

Inner Universality, Solidarity and Human Rights

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We are, according to many commentators, living in an age of rights. Yet despite the promise of dignity and equality espoused in the Universal Declaration of 1948, we appear to be moving inexorably in the direction of increasing competition, growing mistrust, and ever greater inequality. In this paper, the challenge of universality and solidarity will be explored from a human rights perspective.

The paper begins by examining some of the critiques of human rights, particularly with respect to their universality, before addressing four key qualities of inner universality as developed in the work of Buddhist philosopher and educator Daisaku Ikeda. These are: engagement with realities rather than abstractions; recognition of self in others; attention to the particular, and imagination. The paper then goes on to explore the concepts of solidarity, participation and respect and the avenues presented for their realisation through the solidarity rights of sustainable development, the environment and peace. The paper proposes that the cultivation of inner universality through processes of participation is fundamental to the realisation of the human rights of all.

Keywords: human rights, universality, solidarity, participation

The Challenge for Human Rights in an ‘Age of Rights’

It has now been more than sixty years since the signing of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, hailed by its framers as embodying the ‘highest aspiration of the common people’. The language, principles and practices and of human rights that the Declaration enumerates were designed to address and provide a counter-balance to the asymmetries in power between the state and the individual and communities that had been so dreadfully exposed by the Holocaust and other atrocities of the 20th Century. Specifically it was designed to provide legal

and moral resources so that people's legitimate struggles against tyranny and oppression could be realised without recourse to violence in the face of overwhelming odds against them. In framing the Declaration, its advocates sought to demonstrate that States and those that govern them, could no longer expect impunity but would be held to account against internationally agreed human rights standards for their treatment of the people within their borders. By proposing that people have moral and legal rights to civil, political, social, economic, and cultural protection, they also explicitly placed a duty on States to respect, protect and fulfil those obligations.

The Declaration confirmed the interdependence and equality of all rights, including equally civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights, as well as solidarity rights such as the Right to Peace. The Declaration also made clear the relationships between human rights and responsibilities. Whilst human rights are clearly not conditional on the fulfilment of responsibilities, and many human rights are (or at least in the opinion of advocates should be) absolute, others are qualified or limited so as to ensure they are enjoyed reciprocally by all people. These latter two points belie the oft-made accusation that human rights are excessively individualistic or promote a selfish concentration on one's own rights at the expense of those of others.

Since the Declaration was signed, the scope of human rights has gradually been widened in terms of their breadth (there are now eight major international human rights treaties protecting specific groups of rights as well as particular groups such as children, indigenous peoples and the disabled); depth (human rights norms are now developed and applied at the international, regional and domestic levels) and penetration (human rights considerations are now being mainstreamed into all areas of international and domestic relations including international peace

and conflict resolution). Whilst the State was the original focus of human rights protection, increasingly, in what is now being hailed as an 'age of rights' (Bobbio 1995; Baxi 2000) human rights are also being used to hold to account non-state actors (private businesses, multi-national corporations, institutions and paramilitary groups); and to regulate relationships between communities/groups and the State, and between individuals and communities/groups.

Yet despite these developments, the vision of human dignity, equality, freedom and respect that the Declaration envisages remains elusive and contested. Three examples illustrate some of these challenges. Immediately following its signing, Cold War ideologies revealed how human rights could be politicised as both East and West vied with one another to claim recognition as authentic inheritors of the Declaration's spirit, largely to the detriment of the people they claimed to serve. As a result, the International Bill of Rights, finally ratified in 1976 divided civil and political rights from social, economic and cultural rights between two treaties. The result was to imply a hierarchy of rights that appeared to prioritise civil and political rights over social and economic rights as whilst civil and political rights are regarded as inviolable and absolute, social and economic rights were to remain subject to 'progressive realisation'. This legacy continues to frustrate human rights advocates, for whilst inadequate protection for civil and political rights are regarded as violations and states who are signatories to treaties such as the ICCPR can be held to account, social and economic rights remain subject to 'progressive realisation', allowing States to claim that they have insufficient resources to fully feed and shelter their populations, despite spending vast amounts of wealth on armaments and defence. The added pressure of economic crisis has also functioned to the detriment of the realisation of social and economic rights as it has allowed States to use economic crisis as a further excuse for non-compliance.

A more recent challenge to human rights emerged in the wake of the events of September 11th. The ‘human rights renaissance’ that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall in the early 1990s, demonstrated by the rush to democratisation and ratification of international human rights treaties, was to be all too rapidly dashed by the so-called ‘war on terror’. This has since been used as an argument for increased limitations on the protection of civil liberties and even, in some, cases their removal, invoking the so-called ‘ticking bomb’ scenario (For an explanation of the so-called 'ticking bomb' scenario, see Schulz 2009) which is often invoked as a rationale for the use of torture. States have consistently sought to justify the weakening of the absolute protection against torture ratified by most countries in countless international human rights agreements, not by declaring their intention to violate their commitments, but by employing euphemisms such as ‘Special methods of questioning’ and "enhanced coercive interrogation technique" to refer to what otherwise would be considered torture. (Henley 13 December 2007,)

The third challenge has however perhaps been the most testing – the claim that human rights are universal. Even whilst human rights have encircled the globe, emerging as a primary language of peace and emancipation, their universality has remained mired in discussions over cultural relativity that continues to dent their efficacy. Whilst the intense philosophical debates over cultural relativism are beyond the scope of this paper, there is no doubt that claims made by States that human rights are somehow inappropriate for their citizens, have often been politically motivated or based on an ill-conceived understanding of human rights as practice. In the 1990s some Asian governments argued that human rights were too individualist and in some essential way antithetical to the communitarian values of Asian societies – the so-called ‘Asian Values’ argument (see for example Bell 2000). For many, these arguments were a thinly disguised attempt, often by authoritarian regimes, to restrict the rights of citizens to enjoy basic freedoms

such as those of assembly, expression, and political participation. This idea that human rights were unsuitable in certain parts of the world has been, at least to some extent, successfully challenged by the international community in fora such as the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 in which civil society and governments from across the globe, east and west, north and south, joined together to declare human rights as indivisible, interdependent and universal, despite opposition from some States.

A second and related strand of criticism directed towards human rights universal reach has been the charge that human rights represents a form of neo-colonialism that seeks to impose Western values on non-Western states and cultures (Mutua 2002) or at the least, favours Western state structures and sovereignty over indigenous needs and other forms of emancipatory struggle. Again, whilst we should be wary of the potential of any universalist discourse to claim hegemony over local particularity, knowledge and understanding, such concerns still bear scrutiny. Whilst it may be correct to argue that human rights until the 1990s were dominated by large international NGOs often formed and financed in the Northern Hemisphere, Southern Hemisphere NGOs have been increasingly at the forefront of innovative applications of human rights and Northern Hemisphere advocates are increasingly sensitive to the necessity and importance of working in partnership with and support of, domestic actors.

The third challenge is more fundamental and calls into question the very basis of human rights and whether they can invoke a universal foundation that transcends other cultural systems. This raises the spectre of cultural relativism and how far particular cultural systems can or should resist or embrace universal human rights norms and practices. Whilst cultural relativism remains a philosophical, practical and political challenge, and is the subject of considerable debate not least amongst human rights scholars themselves, sociologists and anthropologists, often

originally sceptical of human rights universalism because of their own concern to protect cultural specificity, have nonetheless become increasingly alerted to the emancipatory potential of human rights even whilst being aware of the need to protect cultural diversity. Many now contend that rather than seeking a universal justification for human rights in ideas of natural law or notions of universal humanity, it is preferable to view them as a particular social construction that has developed through practice in specific contexts; an approach that places the spotlight on the users (and abusers) of human rights as the main subject of enquiry and critique.

By analysing human rights as social constructions, Neil Stammers draws attention to their potential to both emancipate and sustain systems of power. He warns that social movements that invoke human rights to make their claims should be aware that they are also embedded in social relations of power, and that as human rights become institutionalised, they can become incorporated into extant systems of power and domination so that they end up sustaining that power rather than challenging it. (Stammers 1999) His argument reminds us that human rights advocates should be wary of forgetting that the pursuit of universal human rights norms, laws and discourses has the potential to dominate and even inhibit cultural diversity when they are pursued without reference to local particularities and the needs of the actual people affected by them. However his caution should not lead inevitably to the conclusion that human rights protection does not have universal application; rather that human rights can be misused by human beings. It reminds advocates of human rights that their primary function is to challenge and diffuse concentrated sites of power and domination in society *wherever they occur*, be they the State or other asymmetries of power structured along lines of gender, race, class or religion (to name but few) including their own! From this perspective, that human rights sometimes fall prey to being used as a hegemonic discourse that undermines local specificity, or to make claims

against one another on the basis of competing rights does not have to be regarded as a problem that undermines the entire discourse and practice of human rights. Rather it is a challenge to be addressed by people – by those that call upon them as they work out the relationship in practice between realising one’s own rights and the responsibilities involved in protecting others’ rights; between promoting the universality of rights, and protecting local particularity; and between challenging structural and systemic forms of power, and being incorporated into them. It is to these challenges that the concept of inner-universality, developed by Daisaku Ikeda in his recent 2009 peace proposal, has much to offer and to which this paper now turns.

Inner Universality in the work of Daisaku Ikeda

In his 2009 peace proposal, Daisaku Ikeda proposes the concept of inner universality and outlines four qualities that it possesses (Ikeda, 2009). These are:

- Inner-universality arises from engagement with realities rather than abstractions. Abstractions and ideologies, especially when universalised leads towards the creation of ‘otherness’ grounded in our inability to identify our commonality
- Inner-universality is immanent and in-dwelling in contrast to being external and transcendent. The spirituality of inner-universality is not transcendent spirituality but inherent ability of people to recognise self in others
- To develop inner-universality we must pay attention to the particular through which to empathetically connect with the experience of others
- Inner-universality requires imagination grounded in sensitivity to daily life and life itself.

Engagement with realities

The first perspective offered by Ikeda is the importance of engaging with reality. The abstract spirit that arises from ideology has been much discussed in the context of human rights violations around the world. Emerging from his study of the Holocaust, Bauman warns of the

pitfalls of abstraction. He argues that the gas chambers of the Holocaust were the ultimate expression of modernity, grounded in the Nazi obsession with the implementation of abstract bureaucracy, mechanisation and technology with their tendency towards categorisation, labelling and classification. (Bauman 2002)

In contrast, Ikeda calls for engagement with realities as being fundamental to the development of inner-universality. This challenges the Cartesian model of society in which efficiency, rationality, objectivity and reductionism dominate, qualities which whilst useful, cannot be the sole guide for action. To engage with realities means to advocate for the contextualisation of solutions to problems of human suffering. In short, an understanding and application of human rights *in context* is essential. Such an approach can only be achieved through engaging and participating with those affected by human rights violations in a way that enables them to develop a response which is informed by human rights but not to the exclusion of their own knowledge and understanding. In his 2009 peace proposal, Ikeda quotes the educator Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who similarly calls for engagement with realities over abstraction in his work 'The Geography of Human Life'. (Makiguchi 1903/2002) Ikeda explains that Makiguchi's work:

...suggests a world of concrete reality comprising politics, economics, culture, education, religion, etc, - the scope of human activities in their full depth and richness. Makiguchi cites the words of the influential mid-nineteenth-century Japanese thinker Yoshida Shoin (1830-59): 'People do not exist separate from the land. Events are inseparable from people. If we wish to discuss human affairs, we must first investigate geography with care.'

Ikeda goes on:

... Makiguchi's approach is rooted in the kind of inner universality I have been discussing, in which we plant our feet firmly in the actualities of the local community and seek to develop all larger perspectives from that starting point. For him, the conditions of great expanses of the Earth are generally observable in a tiny patch of land (literally, "the size of a cat's forehead"). In that sense, the outlines of the vast and complex phenomena of world geography can be explained using the examples of a single town or rural village.

There is of course always the concern that focusing on the particular or local can result in provincialism and a deepening relativism, a spectre eloquently raised by Upendri Baxi. Whilst acknowledging the global reach of human rights, Baxi also recognises that they emerge locally in ‘micro-sites of resistance to practices of power, often disarticulated with reference to the global’. He goes on to argue that ‘the sense one makes of such events depends on how one constructs the relationship between local and global’ (glocalisation). If, he contends, the global perspective is given a dominant position, then the local is just a ghetto in it, exemplified in the slogan ‘think global, act local’. An alternative vision is one in which the local struggles to innovate the global. (Baxi 2000) Drawing equally on the local and the global, is a key component of inner-universality through which, not only does the global innovate the local thus avoiding falling prey to provincialism, and the local innovates the global, but avoiding the pitfall of abstractionism.

Immanence rather than Transcendence

The second perspective on inner universality offered by Daisaku Ikeda is that of an immanent rather than transcendent spirituality. Of course as a Buddhist philosopher and spiritual leader of a world-wide Buddhist movement, he is speaking from a Buddhist perspective. For Ikeda, to say that inner universality is in-dwelling and immanent is to contend that spirituality resides not only within, but is expressed concretely in action by human beings, specifically the action of recognising *self in others* through which the external and internal are interconnected and interdependent. This perspective is in contrast to that of transcendence which places the source and motivation for action outside the self, in the non-material world, independent of time and place. For Ikeda, ideology is external and transcendent and thus easily abstracted.

Immanent universality on the other hand, is, according to Ikeda, ‘rooted in the world of concrete realities and can only be developed from within’. (Ikeda, 2009) This perspective thus prompts

consideration of the intimate relationship between thought and action, between the ideas, values and the non-material world, and the concrete, material world of activity, structure and systems. To think about this more specifically, I want to consider two concepts that are fundamental to our understanding of human rights: identity and respect.

Recognition of Identity

The right to express our individual identity, whether ethnic, religious, national or based on any other distinction such as gender or sexuality, or combination thereof, is central to contemporary conceptions of human rights. However it is clear that the requirements of recognition and identity politics are a major and increasingly salient feature of the world picture. Recognition of identity is frequently a key claim in ethno-nationalist conflict, which when based on external transcendence, regards the self and other as distinct and different and more easily abstracted. This dualist perspective too easily results in a zero-sum identity so that what is won by one is lost by another; recognition of my identity is a threat to yours.

However from the perspective of inner-universality, recognition of the self must be accompanied by recognition of *self in others*. This interconnectedness enables people to recognise their own needs and rights, as well as those of others and their mutual interest in resolving issues affecting both. This way of thinking about identity and the claims arising from identity is not dissimilar to Nancy Fraser's distinction between claims for cultural recognition and for status recognition. She contends that when people claim recognition of their unique cultural identity, they are claiming an exclusive group identity in all its partiality and self-interest. In contrast, when people claim recognition of their status as full partners in social interaction, they make their claims on the basis of a desire to be recognised as social peers and treated as equal participants in public life. (Fraser 2005) The concept of status used by Fraser

does not refer to status order or hierarchy. Rather, it refers to recognition of the status of each person to participate in social life as equals. For example, whilst there may be differences in status order, this should not inhibit recognition or their equal participation as social actors.

The key link between the shift from claims to recognition made on behalf of exclusive identity groups, and those made on behalf of inclusive identity groups is the ability to recognise self-in-others.

Respect

Respect is of course equally fundamental to human rights. It is however often regarded as a feeling or emotion rather than an activity. Yet as Richard Sennett points out, ‘treating others with [respect] doesn’t just happen even with the best will in the world’. He goes on, ‘Respect is an ‘expressive performance’. ‘...to convey respect means finding the words and gestures which make it felt and convincing’. (Sennett 2003:207) Taken from this perspective, respect has to be expressed in concrete action towards the end of enhancing a relationship. Respect is not an absence of activity or interaction (exemplified in the idea that good relations can be sufficiently premised on separate development or the ‘indifference of passive tolerance’ – you have your space and I have mine), but is present in ‘active tolerance’ which presupposes recognition of differences’ (Gorbachev and Ikeda 2005:77) and lies in efforts to enhance the quality of interaction with others. It is performative because as Sennett points out, in the very act of struggling to find the words and gestures that convey respect, we are actually respecting the other. The result of such struggles is the development of mutual recognition which develops ‘as the basis for an evolving a social bond. (Sennett 2003:44)

What binds these two concepts of recognition of identity and respect from a human rights perspective? Both Frazer and Sennett alert us to the importance of being able to recognise *self in*

others through mutual engagement and activity. Respect, as Sennett argues is ‘performative’, it requires our participation, in the sense that in the effort made to express respect, respect is itself conveyed and becomes the basis for reciprocity. Similarly for Frazer, participation is the key that unlocks identification with one’s own need for recognition and transforms it into recognition of others’ right to participate. Thus, it is through participation that respect and recognition can most effectively be developed and it is here that the mutually enforcing relationship between the ideas and practices of human rights and the concept of inner universality emerges.

Connection and Participation

In his peace proposal, Ikeda (2009) identifies the importance of connecting people’s experiences, as lying at the heart of efforts towards peace. Participation, which is central to emerging trends in human rights, can provide an essential framework and support for enabling people to make such connections.

Participation rights in the international human rights system have been elaborated particularly in the context of development programmes and are now fundamental to human rights thinking and practice. From a human rights perspective, participation involves multiple processes and take place at multiple levels from, at one end the right to participate in traditional electoral politics (participation based on a right to representation), and at the other end involvement by end-users in individual decisions affecting for example their health or education or participation in cultural or familial practices (participation based on a right to express autonomy).

Participation involves numerous human rights; and whilst there is no single ‘right to participation’ it can be thought of as a portmanteau of rights such as, amongst others, the right to information, the rights of freedom of association and assembly, and to effective remedy, the right not to be discriminated against, and the right to education. Human rights can thus invoke

numerous actual human rights which can provide legal and moral support and defence of people's right to involve themselves in decisions affecting them.

As well as providing a robust framework that promotes participation through internationally agreed norms and standards, human rights also provides a framework that promotes inclusivity. 'Human rights 'are the rights one has simply because one is a human being.' (Donnelly 1989:10) Participation from a human rights perspective should aim to be 'inclusive, empowering and extend[s] beyond the public sphere into a range of other social arenas'. (Secker 2009) Whilst participation includes dialogue, it should not be confined to processes of consultation in which people are asked to comment on already well-defined and planned proposals. Rather it should promote 'control of planning, process, outcome and evaluation' (Hamm 2001) by those most affected by proposals. It should also advocate for forms of decision-making in which, ideally, the agenda and terms of debate should be decided by the participants themselves (VenKlassen, Miller et al. 2004). This form of participation is equated with access, collaboration and ownership of the processes of reform (Rogoff and Schneider 2008:352). Of course it may at times be necessary to exclude some people from some decisions, such as for example in policies that protect and promote the human rights of indigenous peoples which may prioritise their participation over that of non-indigenous people in matters pertaining to their wellbeing. However such exclusions should be consistent with the protection and promotion of human rights of all in order to achieve outcomes that are grounded in promoting rather than inhibiting human rights protection. From this perspective, human rights are inherently inclusive even whilst recognising that there may at times be a need for partiality to achieve a just end that is in the interests of humanity in general.

A third way in which human rights can promote participation through which connections between people can be made is through offering human rights as an actual methodology for communities to pursue improvements in human rights protection. For example, those whose human rights are being violated can use the language, ideas, and legal remedies to add weight and substance to their claims, working together to identify sources of marginalisation or discrimination, and enabling them to recognise the duty bearer responsible for protecting the right in question. This can lead to people becoming aware of the ways in which structures of power, for example patriarchy, race and class relations, and political, social and cultural systems can mask shared interest and undermine their solidarity. Human rights thus provide a robust moral, legal and discursive framework that promotes participation and the conditions needed for empathetic connection to be built.

Human rights however do not just provide framework and methodologies that support participation, participation in human rights based activities can also contribute to development of a spirit of inner universality. By coming together to solve particularist problems, yet grounded in a universalist perspective of common humanity, people can expand their understanding of their own situation within the wider global context. Through the process of struggling together, solidarity grounded in the desire to protect and promote human dignity can emerge. This emergent solidarity, from a participatory perspective, is thus not a 'prerequisite for political action' but one that is forged out of shared commitments and *achieved through collective political action* rather than assumed in advance' (italics in original). (Allen 1999) In other words, people may begin with conflicting agendas and problems, but through the act of working together, they can develop a perspective that is both particular and universal – one that embodies a spirit of inner-universality.

Imagination

The fourth quality of inner-universality proposed by Ikeda (2009) is that of imagination. He contends that inner-universality requires *imagination* grounded in sensitivity to daily life, and life itself. How can we view the imagination needed to develop this sort of sensitivity?

Hannah Arendt, writing about the Nazi War Criminal Otto Eichmann who was responsible for the organised deportation of millions of people in the Holocaust described succinctly the consequences of a lack of imagination. She used the phrase ‘the banality of evil’ to describe how ordinary people accepted unquestioningly the premises on which the Nazi state was built and the normality of its activities in the Holocaust. For Eichmann the terrible acts he committed had become just a routine job – he wasn’t an ideologue like many of his peers – but followed their terrible plans out of ‘obedience, diligence – lack of imagination – so that he never thought the dreadful suffering for which he was responsible’. (Arendt 1963) Arendt’s political message that followed such reflections, was ‘a humanist message of political commitment: commitment to take responsibility for what was happening in the world instead of surrendering in the face of supposedly inevitable trends, and commitment to face up to reality instead of escaping into private or collective fantasies. (Canovan 1992)

Ikeda’s proposal that imagination is key to tackling the problems the world currently faces is similar. Imagination should not be confused with the imaginary or fantasy. On the contrary, it is an act of commitment rather than surrender, an effort to look beyond the immediate and obvious, but still remain grounded in reality. It is also an act of faith in people themselves. The denial of human rights is often premised on mistrust of people’s ability to respond creatively, wisely, effectively and with respect to the challenges presented to them. As a result,

in times of crisis particularly, governments often justify limiting human rights and fundamental freedoms that reduce participation and opportunities for connection, rather than enhance them. For example, rights of association are often curtailed in the name of security and denial of democracy justified by raising the spectre of mob rule. In dialogue with David Kreiger, Ikeda contends that ‘the hope for a nuclear free world is only an imagined possibility related to the common threat the world faces. ‘But imagination might be the key to meeting the historical challenge confronting us. (Ikeda and Kreiger 2002:4)

Conclusion

What then does the concept of inner universality as outlined by Ikeda offer to both the philosophy and practice human rights?

Firstly, inner universality arises out of engagement with realities; from engaging with the problems in front of each person. However it ensures that even whilst focusing on the local, the global and universal perspectives embodied in human rights are not lost, rather they can be fully deployed. Human rights when grounded in inner-universality, can emerge as culturally appropriate tools of emancipation; their global roots informed by the local which in turn reconstructs the global. This approach challenges the abstract universalism that enables them to be used (and misused) as ideology or panacea and instead focuses on how the practice of human rights can promote, protect and fulfil human dignity in the wide variety of forms through which it can be expressed. It also challenges their characterisation as the false universalising of a particular world-view grounded in abstract methodology or transcendent values. Rather they are primarily a practice by people and for people that can be used to address asymmetries in moral, legal, cultural, physical and political power in order to achieve a more inclusive world. Through

working to protect and promote human rights, people to respond creatively to tensions between the local and immediate, and the global and universal.

At the same time, by protecting and promoting the human rights needed for effective and deep participation, human rights language and practices can support and defend opportunities for people to connect with one another, as they work for the mutual realisation of their human rights, grounded in values of respect for, and recognition of each person's unique and diverse contribution. Given the opportunity to make connections, people begin to recognise their commonalities, developing an appreciation of *self in others*-in-other that is so essential if we are to confront the deepening conflict and exclusion that is a threat to the human rights of all. There is no doubt a long way to go before the universal aspirations embodied in human rights are realised, but that they sometimes (and in some cases often) fail to protect the weakest and most vulnerable should be a call to work even harder and with greater commitment, rather than to abandon the struggle and fall back on violence or cynicism. It is a call to people's imaginations, their ability to imagine new ways of addressing the problems the world faces, and to imagine that people themselves embody the wisdom and creativity to identify the solutions needed.

Nowhere is such an approach more needed than in the realisation of so-called solidarity rights of peace, the environment and sustainable development; rights that depend on interconnectedness and interdependence for their fulfilment. These rights are the most contested and difficult to accomplish for the very reason that sustainable development, peace and environmental protection appear to be realisable, at least to some, only at the cost of the lifestyle, individualism and moral certitude of others. To realise these human rights require engagement with realities, imagination, and the ability to recognise *self in others*-in-others. They also require

global and universal solutions that are grounded in local and specific knowledge and wisdom so that the global and local inform each other dialectically.

Such an approach has been central to the activities as well as the philosophy of Daisaku Ikeda. For example he has engaged with scholars, politicians and activists around the world in dialogues for peace, seeking connections and provoking imaginative responses to global and local problems. His attempts have at times led to criticism, especially when it has involved meeting those whose human rights record is, at the very least, questionable. The tension between the need for dialogue with those whom we are least inclined to countenance, and an imperative to eschew dialogue with those we believe to be beyond our moral universe, (so demonstrating disapproval) is one of the pressing conundrums of our times. However peace processes such as those of Northern Ireland and South Africa have shown that inclusion is essential to establishing the conditions for a lasting peace. Whilst both are admittedly imperfect and incomplete, both peace processes were built on political inclusivity, the involvement of civil society so that peace was not confined to being an elite project, and finally a commitment to human rights based reform so as to address structural inequalities. Ikeda's work has been grounded in the conviction that such broad and imaginative engagement is the necessary medium through which respect for the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people can be developed which are the foundations of lasting peace in its broadest manifestation. Ikeda concludes:

To set out from immediate and concrete realities, creating with every step new neighbours in an expanding network of human solidarity – this is the true path to peace. Without the steady accumulation of such efforts, the ideal of a perpetual peace will remain forever out of reach. To share with others this kind of awareness and sensitivity – un-poisoned by what Marcel calls the spirit of abstraction – is to nurture and cultivate inner universality. (Ikeda, 2009)

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