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EMOTION AS A LANGUAGE OF UNIVERSAL DIALOGUE

ABSTRACT

Despite globalization and the rapid development of information technology, cross-cultural dialogue did not become any easier. The physical and non-physical confrontations are intensified by the differences in basic values and interest of cultures, which can be seen by the increasing number of wars, extreme localism, and mistrust between people. Rationality, which has long been regarded as the best and the only common language among different cultures, fails to facilitate communication and collaboration. Rationality's limitation was revealed among others in Alasdair MacIntyre's *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Unlike what ancient Greek philosophers suggested, there is not a single type of supreme rationality that everyone will and should follow. The only consensus perhaps is about the instrumental rationality suggested by Max Weber, which is futile in promoting cross-cultural dialogues as it addresses the various means rather than the ends of different cultures. In this paper, I argue that emotion is a better language for universal dialogue than rationality in two senses. First, the psychologists and anthropologists provide solid evidence to prove that certain emotions are basic and universal among all human beings. For instance, based on his study of facial expression of the Fore people in Papua New Guinea, Ekman (2003) proposed that anger, fear, surprise, disgust, sadness, and happiness are six basic emotions that are universally shared. Other evidence includes studies conducted by Tomkins (1962), Arnold (1960), and Frijda (1986). These basic emotions might serve as the foundation of cross-cultural dialogue because we are evolved to understand the causes and expressions of these emotions in others despite the cultural and social differences. Second, unlike instrumental rationality that focuses solely on how to achieve one's end, certain emotions are non-egocentric by nature. For instance, compassion is "another-oriented emotion elicited by and congruent with the perceived welfare of another person" (Batson 1991). Chinese philosophy expresses a similar idea with the aid of the concept of *Ren*, which is the essence of human being, according to Confucianism. Love is another non-egocentric emotion that is constituted by care and concern of the well-being of one's beloved for his or her own sake. That is, I love you not because loving you makes me happy, instead, it is because loving you makes you happy. Such non-egocentric emotions (other

examples include sympathy, empathy, trust, etc.) might encourage and motivate cross-cultural dialogue despite the conflict of interest between cultures. While facing multifaceted contemporary problems and crisis, we do not lack rational and intelligent solutions. We lack mutual understanding, reciprocal tolerance, and sustainable collaboration. The role of emotion in establishing a platform of cross-cultural dialogue should not be overlooked.

Keywords: Emotion, universal dialogue, cross-cultural dialogue, rationality.

INTRODUCTION

Despite the trend of globalization and the rapid development of information technology, cross-cultural dialogue did not become any easier. Difference in basic values and interest of cultures have intensified the physical and non-physical confrontations, which is demonstrated by the increasing number of wars, extreme localism, and mistrust between people. Rationality, which has long been regarded as the best and the only common language among different culture, fails to facilitate communication and collaboration. In this paper, I will argue that the language of emotions is a better language for universal dialogue than rational means of communication in two aspects. First, the psychologists and anthropologists provide a solid evidence to prove that certain emotions are basic and universal among all human beings. The basic emotions might serve as a foundation of cross-cultural dialogue because we are evolved to understand the causes and expressions of these emotions in others despite the cultural and social differences. Second, unlike instrumental rationality that focuses solely on how to achieve one's end, some emotions, such as empathy, compassion, and love, are non-egocentric by nature. Such non-egocentric emotions might encourage and motivate cross-cultural dialogue despite the conflict of interests between cultures.

1. THE FALL OF REASON

Even since the inception of western philosophy reason has always been regarded as the most reliable and effective way to reach the truth of the world. In the *Republic*, Plato identifies three key elements in the soul (*psychē*), namely, reason (*logismos*), appetite (*epithumia*), and spirit (*thumos*). An analogy of our soul to a chariot, appetite and spirit are the two horses that run in different directions, and our reason is the charioteer that controls the horses and guides us in the right direction. Only if we follow the rule of reason can we learn the true value of life. According to Plato, “[W]hen a person starts on the discovery of the absolute by the light of reason only, without any assistance of sense, and perseveres until by pure intelligence he arrives at the perception of the absolute

Good, he at last finds himself at the summit of the intellectual realm.”¹ Since then, philosophers, including Aristotle, the Stoics, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, John Locke, George Berkeley, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, tried to elaborate Plato’s idea and explained how reason can point us to the real value of life. Conflicts of values, which constitute the core element of all kinds of physical and psychological conflicts among people, cities, and countries, are regarded as consequences of a failure in using reason to reach the “truth.” Philosophers use to believe that if everyone can communicate with each other in terms of reason, all the problems that we struggle with, such as wars, poverty, injustice, etc., will disappear.

The power of reason in telling us what is right and wrong was seriously questioned in time of vivid scientific development and the rise of industrial revolution. Max Weber call it the disenchantment of the world and said,

“The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the disenchantment of the world. Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations” (Weber 1946, 155).

In other words, many modern philosophers believe that reason at most possesses an instrumental value by telling us how to achieve our ends or goals. According to Robert Nozick,

“something is instrumentally rational with respect to given goals, ends, desires, and utilities when it is causally effective in realizing or satisfying these. But the notion of instrumental rationality gives us no way to evaluate the rationality of these goals, ends, and desires themselves, except as instrumentally effective in achieving further goals taken as given” (Nozick, 1993, 139).

If reason can do nothing but tell us how to achieve our own ends or goals, without telling us which ends or goals everyone should pursue, it is clear that we can no longer rely on such practical reason in communicating with people from different cultures with hugely diverse, if not incompatible, ends or goals.

Even so, we might still ask if there is any instrumental value of reason that is universally accepted by everyone, such that it might serve as the new language for cross-cultural communication. According to Aristotle, laws of logic are basic. It is clear that no one can reject his three laws of logic, namely, the law of identity (P is P), the law of noncontradiction (P is not non-P), and the law of the excluded middle (either P or non-P) without first assuming the truth of these

¹ Plato. 1937a. *Republic*, Jowett, M. A. (Trans.), 532a–b 1937a:791–2; <https://www.gutenberg.org/files>

laws. However, such a weak concept of instrumental reason might be unable to serve as a medium of cross-culture dialogue. According to MacIntyre,

“But even if Aristotle was successful, and I believe that he was, in showing that no one who understands the laws of logic can remain rational while rejecting them, observance of the laws of logic is only a necessary and not a sufficient condition for rationality, whether theoretical or practical. It is on what has to be added to observance of the laws of logic to justify ascriptions of rationality—whether to oneself or to others, whether to modes of enquiry or to justifications of belief, or to courses of action and their justification—that disagreement arises concerning the fundamental nature of rationality and extends in to disagreement over how it is rationally appropriate to proceed in the face of these disagreement” (MacIntyre, 1984, 4).

Drawing on a careful study of practical rationality suggested by different traditions, MacIntyre argues that such rationality cannot serve as a universal language as it is heavily historically-loaded. He states that

“So rationality itself, whether theoretical or practical, is a concept with a history: indeed, since there are also a diversity of traditions of enquiry, with histories, there are, so it will turn out, rationalities rather than rationality, just as it will also turn out that there are justices rather than justice” (MacIntyre, 1984, 2).

Furthermore, he identifies four traditions of rationality which have their own historical sources and ways of achieving practical rationality. (1) The Aristotelian tradition “emerges from the rhetorical and reflective life of the polis and the dialectical teaching of the Academy and the Lyceum” and arrives at practical rationality through “successive dialectical enterprises of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Aquinas.” (2) The Augustinian tradition “flourished in the houses of religious orders and in the secular communities which provided the environment for such houses both in its earlier, and in its Thomistic, version in universities” and arrives at practical rationality and justice “through obedience to divine authority as disclosed in scripture, mediated by Neoplatonic thought.” (3) The Scottish tradition is a “blend of Calvinist Augustinianism and renaissance Aristotelianism in formed the lives of congregations and kirk sessions, of law courts and universities” and arrives at practical rationality “by way of refutation of his predecessors, arguing from premises which they had come to accept, that Hume propounds his account.” (4) Lastly, liberalism, “begins as a repudiation of tradition I the name of abstract, universal principles of reason, turned itself in to a politically embodied power, whose inability to bring its debates on the nature and context of those universal principles to a conclusion has had the unintended effect of transforming liberalism into a tradition” and arrive rationality by “a succession of ringing accounts of justice continue in a debate rendered inconclusive in part by the accompanying view of practical rationality” (MacIntyre, 1984, 2).

The dispute between these four traditions is difficult to solve. MacIntyre explains the reason behind it, which is stated as follows.

“Fundamental disagreements about the character of rationality are bound to be peculiarly difficult to resolve. For already in initially preceding in one way rather than another to approach the disputed questions, those who so proceed will have had to assume that these particular procedures are the ones which it is rational to follow. A certain degree of circularity is ineliminable” (MacIntyre, 1984, 4).

Worse still, similarly to the paradigm postulated by Thomas Kuhn and the research programs suggested by Imre Lakatos, these four traditions might not even be commensurable with each other. MacIntyre said that “So the narrative history of each of these traditions involves both a narrative of enquiry and debate within that tradition and also one of debate and disagreement between it and its rivals, debates and disagreements which come to define the detail of these varying types of antagonistic relationship” (MacIntyre, 1984, 350). It is as if they are speaking four different kinds of languages. In this sense, relying on the historically-loaded idea of practical rationality as a medium in cross-cultural dialogue is doomed to be futile.

In short, reason fails to be a “language” of universal dialogue for three reasons. First, it cannot lead us to values or ends that are accepted universally. Second, the universally accepted laws of logic are too thin to resolve the concrete conflicts between different cultures. Lastly, practical rationalities are necessarily historical. Different traditions of reasons are neither compatible nor commensurable with each other. Even though all the human beings are rational in a broad sense, reason is far from being an ideal medium for cross-cultural dialogue.

2. BASIC EMOTION

I argue that emotion is a better option for universal dialogue because of two reasons. First, scientists have shown that several emotions are universally shared by all human beings. They are written in our genes for strong evolutionary reasons. Second, several emotions are non-egocentric in nature. That is, they do not motivate us to advance our interests, but to actively concern the growth and maintenance of other’s well-being. I will elaborate these two features of emotions and explain how they matter for cross-cultural dialogue in the following paragraphs.

The question whether there are emotions that are shared universally by human beings has been a topic of research of psychologists, biologists, and anthropologists for decades. Ekman’s (2003) studied the facial expressions of emotions of the inhabitants in a remote jungle of Papua New Guinea, which

serves as the earliest attempt to answer this question. These natives had never been exposed to western cultures before. They had no television, radio, or any medium providing them any information about the western world. Ekman tested whether these natives shared the same pattern of facial expression of some basic emotions with the westerners by a judgment test. The natives were told a story that suggested a typical emotional response. For example, the fear story is as follows:

“He (she) is sitting in his (her) house all alone, and there is no one else in the village. There is no knife, axe, or bow and arrow in the house. A wild pig is standing in the door of the house, and the man (woman) is looking at the pig and is very afraid of it. The pig has been standing in the doorway for a few minutes, and the person is looking at it very afraid, and the pig won’t move away from the door, and he (she) is afraid the pig will bite him (her).”²

Then, they were asked to pick a photo of the facial expression that was most appropriate for the story they were told. Ekman found that the natives did significantly well in matching the facial expression of anger, fear, sadness, and disgust with the corresponding stories. This provides strong evidence that these natives have the same facial expression of these emotions as the westerners. Simultaneously, the facial expressions of the emotions of the Papua New Guinea natives were recorded when they were told these stories. The photos were brought back to America, and a group of American students were asked to identify what kind of emotion were exhibited via those facial expressions. Again, the American students showed significant accuracy in identifying the facial expressions of six emotions of these people. The study suggests that there are facial expressions of emotions that are universal among people from different cultures. Ekman characterized the specific facial expressions of these six emotions as follows:

Basic Emotion	Facial Expression
Joy	Raise of mouth corner. Tightening of eyelids.
Surprise	Arching eyebrows. Widely opened eyes. Slightly dropped jaw.
Sadness	Lowering of mouth corner. Eyebrows pulled down to the inner corners. Dropping eyelids.
Anger	Eyebrows lowering. Firmly pressed lips. Eyes bulging.
Disgust	Nose wrinkling. Upper lip raising.
Fear	Upper eyelids raising. Eye opening. Lips stretching horizontally.

These universal facial expressions serve as an important piece of evidence in support of the existence of basic emotions that are shared universally by all human beings.

² Ekman (1971). p. 126.

Universal emotion-specific physiologies can be another kind of evidence that support the existence of basic emotions. As Ekman said, “If basic emotions evolved to deal with fundamental life tasks, they should not only provide information through expressions to conspecifics about what is occurring, but there should also be physiological changes preparing the organism to respond differently in different emotional state” (Ekman, 1999, 48). P. Ekman, R. W. Levenson and W. V. Friesen (1983, 1990) discovered that there were universal patterns of autonomic nervous system (ANS) activity for anger, fear, sadness, and disgust. A similar experiment was conducted in a non-western, fundamentalist Moslem, and matrilineal society, namely Minangkabau of Western Sumatra by Levenson and others (1992). The same patterns of ANS were found for the afore-mentioned four emotions. Lastly, some emotions have been found to be aroused by universal antecedent events. For example, Boucher and Brant (1981) found that the loss of a significant other was a universal antecedent to sadness in all the cultures. Ekman and Friesen (1975) discovered that the threat of physical or psychological harm was a universal antecedent for fear. Other evidences supporting the existence of basic emotions include universal action tendency (Arnold, 1960), which is related to adaptive biological processes (Plutchik, 1980) and density of neural firing (Tomkins, 1962).

In the light of all these studies, we have good reasons to believe that there are several emotions that are universally shared by all human beings, regardless of their cultural differences. The list of basic emotions, on the other hand, varies among researchers. Ekman and Arnold (1960) propose the Big Six, while others—anger, aversion, courage, dejection, desire, despair, fear, hate, hope, love, and sadness as basic emotions due to their universal relation to action tendencies. Nico H. Frijda propose desire, happiness, interest, surprise, wonder, and sorrow as basic emotions due to their universal forms of action readiness. Plutchik (1980) proposed acceptance, anger, anticipation, disgust, joy, fear, sadness, and surprise as basic emotions due to their universal relation to our adaptive biological processes. Tomkins (1984) proposed anger, interest, contempt, disgust, distress, fear, joy, shame, and surprise as basic emotions due to their universal density of neural firing.

The existence of universally shared emotions may aid cross-cultural dialogue by helping us understand what others really think and feel. Unlike language, which is deceptive, misleading, and ambiguous, the facial expressions of basic emotions are involuntary. Ekman calls them micro-expression of emotions. He says:

“Micro expressions are facial expressions that occur within 1/25th of a second. They are involuntary and expose a person’s true emotions. They can happen as a result of conscious suppression or unconscious repression. These facial expressions are universal, meaning they occur on everyone around the world” (Paul Ekman Group).³

³ See Paul Ekman Group. *Micro Expressions Training Tools*; <https://www.paulekman.com/micro-expressions/>

People from different cultures might hide or conceal their facial expressions in specific ways. Ekman calls them “display rules.” However, micro-expression happens before the application of display rules and, therefore, might tell us what the person really feels even though he/she tries to hide it. Ekman demonstrates this with a famous experiment, in which Japanese and American students were shown footage of surgeries and accidents, which were supposed to arouse negative facial expressions. A scientist was sitting next to them when they watched the movie. Ekman found that Japanese students tended to mask their negative expressions with a smile while their American counterparts showed their negative expressions. It is because Japanese students might have a rule to inhibit the display of negative expressions and behaviors when an authority is present while Americans have no such rule. However, when they watched the films alone, negative facial expressions were observed in both the Japanese and the American students. This shows that we may know a person’s true emotion by looking at their micro-expressions under specific settings. If we agree that failure to understand what people from other cultures really think is a crucial hindrance to cross-cultural dialogue and language and rationality might worsen rather than remedy such misunderstandings, then these universally shared and involuntary emotional expressions might serve as windows for us to truly see what others think and feel.

Not only is the arousal of the facial expression of basic emotions involuntary, their perception is also involuntary. Unlike verbal language (like the corresponding concepts of rationality and justice) that can be interpreted in multiple or contradictory ways, the perception of emotions need not go through our conscious reasoning process. Instead, it is directly executed by an involuntary and unconscious mechanism called empathy. First, introduced by the psychologist Edward Titchener in 1909 as the translation of the German term “*Einfühling*,” empathy generally refers to our capacity to mirror what the other person is feeling. We do not earn this capacity by training or education, instead, our brain is wired in such a way that we can naturally perform such mirroring of emotions. Specifically, this capacity is made possible by the so-called mirror neuron system. Mirroring systems were first discovered in monkeys by G. Rizzolatti and others (1996). The same action mirror neurons fired when the monkeys performed the associated actions and when an observing monkey watched other monkeys performing the actions. Rizzolatti and others (2001) discovered a similar mirroring system in humans. Moreover, vocal mirror neurons were discovered by Kohler and others (2002). These neurons fire both when the subjects perform an action and when they hear a sound related to that action. Recently, scientists discovered that there is a significant overlap between the neural areas of excitation that underlie our recognition of another person’s emotions based on their facial expressions and areas that are stimulated when we experience the same emotion (Gallese, 2003). Due to the involuntary nature of the arousal and recognition of basic emotions, we can expect that basic emotions may lead

to less misunderstanding as compared to the rationality of cross-cultural dialogue.

Besides, basic emotions may serve as a common mood of communication (“language”) among people from different cultures. As suggested by MacIntyre, the meaning of rationality and justice vary vastly in different cultures. Thus, to communicate based on these two terms is as futile as talking to people in different languages. For example, consider the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Israelis claim that their occupation of the Israel is just and legitimate because of the words mentioned in the Bible and the long history of the prosecution of the Jews. The Palestinians claim that they should be the owner of Israel because of the words of the Quran and the long history of Palestinian settlement in Israel. While the Israelis think that it is rational for them to build the West Bank Barrier and the settlements to protect their citizens, the Palestinians think that it is rational for them to protest against the establishment of these illegal and unjust barriers and settlements. Apparently, their ideas of justice and rationality are so different that appealing to these criteria is hopeless in reaching any agreement or compromise between them. Instead of talking about what would be the rational and just thing to do, what if they talk about what would be the happy and sad thing to do? As shown above, some emotions are found to be aroused by universal antecedent events. That is, our basic emotions are aroused by the same formal object. Even though they might not reach any agreement about whether it is just to build the West Bank Barrier, but they might agree that it is *heart-breaking* to be separated from one’s family and friends by such a barrier. Even though they might not draw any consensus of whether it is rational to stop wars by buying more weapons and attacking each other, but they might agree that sending their sons to a dangerous war is the most *fearful* experience that must be avoided at all costs. It is impossible for them to agree whether war or peace negotiation might bring them the most benefit, as they might agree on the fact that nothing might give them more *satisfaction* than a peaceful living environment that is free from the threats of death and injury for them and their children. Certainly, I am not suggesting that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be resolved by appealing to each other’s basic emotions. Nevertheless, to talk in terms of emotions rather than in terms of rationality seems to be a promising start to reach some minimal mutual consensus, given that these emotions are shared by both the parties.

3. NON-EGOCENTRIC EMOTIONS

One reason why instrumental rationality fails to shorten the distance between people is because it is always about one’s own interest. We cannot help but see things and calculate cost and benefit from our perspective. Contrarily, there are certain emotions that are non-egocentric in nature, but are concerned with the

well-being of others. These emotions might facilitate cross-cultural dialogue by motivating us to temporarily put down self-interests and put ourselves into others' shoes. The following section discusses three non-egocentric emotions and explains how they enhance communication between people from different cultures.

3.1. Trust

The first non-egocentric emotion is trust. Trust is a feeling of assurance that is often based on inconclusive evidence. When we believe in something with conclusive evidence, just like we know that a triangle has three sides, or the sky is blue, these knowledges are so well fitted into our commonsense that we do not feel anything about them. But when we believe in something that we actually are not sure about, i.e., whether it is true or not, there is a feeling of determination that is stronger than the feeling of doubt motivating us to insist that it is true and act accordingly. Søren Kierkegaard calls such feeling of trust a leap of faith. His prominent example of such a leap is the story of Abraham. God asks Abraham to offer his son, Isaac, to him. He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love so greatly, and go to the land of Moriah, and there on a mountain that I will show you, offer him for a burnt-offering to me." There is no reason to justify killing your son and Abraham did not get any reason to believe that God will not keep his words. Thus, all he could do at that moment was to take a leap of faith and to believe that obeying God and saving his son's life could both happen despite the contradictory evidence. Thus, trust is non-egocentric in the sense that it is not based on any rational calculation, but a leap of faith about other's good will.

I believe that such non-egocentric trust of other's good will is of utmost importance to cross-cultural dialogue. Many of the conflicts today are not a result of evil intentions, but a failure to believe that others are willing to be kind and fair just as us. This situation is best illustrated by the case of prisoner dilemma. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* describes one version of the dilemma as follows:

"Two prisoners are accused of a crime. If one confesses and the other does not, the one who confesses will be released immediately and the other will spend 20 years in prison. If neither confesses, each will be held only a few months. If both confess, they will each be jailed 15 years. They cannot communicate with one another. Given that neither prisoner knows whether the other has confessed, it is in the self-interest of each to confess himself. Paradoxically, when each prisoner pursues his self-interest, both end up worse off than they would have been had they acted otherwise."⁴

⁴ Cf.: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/prisoners-dilemma>

From the dilemma, we can see that the two parties fail to adopt a win-win strategy because there is no way that they can be sure that the other party will cooperate. As a matter of fact, none of them has any conclusive reasons to believe the good will of other. Consequently, they are bound to suffer a worse consequence even though both are well aware of the better strategy. Similar problems occur in our real lives from time to time. One cogent example is the armament race between countries. All countries know that the expenditure on weapons is so huge that the welfare of their people can be greatly improved if such an amount of money is spent on medical service, education, infrastructure, etc. However, they cannot cut their armament budget because the hostile countries around them might attack. If all countries agree not to raise their expenditure on weapons, everyone can enjoy a better life with the money saved. The problem is, no one can be sure that the other will keep their promise. One will be in great danger if one gives up their defense while one's enemy gets even more weapons. The armament race before World War II and during Cold War were caused by such failure to reach mutual agreements. Similar problems occurred in the conflicts between people, companies, races, and countries. For instance, one of the reasons why the process of democratization is extremely difficult is caused by such a dilemma. There is no guarantee that one's opponents will not change the election rule to ensure that they will always win once they win an election. Thus, the most rational and safest way is to preserve one's power and to rule out the possibility of one's opponents ruling over oneself by hindering any effort toward democracy. There is no way to find a rational way to solve these dilemmas, given that reason dictates us to protect our interests by choosing the worse strategy. The only possible breakthrough is by adopting the emotion of trust. If both parties can take a leap of fate and trust the goodwill of the other despite the lack of evidence, then conflicts between people, cultures, or countries with contradictory interests can be solved, which in turn would lead to a win-win situation.

3.2. Compassion

The second non-egocentric emotion is compassion. Compassion is a feeling of being moved by witnessing the suffering of others and being motivated to alleviate such sufferings. It is non-egocentric in the sense that we feel bad toward others' suffering not because such suffering will harm our well-being, but we feel bad because it will harm their well-being, which is a concern for us. Such non-egocentricity is nicely illustrated by an example given by the ancient Chinese philosopher Mencius. He says:

“When I say that all men have a mind which cannot bear to see the sufferings of others, my meaning may be illustrated thus: even now-a-days, if men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they will without exception experience a feeling of alarm and distress. they will feel so, not as a ground on

which they may gain the favor of the child's parents, nor as a ground on which they may seek the praise of their neighbors and friends, nor from a dislike to the reputation of having been unmoved by such a thing."⁵

In his example, we are motivated to save the child not because of any personal interest but because of a pure feeling of compassion toward him. Such non-egocentric nature of compassion plays an essential role in solving cross-cultural disputes. For example, let us consider the recent Syrian refugee crisis, which officially began on March 15, 2011. In the Syrian civil war hundreds of thousands of people were killed and most of the major public facilities, including hospitals, schools, water and sanitation systems in Syria were destroyed. Over 5.6 million of Syrians were forced to flee, which made them refugees. At that time, most European countries were reluctant to take in these refugees. All of them had "good" reasons not to do so, such as "Our country cannot afford the cost of taking care of these people," "It may harm the local people's opportunities to find a job or reach public service," "The outbreak of the Syrian civil war is not our responsibility," "The refugee may create security problem in our country," etc. On 2nd September 2015, a three-year-old Syrian boy named Alan Kurdi drowned and was found dead on a Turkish beach. Clicked by a Turkish journalist named Nilüfer Demir, this photo immediately made global headlines. A strong feeling of compassion toward the Syrian refugees was so widespread that all the major powers in Europe agreed to start taking in Syrian refugees or raising their quota of taking in. From this case, we can see that sometimes the power of compassion is much stronger than that of rationality in motivating altruistic and humanistic behavior.

Just like other basic emotions, the emotion of compassion is shared by all the major cultures and religions in the world. As mentioned above, Chinese cultures regard compassion as one of the human natures that defines who we are and distinguishes us from other animals. Mencius says,

"The feeling of commiseration belongs to all men; so, does that of shame and dislike; and that of reverence and respect; and that of approving and disapproving. The feeling of commiseration implies the principle of benevolence; that of shame and dislike, the principle of righteousness; that of reverence and respect, the principle of propriety; and that of approving and disapproving, the principle of knowledge. Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and knowledge are not infused into us from without. We are certainly furnished with them."⁶

In Theravāda Buddhism, compassion (*karuṇā*) is one of the four "divine abodes" along with loving kindness, sympathetic joy, and equanimity, while in Mahāyāna Buddhism, compassion is one of the two qualities along with en-

⁵ See <http://nothingistic.org/library/mencius/mencius12.html>

⁶ See <http://nothingistic.org/library/mencius/mencius42.html>

lightened wisdom that is to be cultivated on the bodhisattva path. Dalai Lama once said:

“According to Buddhism, compassion is an aspiration, a state of mind, wanting others to be free from suffering. It’s not passive—it’s not empathy alone—but rather an empathetic altruism that actively strives to free others from suffering. Genuine compassion must have both wisdom and lovingkindness. That is to say, one must understand the nature of the suffering from which we wish to free others (this is wisdom), and one must experience deep intimacy and empathy with other sentient beings (this is lovingkindness)” (Dalai Lama, 2002).

Christianity emphasizes compassion by attributing it as one of the most important characteristics of God. According to the Bible, God is “a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” (Psalm 86:15). As Lamentations 3:22–23 says, “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.” In John 11:33–35, Jesus showed his deep compassion toward others’ sufferings. It says, “When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept. Motivated by his compassions toward the sick people, Jesus practiced his miracle healing. Matthew (14:14) says, “When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. Mark (1:40–41) says, “And a leper came to him, imploring him, and kneeling said to him, “If you will, you can make me clean.” Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, “I will; be clean.” Last but not the least, Muslims have also placed an important value on the emotion of compassion. Muslims address Allah as “Compassionate and Merciful.” The first chapter of Quran describes Allah as Rabb al-Alamin (i.e., Sustainer of the whole world) and sustenance of the whole world itself is based on His Mercy and Compassion. Allah sent His Messenger Muhammad as the Mercy of the World (21:107). Thus, “a true follower of the Prophet (PBUH) has to be merciful and compassionate to the extent humanly possible. Anyone who is cruel and has no sensitivity towards sufferings of others cannot be Prophet’s true follower in any sense.”⁷

From the above teachings, we can see that Confucism, Buddhism, Christianity, and Muslim all emphasize the importance of compassion. This universally recognized emotion, which is extremely powerful in motivating us to concern other’s well-being instead of our own, might help facilitate cross-cultural dialogue by showing others our good will and let them feel safe and peaceful to participate in such a dialogue.

⁷ See <http://www.islamicity.org/8398/the-concept-of-compassion-in-islam/>

3.3. Love

The last non-egocentric emotion that I want to discuss is love. Similar to compassion, the importance of the value of love is universally acknowledged in almost all the cultures and religions. The scope of love is not limited to romantic love, but also includes family love and friendship. The non-egocentric nature of love is characterized by Taylor (1976) as follows:

“To summarize: if x loves y then x wants to benefit and be with y etc., and he has these wants (or at least some of them) because he believes y has some determinate characteristics ψ in virtue of which he thinks it worthwhile to benefit and be with y . He regards satisfaction of these wants as an end and not as a means towards some other end” (Taylor, 1976, 157).

The stories of unselfish love have always been an inspiration for people from different cultures. Moral saints such as Mother Teresa, Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, Martin L. King Jr., and all the fathers and mothers who devote their whole lives for their children are named as moral saints mainly for their unselfish love.

One important feature of such an unselfish love, which makes it particularly helpful in having a successful cross-cultural dialogue, is that it can spread from friends and relatives to strangers. Such extension of love nurtures our power to see the common ground between people different from us, which lay the foundation of cross-cultural dialogue. In *the Art of Loving*, Fromm says, “To love one person productively means to be related to his human core, to him as representing mankind. Love for one individual, in so far as it is divorced from love for man, can refer only to the superficial and to the accidental; of necessity it remains shallow” (Fromm, 1956, Chap. 2). That is, if one learns to really love a person, one must love the essence that makes him a human being. As you might find such essence in other people too, your love toward a specific person will extend to human beings as such. Thus, Fromm says, “Love is not primarily a relationship to a specific person; it is an attitude, an ordination of character which determines the relatedness of the person to the whole world as a whole, not toward one object of love” (Fromm, 1956, Chap. 2). A similar view regarding the extension of love can be seen in Mencius who describes the man who knows how to love as follows: “He is affectionate to his parents, and lovingly disposed to people generally. He is lovingly disposed to people generally, and kind to creatures.”⁸ That is, we learn how to love by loving our parents first, and then we can love people generally, and ultimately extend our love toward non-human creatures. Such extending love is made possible by seeing the common ground of different people, namely, as human being as such. If we start to see people of different cultures, races, gender, or nationality as human beings who

⁸ See <http://nothingistic.org/library/mencius/mencius52.html>

are no different from us, then we might be able to talk to them as if we talk to our friends, spouses, and family.

Such a power of love to see commonality in difference also plays an inevitable role in the establishment of global justice. In her latest book *Political Emotions*, Martha Nussbaum argues that love matters for justice. One of the foundations of global justice is a general respect for human dignity. However, such respect is practically impossible if one cannot imagine how it is like to live closely with people whose value and beliefs are vastly different from you. Such power of imaginative engagement with others, on the other hand, can only be nurtured by the emotion of love. Nussbaum says,

“Consequently respect grounded in the idea of human dignity will prove impotent to include all citizens on terms of equality unless it is nourished by imaginative engagement with the lives of others and by an inner grasp of their full and equal humanity [...] The type of imaginative engagement society needs, Part II argued, is nourished by love” (Nussbaum, 2013, 380).

By the non-egocentric nature of love, we might learn to respect, care, and show concern about those who are different from us. Such respect and the love that breeds it, lays the foundation of a successful cross-cultural dialogue.

4. CONCLUSION

Facing multifaceted contemporary problems and crisis, we do not lack rational and intelligent solutions. What we lack is mutual understanding, reciprocal tolerance, and sustainable collaboration. The existence of basic emotions universally that are shared by all human beings might serve as a common language among people from diverse cultures, while the involuntary arousal and perception of emotions help us understand what others really feel. Non-egocentric emotions, such as trust, compassion, and love, might lay the foundation of cross-cultural dialogue by ensuring the good will of both the parties in participating into communication and learning to see the commonality in difference. I conclude that the role of emotions in establishing a platform for cross-cultural dialogue should not be overlooked.

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