

WORLD PHILOSOPHY

WHAT IS IT?

World philosophy is philosophy. What is philosophy? First, philosophy is love of wisdom. To love wisdom involves a desire to understand the nature of things. Understanding the nature of things includes understanding of the nature of existence, its universal characteristics and kinds, the nature of knowledge, truth, and certainty, and the nature of human values and how to optimize them. A man method for pursuit of understanding is to examine critically the presuppositions and conclusions of philosophies that have been proposed already.

WHY NEEDED?

1. Many people claim to have a true world philosophy. These claims are evidence of the desirability of having a world philosophy. But many of these involve contradictions, within themselves and with others. Since contradictory, they cannot all be true. Thus need for a true world philosophy continues. 2. Conflicting philosophies cause problems. In fact, many of the world's most serious problems involve conflicting philosophical presuppositions. The costs of wars resulting from religious conflicts are so tremendous that they appear as the greatest evils that humankind has perpetrated on itself, historically and today. 3. We cannot solve new problems with old solutions. Too many world philosophies originated when people were ignorant of much that is known today. When such ignorance is embedded in accepted world philosophy, it inhibits achieving more adequate knowledge. 4. We cannot solve global problems with regional solutions. Western, Indian and Chinese civilizations embody conflicting presuppositions that need synthesis to achieve peace. 5. We cannot solve comprehensive world problems with partial knowledge. Many active proponents of solutions to world problems are specialists emphasizing specialized knowledge and suffering from the limitations of such specialization. World philosophy incorporating contributions from all of the sciences is needed.

PROPOSED IDEALS

I propose that, when an agency is established to consider proposals for world philosophy, its purpose should be to examine ideas that may be candidates for inclusion. Acceptability of these ideas may be arranged in four levels: I. Essentials.



All ideas needed for understanding human nature, including optimizing human happiness. II. Cultural claims. All claims of cultural traditions should be recognized as candidates for inclusion as essentials, when not demonstrably contradictory or false, for experimental testing. III. Museums. Recognize as worthy of memory, even cherished memory, ideas, institutions, and customs constituting human history. Questions will continue regarding which should be prevented from becoming “extinct species”. IV. Freedoms. Recognize the right of particular cultures to have their “individual differences” respected appropriately. No limit should be placed on cultural creations unless harmfulness to human welfare can be demonstrated.

I. ESSENTIALS

Ideally, world philosophy should include some minimum of ideas believed to explain the nature of existence, including human existence. I summarize these as ideas about self, society, and the universe, and their origin, nature and future. Although a summary of such ideas should favour ideas that have popular appeal, an adequate world philosophy should include ideas about the nature of existence, knowledge, values, and society. It should include contributions from all of the general sciences.

II. CULTURAL CLAIMS

Most cultures have proclaimed a world philosophy most adequate in terms of their cultural conceptions. All have some truth in them, not only as insights into existence and values based on experience but also as expressions of human needs for ideals, which are also facts of human experience. Cultural ideals that have served a people for ages should receive consideration unless their falsities (all cultures embody some falsities) are demonstrated to be harmful to human beings. Cultural claims should be examined objectively, that is, both to see whether they also appeal to persons in other cultures when introduced to them, and whether they contain falsities (contradictions or inadequacies in terms of present knowledge) making them unacceptable universally. Each claim may be tested experimentally to determine whether it is a benefit or a harm to human beings, while considering it as a candidate for essentials.

III. MUSEUMS

Human history is replete with human achievements, each amazing in its ingenuity in meeting human needs at particular times and places. A world citizen will recognize all of them as human accomplishments and as integral part of “Our World”. People trying to improve their cultures make mistakes. The history of science is a history of abandoned theories (because regarded as false). We can



benefit from appreciating our history, especially if we learn from historical mistakes and do not repeat them. World philosophy will recognize the need for world culture. A world culture will include not only good, true, and useful ideas but also recognize that the ideals of each culture can make contributions to world culture in ways that enrich it, as well as impoverish it, if its falsities are included. Appreciating various cultures as contributing to human culture promotes concern for preventing many from becoming extinct.

IV. FREEDOMS

World philosophy will involve recognition that much philosophy is not world philosophy. Individual differences in personal philosophies should be respected as well as differences in biological and physiological natures. Cultural differences should be respected unless they prove harmful. Acclaiming some optimum of individual and group cultural freedoms should be an essential in world philosophy.

HOW ACHIEVE IT?

Suggested Agencies

1. UNESCO Division of Philosophy and Ethics. Already established with United Nations Organization authorization, having budget, offices, and personnel, and a primary concern with philosophy. [Present offices in UNESCO buildings at 7, place de Fontenoy, 1 rue Miollis, 75015 Paris, France. S. Lazarev is the present Director].
2. International Federation of Philosophical Societies. (FISP). The Steering Committee may be authorized to establish a special committee to pursue the project. Unresolved issues could be scheduled for discussion in World Congress of Philosophy sessions. [Present Secretary-General is Prof. Ioanna Kuçuradi, Department of Philosophy, Hacettepe University, Betepe, Ankara, Turkey].
3. The United Nations University. The University Council, which sets principles and policies, is an agency of the United Nations Organization. Subjects for research specified in its Charter include: "Universal human values related to the improvement of the quality of life". [It has just moved into its own new building, at 53-70 Jingumae 5-chome, Shibuyau-ku, Tokyo 150, Japan]. It has already sponsored a completed multi-volume "Socio-Cultural Development Alternatives" project involving philosophical issues.
4. World Society of Responsible Philosophers. If no official agency is able and willing to undertake a continuing project agency concerned with achieving world philosophy, an independent society organized by persons interested in committing themselves to cooperating responsibly may be organized. [I suggested such a society in 1976 (Xth World Congress of Philosophy, Varna, Bulgaria), but I did not have time or money to pursue the project. Now, if no other agency agrees to undertake the project, perhaps it is time to me to act. I am



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located in the Department of Philosophy, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131-1151, U.S.A. Phone: 505-242-9983. FAX: 505-839-4950]. A primary problem for whoever undertakes this project is how to prevent special interests from biasing the general aims of philosophy. One general aim of world philosophy is appropriate recognition of the contributions of all special interests to it.

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ΚΟΣΜΙΚΗ ΦΙΛΟΣΟΦΙΑ

Περίληψη

Πρωταρχικό πρόβλημα για όποιονδήποτε αναλάβει τὸ πρόγραμμα αὐτὸ πὸν ἀφορᾷ στὴ διοργάνωση μιᾶς κοσμικῆς φιλοσοφίας, ὅχι ἀπὸ ἐπίσημο φορέα ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ ἐνδιαφερόμενους γι' αὐτὸ ἰδιῶτες, εἶναι πῶς νὰ τοὺς ἀποτρέψει ἀπὸ τὸ νὰ παραμορφώσουν τοὺς γενικοὺς σκοποὺς του. Αὐτὸ δὲν σημαίνει ὅτι πρόκειται νὰ ἀγνοηθεῖ τὸ γεγονὸς ὅτι ἓνας ἀπὸ τοὺς σκοποὺς τῆς κοσμικῆς φιλοσοφίας συνίσταται ἀκριβῶς στὴν ἀναγνώριση ὅλων τῶν ἐπιμέρους ἐνδιαφερόντων.

Μετάφραση: Ἄννα ΑΡΑΒΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ

