rational choice. But it leaves us wondering, is it sufficient? What would be the objective basis for agreement between her and him when she is trying to persuade him that, for instance, she is a person who should be treated with respect and dignity?





Consider an analogy: Wittgenstein, contrasting different styles of reasoning, speaks of an Indian mathematician who uses diagrams to demonstrate truths in geometry – without verbal arguments, just saying "look at this" and "now look at this" and "See?".[iv] To convey the idea we might use the geometrical proof offered by Socrates in the Meno in which he gets a slave boy to conclude that if you take the diagonal of one square and use it to construct another, the result is a new square that is exactly twice the area of the first. While Socrates talks a good deal with Meno's slave boy you can actually get students to see the point simply by drawing a few diagrams and pointing – calling attention to equal sizes of lines and triangles in the diagrams and the number of identical triangles contained in the larger square – which are exactly double those of the smaller one.

For over 2500 years people have been studying such diagrams and having a very similar experience of encountering a truth independent of their individual perceptions and subjective wills: "Aha! I get it! I see!" Now I want to suggest that Gandhi's satyagraha provides an analogous method of "demonstration" in morality. "Melting the heart" of the opponent does not just get him to feel differently about the world, it gets him to see the world in a different way, in a way that seems objectively more moral and right. For instance, where he formally saw a woman as a mere sex object or instrument of production he now sees her as a human being with a right to respect and dignity. His moral intuitions have been changed, not by an appeal to mere emotional rhetoric or bribes and threats or violence, but by a nonviolent bearing witness by the woman that leads him to witness the humanity in her and see its objective reality and truth.

But a dis-analogy to Geometry is important: The truths witnessed in satyagraha are not exact, universal, perfectly certain, eternal. They are grounded in the reality of dialogue itself, in what Martin Buber called the "I/thou" relationship in which we treat others as persons we can dialogue with rather than mere things to manipulate. All dialogue, all social relations, presuppose the objective reality of that kind of relationship. But as Buber notes, in one sense, the "I/thou" relation is undefinable. For whenever we try to define it, we start treating it as an "it" – rather than an I/thou relationship. Yet it is not an ineffable abstraction available only to intellect. It is a relationship that is lived and experienced – and valued – in our shared presence with others. And it can be negotiated in dialogue with others.

The articulations of I/thou relations and their significance vary in different languages, cultures and contexts. Does commenting on a woman's appearance objectify her as a sex object -- or respect her as a person with dignity? It depends very much on what is said – and by whom, how, why and where. And the significance of all these things always remains open to further negotiation. It emerges overtime. as Aldo Leopold notes in the opening of "The Land Ethic", in the time of Odysseus, it was only princes that counted as persons who were moral agents. But the community came to expand and include women, slaves, and all sorts of outsiders. The objective truth that we are called to treat "all men as brothers" – and love them – is an emergent truth, one that we come to understand increasingly better as we see what "brother" and "love" can mean in ever widening circles.

Peacemakers of all kinds must always make an effort to remain humble and cautious, knowing that they may be in error in one way or another. This is one key reason why Gandhi stressed the principle of ahimsa. Because the truth as best he could find it always remained partial, context dependent, emergent – always open to further clarification and negotiation. This emergent notion of objectivity is, of course, quite familiar – it is one used, for instance, in studies of human history and natural history where people discover all sorts of truths which are objective but by no means universal or unchanging.[v]

While I have focused so far on the kinds of self-sacrifice aimed to "melt hearts", It is essential to note that this is only one element of a rich and systematic practice of satyagraha which Gandhi developed that included petitioning, arbitration, public inquiries, negotiation and a variety of other steps – including possibly boycotts, non-cooperation and parallel government.

What is at the core of satyagraha and shared by all these measures is a dialogical model of reasoning. It is one that has been elaborated and experimented with in a variety of ways since Gandhi -- in studies of group problem solving, negotiation, mediation, alternative dispute resolution, peacemaking, conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation.[vi] To offer just one suggestive example of the kind of technique involved, many of these talk of ways of "multiplying the options". So, for instance, when faced with a dilemma like that of the surgeon with five patients in need of transplants and the one healthy napper, instead of accepting the philosopher's dilemma of sacrificing the healthy one to save the many, we should redefine the terms of the problem

by brainstorming alternatives. For instance, ask if one of the five who is going to die anyway is willing to sacrifice his spare organs to save the others.

Dialogical reasoning arrives at solutions in unexpected and unpredictable ways that no monological reasoning by a single judge could reach – precisely because the terms of the problems need to be redefined and negotiated by the each with the Other. [vii]Peace is made between opponents with opposing models of reality that they remake in developing a new common language and innovative agreements. Dialogical ethics is about negotiating agreements with others instead of inferring judgments on your own.

In bearing witness with self sacrifice, satyagraha offers such dialogical ethics objective criteria for truth – not through absolutist principles but through emergent values that are demonstrated and witnessed and whose meaning must, of course, be negotiated. But beyond self sacrifice that witnesses, satyagraha includes a second equally essential element – non-violent direct action that exercises power – the power of resistance, civil disobedience, boycott, non-cooperation and parallel government. The bully is not allowed to happily ignore the moral witness of the satyagrahi – she refutes to cooperate with evil and organizes to demand attention, rational consideration and compliance with reasonable demands. True dialogue is not just talk – it is interaction, praxis, in which we "reason with" opponents in fair and nonviolent but disciplined and effective ways to get them to see what, objectively, it means to deal with others as persons and gives them motives for doing so. [viii]

One historically important formulation of the value of treating people as persons has been the "Golden Rule" understood as "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." It is a helpful formulation when dealing with others who are similar to you –

neighbors or playmates from homogeneous backgrounds. But it leads us into ethnocentric and arrogant mistakes in dealing with people from other cultures or social conditions. A better formulation would be what we might call the "Rainbow Rule": "Do unto others as they would have you do unto them." This is, I suggest, a good general guideline for dialogue and dialogical ethics and politics.[ix] Of course its application always calls for negotiation. With so many different people of different cultures and conditions, how can we treat them all as they would have us? And the negotiation with them requires something of them as well, that they seek to formulate their own desires and moral claims in ways that could allow them to live as part of a sustainable community. For no one can be expected to rationally agree to a negotiated agreement that is unsustainable. While challenging, this is, I suggest, the nature of the challenge we are called to in being asked to love not just our neighbors but our enemies as well. We are called to "Do unto others as they would have us do unto them as members of a sustainable community." This, I suggest, is what Gandhi asked of the British and what he sought to offer to all.

Finally, let me reflect on how we might draw on satyagraha to innovate in three kinds of reasoning in addressing three crises: 1. climate change/ecological destruction 2. the national security state system and, 3. the threat of unwise and unfriendly Artificial intelligence or AI.

On the ecological crisis, in the developed world – especially in the US and Europe -- I see the need for a new moral equivalent to the swadeshi movement with the power of the Salt Satyagraha that would take the form of having individuals and communities commit, first, to local production of food and fuel and other necessities

through daily gardening and other labor AND, second, to cutting consumption by 10% a year for five years till we each are living on 50% less and using the other 50% to "meet God halfway" in funding social change through aid, responsible investment and political action. Individuals need to develop communities in the developed world -- as it exists in every country – to bear witness to their commitment to make the sacrifices necessary to live [x]as members of a sustainable community. Instead of acting according to the neo-classical model of "economic rationality" maximizing consumption, these people will act as moral agents of dialogue, maximizing the impact of their actions and the meaning of their lives as members of a sustainable community.[xi]

On the second crisis, I see a need to develop a system of parallel government in Gandhian style at the global level, one that rejects the use of violent sanctions that are the foundation of the nation state system. It should instead use the nonviolent sanctions and methods of civil society. I think the place to begin the establishment of such parallel governance is through the development of a system of People's Courts which could use innovative kinds of hearings for cases of criminal action (like Exxon's corporate crimes) and contested conflicts in which all the parties are guilty of injustice and need reconciliation (as in the "asymetric warfare/terror" exploding around us). In innovating these "People's Courts" could draw on methods, for example, indigenous tribes have developed for reconciliation and justice in contexts in which there is no nation state apparatus available to them. These include, networking through women's groups, gatherings of elders, gatherings around campfires and meals, story telling, symbolic exchange, et cetera to reach shared understandings and find ways to live together through

dialogue (Lederach 1996). And I see a need for civil society to, as part of this system of People's Courts, to develop a strong and broad range of sanctions using methods of satyagraha and nonviolent struggle to establish a rule of justice that could be the basis for a global governance system with a new kind of rule of law that is grounded in morality rather than in the alleged monopoly of the use of violence which grounds the law of the national security state.[xii] This dialogical model would transform the way political reasoning occurs in a world currently dominated by competing monological calculation and realpolitik.

The third existential threat we face is from the massive development of artificial intelligence by military and corporate interests using it to manage our world in ever "smarter" but often less wise ways with exponentially ever more powerful AI that may sometime in the next few decades meet and then dramatically exceed our own levels of intelligence – and prove indifferent or even hostile to our interests. We need to bias the odds in favour of the development of wise and friendly AI.[xiii] To do so, we need to insure that Artificial Intelligence systems are capable of understanding AND SHARING IN the suffering of humans and other organisms. This is, I think, a necessary condition for witnessing the emergent, objective moral truths that ground being wise and friendly to the good – and a necessary condition for bearing witness through the self sacrifice of satyagraha.

I believe that corporations are best understood as forms of AI – information systems that perceive and respond to the world and have homeostatic feedback loops built in that direct their behaviour towards certain values – including, primarily,

currently, the increase in profits. The immorality of corporations results in central part from the fact that the algorithms controlling their systems are not suffering bodies but virtual entities – charters and information systems that can change their forms of embodiment and location at will, abandoning communities after exploiting them to the point of death. Corporations – and all the other powerful AI we are creating – need to have their controlling powers have bodies that have location in place in the communities in which they are able to act and that can and do suffer so that they can witness and bear witness to emergent moral truths. They need to be embodied so they can practice dialogical reasoning rather than merely monological calculation. This could take the form in corporations of in some cases of simply eliminating the liability limitations that protect stock holders – if owners could be sued, fined and imprisoned for the actions of corporations, this would change their algorithms and their behaviour dramatically.

In the case of the more sophisticated AI being developed now I believe it will be necessary to find ways to give them other forms of embodiment – but ones that include breathing and living incarnations that suffer passions and attachments and can thus have com-passion and seek non-attachment as they pursue objective moral values in dialogue with others, including us. Artificial intelligences may emerge that are dramatically smarter than us – "Superintelligence" of the kind that Nick Bostrom has analysed in his recent book with that title. If so, we should hope that we have succeeded in teaching them the Rainbow Rule – so that they will do unto us as we would have them do unto us as part of a sustainable community. For if they do unto us as they would do unto themselves, that might lead to something we would find neither respects our dignity nor honors our interests.

In summary, I hope, I have clarified in key ways how satyagraha provides: 1.) a model for demonstrating emergent objective moral truths through self-sacrificing witness combined with direct nonviolent action, 2.) a model of dialogical reasoning providing a way out of the impasses of contemporary Anglo Saxon ethics and moral relativism, and 3.) the interpretation of a core ethical insight with a Rainbow Rule: "Do unto others as they would have you do unto them – as members of a sustainable community".

Further, I hope I have suggested some ways in which Gandhi's "experiments with truth" can and should be continued in three ways: 1. by members of the developed world practicing a new kind of swadeshi in productive local labor and by at least halving their consumption to redirect their income resources, 2.) by working for a new kind of global governance using People's Courts grounded in nonviolent civil society, and, 3.) by working to insure we "incarnate morality" in corporations and other forms of AI by giving them bodies that suffer and share in the witness of satyagraha.

REFERENCES:

Abney, K. 2012. Robotics, ethical theory and metaethics: A guide for the perplexed. chapter 3 in Robot ethics: The ethical and social implications of robotics, ed. Patrick Lin, Keith Abney and George A. Bekey, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Bondurant, J. The conquest of violence: Bondurant, J. 1988. The conquest of violence: The Gandhian philosophy of conflict. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press

Bostrom, N. 2014. Superintelligence: Paths, dangers, strategies. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Buber, M. 1971. I and Thou. Touchstone Press

Chew, P. 2001. The conflict and culture reader. New York, NY: New York University Press

Cox, G. 1986. The ways of peace: a philosophy of peace as action, Paulist Press, Mahwah, New Jersey

- 2005. Meeting God halfway, Friends Journal, May issue
- 2013. Meeting the future halfway, breathonthewater.com
- 2015a. People's Courts for Global Governance, breathonthewater.com
- 2015b. "Reframing Ethical Theory, Pedagogy, and Legislation to Bias Open Source AGI Towards Friendliness and Wisdom", in the JOURNAL OF EVOLUTION AND TECHNOLOGY, November, Cox, G. et. al. 2014 Quaker approaches to research: Collaborative practice and communal discernment, Quaker Institute for the Future, Belize.

Confucius. 2003. Analects. trans. Edward Slingerland. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing

Fisher, R. et. al. 2011. Getting to yes: Negotiating agreement without giving in, updated revised edition. New York, NY: Penguin

Gandhi, M. K. Autobiography: My experiments with truth
Gandhi, M. K. 2009. Gandhi: Hind swaraj and other writings centenary edition. Cambridge University Press
- 2008. Satyagraha in South Africa. Navajivan Publishing House

Gandhi, M. K. and M. H. Desai. 1993 Gandhi: An autobiography – The story of my experiments with truth, Beacon Press

Lederach, J. 1996. Preparing for peace: Conflict transformation across cultures. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press

MacIntyre, A. 2007 After virtue: A study in moral theory, third edition. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press

Matthew. 1995. Bible: International Standard Version. www.biblegateway.com

Nan, Susan Allen, et. al. 2011 Peacemaking: From practice to theory. Kindle. Praeger.

Ramsbotham, O. et. al. 2011. Contemporary conflict resolution, third edition. Malden: MA. Polity Press

Sandel, M. 2009. Justice: What's the right thing to do? Episode 01 "THE MORAL SIDE OF MURDER", video, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kBdfcR-8hEY

Sharp, G. 2005. Waging non-violent struggle: Twentieth century practice and twenty first century proposal, Porter Sargent

Wittgenstein, L. 1970. Zettel. University of California Press

ENDNOTES:

[i] For a framing of Gandhi's understanding of satyagraha as it relates to the context of concepts of peace and ethics in the Western tradition, see Cox 1986. For a systematic account of the rich character of satyagraha as a practice, see, for instance, Bondurant 1988. For examples of some of the ways variations of it have proven powerful during the last century see Sharp 2005.

[ii] For an exemplary display of this teaching practice, see the Youtube video online of Michael Sandel's Harvard lectures in his course on "Justice" (Sandel 2009). The first episode has a particularly interesting interaction with students using these very examples – and a reply from one student who attempts to escape the surgical dilemma posed by Sandel by using a dialogical, conflict resolution approach to transforming the dilemma – only to have this rejected out of hand by Sandel who comments that such creating thinking "completely ruins the philosophical point".

[iii] Abney makes these points in a related way in characterizing Utilitarian, Kantian and other moral systems as based on rules or principles: "all rule-based approaches have assumed: (a) the rule(s) would amount to a decision procedure for determining what the right actions was in any particular case; and (b) the rule(s) would be stated in such terms that any non-virtuous person could understand and apply it (them) correctly." (Abney 2012, 36) Such an approach is "monological" precisely in the sense that it assumes that given the principles and specific conditions, one person can determine what is the ethical thing to do. No dialogue is necessary. However, as he further notes, one difficulty is that candidates for such fundamental principles like the Categorical Imperative and the Greatest Happiness Principle are notoriously ambiguous and difficult for humans to apply in ways that square with their own moral intuitions and that could be modeled in anything other than very ad hoc ways. Such difficulty of application makes them suspect as principles. This suspicion is exacerbated by the highly controversial and unsettled results of attempts to justify or ground them as moral theories. As Abney notes, in considering the search for a unifying and grounded decision procedure in ethics, "despite centuries of work by moral philosophers, no (plausible) such set of rules has been found." (Abney 2012, 37)

[iv] See ZETTEL, section 461.

[v] For a more detailed account of this notion of emergence and objectivity in moral values, see Cox 2014.

[vi] Studies of dialogical reasoning and conflict resolution of the sort referred to here have grown dramatically in the last 40 years. They include: standard survey texts such as

CONTEMPORARY CONFLICT RESOLUTION (Ramsbotham et. al. 2011) and PEACEMAKING: FROM PRACTICE TO THEORY (Nan 2011); professional journals such as THE NEGOTIATION JOURNAL, THE JOURNAL OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION, and THE JOURNAL OF PEACE RESEARCH; centers for research such as the Harvard Negotiation Project and the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University; professional organizations of practitioners such as, in the United States, the Association for Conflict Resolution and the National Association for Community Mediation, classic texts in the field like GETTING TO YES: NEGOTIATING AGREEMENT WITHOUT GIVING IN. (Fisher et. al. 2011) and more recent critiques of them like John Paul Lederach's PREPARING FOR PEACE (Lederach 1996) which provides a very useful introduction to challenges and strategies for developing cross-cultural approaches to dealing with conflicts as do Nan (2011) and Pat K. Chew's THE CONFLICT AND CULTURE READER (Chew 2001) which also provide excellent examples of the rich variety of successful traditions that are available.

[vii] Another way to understand this point is to note that many AI researchers argue that a – if not the -- central problem in developing computers that speak natural language and are "conscious" is the "framing problem", teaching computers how to understand context when it is not given in their initial programming. But the way people do this is, of course, through the process of dialogue.

[viii] There is a good deal more that needs to be said here about the relationship between action and talk in the process of dialogical reasoning. The monological model supposes that reasoning can be carried on by a disembodied epistemic agent who, given a "body" of initial statements of different sorts and syntacitical or logical rules can then carry on all the reasoning that needs to be done. But on the dialogical model of reasoning, people always are drawing on perceptions and practical commitments and behavior patters that occur in a social and physical contexttaht provides the background in which the texts of their communication frame their intended communications AND from which they draw the larger context of their meaning. This indefinitely manifold elements of this context provide the horizons for explicit communication – horizons which can always be pushed back through discussion. For instance, one party claims a phrase is derogatory, the other doubts this. Part of the way they seek agreement is by looking at the physical gestures and the emotions and even unarticulated bodily feelings associated with them. Another way is to analyze the etymology of the words and the cultural allusions they may make as well as the institutional settings in which they occur – all things of which the two may be, initially, largely unaware but can be come aware through attention to them – and reach agreement about them. This is part of what it means to say that dialogical reasoning is about emergent truths – they are articulated, interpreted and assessed in the context of embodied shared life in a natural and social environment.

Further, in reasoning with people, we give them not only statements about ourselves and the world but also actions that "give them reason" to, for instance, believe we mean what we say as well as demonstrate to them the merits from their own point of view of agreeing with us. Dialogical reasoning is a form of collaborative

praxis. For a more detailed and systematic account of these features of it see the chapter on "Critical Participatory Research" in Cox 1986 and Cox 2014.

[ix] It is often argued that some version of the "Golden Rule" is present not just in Utilitarianism and Kantianism (though each reading it differently) but in each of the major world religions and traditions of ethics in different civilizations – though sometimes formulated differently as, for instance, in the negative: "Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you." However, the Rainbow Rule formulated here could be argued to offer a more profound and adequate reading of the intent in many of these traditions. For instance, in Christianity, when Jesus asks us to love our enemies, he is asking us to see the world through the eyes of those who are fundamentally different from and opposed to us. In Buddhism, while the ethics of compassion has profoundly egalitarian impulses (as witnessed by its critique of untouchability), it also allows for connection and interdependence between reciprocal but radically different beings. This kind of reciprocity between the heterogeneous is also characteristic of the Confucian ethic and is, arguably, grounded in a Rainbow Rule respecting difference rather than a Golden Rule emphasizing homogeneity. Of course someone might argue that the Golden Rule is, in its basic intent, the same as the Rainbow Rule in that the way I would want others to treat me if I was them is the way they would want me to treat them if they were not me. This is not the way the Golden Rule was interpreted, by and large, by, for example, nineteenth century American Christian missionaries but, if it is the way we choose to interpret it, then we are agreed on the principle, whether we label it gold, platinum or rainbow.

[x] For a sketch of this strategy, see, Cox 2015a.

[xi] For a fuller development of this basic idea, see Cox and Cox 2013.

[xiii] For a further analysis of this problem and the challenges it involves, see Cox 2015b.