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RESEARCH ARTICLE

'In the West but not of the West': Notes on Wittgenstein, dialogue, and decoloniality

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Abstract

The 'relational turn' in International Studies offers an important opportunity for the field to move beyond Eurocentric conceptions of relationality in the study of international politics. But pluralizing sources for relational thinking requires practical negotiation of epistemic, ontological, and cosmological differences for which the field remains poorly equipped. To address the methodological needs around navigating relational differences, this article rereads the philosophical method of Ludwig Wittgenstein alongside key insights from decolonial theory to provide a conceptual and practical bridge between Westernized approaches to International Studies and the diverse relationalities at play in non-Westernized ways of knowing and being. Scholars of International Studies and decolonial theory highlight Wittgenstein's utility for deconstructing epistemic and ontological Eurocentrism. However, this article introduces for the first time the important practical, epistemic, and ethical consonances between Wittgenstein's method of dialogical comparison and decolonial practices of pluriversal dialogue around specific 'connectors', seemingly cognate concepts whose irreducible plurality of meaning provides grounds for contingent practices of pluriversal encounter. Through its family resemblances to pluriversal dialogue, Wittgenstein's method re-envisions the field's key concepts as sites for discursive encounter across epistemic, ontological, and cosmological differences, opening possibilities for engagement with correspondingly diverse modes of relationality.

Keywords: decolonial theory; pluriversal dialogue; pluriversality; Wittgenstein; International Relations Theory

Introduction

The 'relational turn' in the study of international politics offers an important opportunity to move beyond epistemic and ontological Eurocentrism.[1] Encounters between more disciplinarily orthodox scholarly approaches to global politics and 'situated relational knowledges and … different forms of relational thought and practice' illustrate the limitations of unreconstructed imperial and colonial conceptualizations of international politics through atomistic, ontologically distinct political units, and offer potential tools for reimagining complex global interconnections in less exclusionary forms.[2] But pluralizing – or even *pluriversalizing* – sources for relational thinking

[1]Tamara Trownsell, Navnita Chadha Behera, and Giorgio Shani, 'Introduction to the special issue: Pluriversal relationality', *Review of International Studies*, 48:5 (2022), pp. 787–800.

[2]Milja Kurki, 'Relational revolution and relationality in IR: New conversations', *Review of International Studies*, 48:5 (2022), pp. 821–36; Julian Saurin, 'International Relations as the imperial illusion; or, the need to decolonize IR', in Branwen Gruffydd Jones (ed.), *Decolonizing International Relations* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), pp. 23–42.

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about international politics requires the negotiation of epistemic, ontological, and cosmological differences with which the field remains poorly equipped to engage.[3]

Despite increasing theoretical interest in non-Westernized relational resources, disciplinary developments of corresponding methods for engagement across various forms of difference continue to lag.[4] To help address the need for practical methodological tools to navigate epistemic, ontological, and cosmological differences, this article proposes a novel rereading of the Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophical method as a conceptual and practical analogue to decolonial practices of *pluriversal dialogue* – decolonial modes of encounter between the inhabitants of the many worlds entwined within irreducibly plural ways of knowing and being. Development of these analogous practices offers one possible methodological bridge between Westernized conceptualizations of international politics and non-Westernized epistemologies, ontologies, and cosmologies shaped by dramatically different notions of relationality itself.

This article brings together and extends existing retrievals of Wittgenstein within both International Relations and decolonial literatures. Wittgenstein's influence on social theory's 'linguistic turn' already informs diverse critical approaches within the study of international politics.[5] Salman Sayyid's decolonial retrieval of Wittgenstein as a thinker 'in the West but not of the West' also indicates Wittgenstein's utility in confronting epistemic Eurocentrism and enabling the 'decolonial deconstruction' of Westernized academic disciplines and discourses.[6] However, this article outlines for the first time the important practical, epistemic, and ethical consonances between Wittgenstein's method of *dialogical comparison* and decolonial practices of *pluriversal dialogue*. The discussion that follows shows how Wittgenstein's method of dialogical comparison – and the deeper epistemic assumptions upon which it is predicated – offers Westernized scholars of international politics a possible entrée into pluriversal encounter with epistemic, ontological, and cosmological difference and corresponding modes of relationality, while avoiding tendencies to reinscribe non-Westernized ways of knowing and being within a hegemonic academic 'language of redescription'.[7] Wittgenstein's philosophical method instead resituates Westernized epistemologies (including academic disciplines) as 'a set of particularistic intellectual choices' embedded in specific (but always contested) contexts of meaning, allowing scholars of international politics to '*provincialize* rather than *reject wholesale*' their operative understandings of the field and its key concepts as these are brought into contingent, comparative engagement with seemingly cognate concepts

[3]David L. Blaney and Tamara A. Trownsell, 'Recrafting international relations by worlding multiply', *Uluslararası İlişkiler Dergisi*, 18:70 (2021), pp. 45–62; Tamara Trownsell, Amaya Querejazu Escobari, Navnita Chadha Behera, Jarrad Reddekop, and Arlene Tickner, 'Recrafting international relations through relationality', *E-International Relations* (2019), pp. 1–10.

[4]Garrett FitzGerald et al., 'Relational voices in international studies: Rethinking theory and method through relationality', *International Studies Review*, 28:3 (2026), pp. 1–24; Karen Tucker, 'Unraveling coloniality in international relations: Knowledge, relationality, and strategies for engagement', *International Political Sociology*, 12:3 (2018), pp. 215–32.

[5]Karin Marie Fierke, 'Wittgenstein and international relations theory', in Cerwyn Moore and Chris Farrands (eds), *International Relations Theory and Philosophy* (Routledge, 2010), pp. 83–94; Mervyn Frost and Silviya Lechner, 'Two conceptions of international practice: Aristotelian praxis or Wittgensteinian language-games ?', *Review of International Studies,* 42:2 (2016), pp. 334–50; Kimberly Hutchings, 'War and moral stupidity', *Review of International Studies*, 44:1 (2018), pp. 83–100; Véronique Pin-Fat, "What's love got to do with it?' Ethics, emotions, and encounter in International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 45:2 (2019), pp. 181–200; Necati Polat, 'European integration as colonial discourse', *Review of International Studies*, 37:3 (2011), pp. 1255–72; Jessica Woolley, 'Wittgenstein against 'positivist' approaches to international relations: Replacing the anti-representationalist objection', (2015).

[6]João José R. L. de Almeida, 'The Nestroy's motto and a decolonial Wittgenstein', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 54:12 (2022), pp. 1986–2007; Antonio Miguel and Carolina Tamayo, 'Wittgenstein, therapy and decolonial school education', *Educação & Realidade*, 45:3 (2020), pp. 1–39; Salman Sayyid, 'Towards a critique of eurocentrism: Remarks of Wittgenstein, philosophy and racism', in Marta Araújo and Silvia Rodríguez Maeso (eds), *Eurocentrism, Racism and Knowledge: Debates on History and Power in Europe and the Americas* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 80–92.

[7]James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

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that inform other ways of knowing and being.[8] This provincialization permits Westernized epistemologies to function as one among a variety of subject positions rather than a single authorized site of knowledge production, decentring Westernized ways of knowing and being as the touchstone for negotiating difference and relationality, and opening new possibilities for pluriversal encounter.

Dialogical approaches to navigating difference and relationality require caveats, and critical scholars of international politics rightly indicate the intersectional exclusions that often attend dialogical attempts to broaden the field.[9] However, some of these concerns are hopefully allayed by the centring of pluriversal dialogue as a form of encounter *already in use* among communities surviving and navigating such exclusions on the margins of the modern-colonial world system. Pluriversal dialogue represents such an important praxis for decolonial theorists precisely because it indicates how communities marginalized by diverse experiences of coloniality – including Indigenous and peasant communities, Global South feminist groups, and other decolonial movements – are already finding ways to collaboratively resist oppression in practice without erasing internal tensions or irreducible differences in past experiences, present resources of meaning, or visions for alternative futures.[10]

Wittgenstein's potential contributions towards new modes of dialogical encounter require similar circumspection. The discussion that follows is emphatically not intended to displace non-Westernized epistemologies and methodologies as the primary loci of enunciation for critiques of Eurocentrism and the imagination of potential alternatives, nor to suggest that the provincialization of Eurocentric epistemologies and intellectual productions cannot be achieved without Wittgenstein's contributions (or the contributions of *any* Western thinker, for that matter). Such Eurocentric claims simply reinscribe the indispensability of Western thought, even as the primary vehicle for its own critique. Rather, this intervention's more modest goal is to show how a certain retrieval of Wittgenstein's later thought furnishes specific resources for avoiding recurring pathologies that plague attempts by scholars of international politics to engage with various forms of difference, and for furthering important recent trends in International Studies that draw on movements in 'posthuman IR … indigenous IR, studies rooted in the black diaspora, and decolonial approaches' to provide 'new models and toolkits of concepts and methods, [and] distinct forms of relations, including those with wider non-human worlds'.[11] By offering a conceptual and practical bridge to non-Westernized conceptions of relationality (and related conceptions of politics), reading Wittgenstein in conversation with decolonial practices of pluriversal dialogue provides one more set of tools that 'those with a particular imaginative bent may find useful in the struggle against Eurocentrism'.[12]

The following section on pluriversality and pluriversal dialogue introduces a prominent conception of pluriversal dialogue that coheres around particular 'connectors' – seemingly cognate

[8]Meera Sabaratnam, 'IR in Dialogue … but can we change the subjects? A typology of decolonising strategies for the study of world politics', *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 39:3 (2011), pp. 781–803.

[9] H. Behr, 'Peace-in-difference: A phenomenological approach to peace through difference', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 12:3 (2018), pp. 335–51; Hartmut Behr and Giorgio Shani, 'Rethinking emancipation in a critical IR: Normativity, cosmology, and pluriversal dialogue', *Millennium*, 49:2 (2021), pp. 368–91; Yong-Soo Eun, 'Beyond 'the West/non-West Divide' in IR: How to ensure dialogue as mutual learning', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 11:4 (2018), pp. 435–49; 'Global IR through dialogue', *The Pacific Review*, 32:2 (2019), pp. 131–49; Johanna Leinius, 'Decolonizing cosmopolitanism in practice: From universalizing monologue to intercultural dialogue?', *Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies*, 15 (2014), pp. 39–65; Mustapha Kamal Pasha, 'Western Nihilism and Dialogue: Prelude to an Uncanny Encounter in International Relations', *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 39:3 (2011), pp. 683–99; Robbie Shilliam, 'Decolonising the grounds of ethical inquiry: A dialogue between Kant, Foucault and Glissant', *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 39:3 (2011), pp. 649–65.

[10]Janet Conway and Jakeet Singh, 'Radical democracy in global perspective: Notes from the pluriverse', *Third World Quarterly*, 32:4 (2011), pp. 689–706; Leinius (2014); 'María Elena Martínez-Torres and Peter M. Rosset, 'Diálogo de Saberes in La Vía Campesina: Food sovereignty and agroecology', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 41:6 (2014), pp. 979–97.

[11]Blaney and Trownsell (2021) p. 47.

[12]Sayyid (2015) p. 90.

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concepts shared across epistemic, ontological, and cosmological differences – whose simultaneous use and the irreducibility of their meaning across contexts provide contingent discursive and ethical grounds for pluriversal encounter. The next section, on the decolonial availability of Wittgenstein's later thought, outlines Wittgenstein's philosophy of language and the deconstructive resources it furnishes both for scholars of international politics and for decolonial scholars as resources against epistemic Eurocentrism. The next two sections ('Dialogical comparison as method' and 'From comparative to pluriversal dialogue') engage Wittgenstein's method of dialogical comparison and note as-yet-unexplored points of consonance with pluriversal dialogue to establish a particular retrieval of Wittgenstein's method as an epistemically analogical practice for navigating questions of difference and power.[13] The final section ('Listening to the pluriverse') indicates how Wittgensteinian comparative dialogue frames specific instances of pluriversal encounter, demonstrating the utility of Wittgenstein's intriguingly non-Eurocentric method in bridging epistemic, ontological, and cosmological differences and offering a novel approach to reimagining the theory and practice of international politics through more pluriversal forms of relationality.

Pluriversality and pluriversal dialogue

Pluriversality names the alternative pasts, presents, and possible futures entwined within irreducibly plural ways of knowing and being that struggle to survive under the conditions of modernity-coloniality. Globalized capitalist modernity is constructed and maintained through violent logics of superiority and associated policies of genocide and epistemicide.[14] The pluriverse endures despite these violences, but remains actively endangered by the racist, sexist, heteropatriarchal material, and ideological formations of the modern-colonial capitalist world system. The existence of epistemologies, ontologies, and cosmologies *otherwise*, however, denies the authority of modernity's claims to 'universally valid knowledge' and of any accounts of relationality or 'transcendental ontologies … [that claim to grasp] objective reality'.[15] Pluriversality instead insists upon the existence and validity of 'multiple ontologies, multiple worlds to be known – not simply multiple perspectives on one world' and a corresponding rejection of universalizing epistemologies that 'assume that the world is one, that it is knowable on a global scale within single modes of thought, and is thus manageable and governable in those terms'.[16] Recognition of the ontological fact of pluriversality – that other worlds *are* – informs the programmatic pursuit of decoloniality in light of the acknowledgement that what 'should be', and the ways of knowing and being that underpin any such normative goals, are likewise 'in fact pluriversal, and not a single totality'.[17]

The ethico-political valences of pluriversality thus reflect, at a minimum, a principled commitment to a politics of non-domination that 'binds together equality and difference' by seeking to create 'a world in which multiple cosmovisions, worldviews, practices and livelihoods co-exist, a world where no one particular way of living shuts down others', as famously expressed in the Zapatista expression 'a world in which many worlds can fit'.[18] Pluriversal ethics views the preservation of the many worlds entwined within diverse ways of knowing and being as a positive good in its own right, but further suggests that the diverse relationalities operating within and between

[13]Garrett R. FitzGerald, Pluriversal Peacebuilding: Decolonial Dialogue, Democracy, and the Epistemic Politics of Peace, PhD Diss, University of Notre Dame (2020).

[14]Ramón Grosfoguel, 'Epistemic racism/sexism, westernized universities and the four genocides/epistemicides of the long sixteenth century', in Marta Araújo and Silvia Rodríguez Maeso (eds), *Eurocentrism, Racism and Knowledge: Debates on History and Power in Europe and the Americas* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 23–46.

[15]Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Duke University Press, 2011).

[16]Conway and Singh (2011) p. 701; Amaya Querejazu, 'Encountering the pluriverse: looking for alternatives in other worlds', *Revista Brasileira de Política Internacional*, 59:2 (2016), pp. 689–706.

[17]Behr and Shani (2021); Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, and Praxis* (Duke University Press, 2018).

[18]Robin Dunford, 'Toward a decolonial global ethics', *Journal of Global Ethics*, 13:3 (2017), pp. 380–97.

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these worlds might carry 'different, and perhaps less damaging, ethical and political implications' for inhabiting the pluriverse without contributing to the erasure of difference than do the violent pressures of modernity.[19]

While disclosing myriad forms of relationality operative within and between situated ways of knowing and being, pluriversal ethics also tracks how particular worlds are always embedded in relation to one another within the colonial matrix of domination. As such, pluriversal ethics emphatically rejects 'the illusion of a non-existent symmetry between cultures',[20] and derives its urgency from the fact that some 'cultures, cosmovisions and livelihoods [remain] systematically threatened by others'.[21] In its programmatic sense, pluriversality thus indicates an imperative to safeguard the existence of irreducibly plural ways of knowing and being and the ethico-political implications of their distinct modes of relationality from the 'ontologically destructive' social, economic, and political transformations of modernity, including forms of political organization and political economy historically central to the study of international politics.[22] At a time of ongoing genocidal state violence, liberal democratic decay, and rapidly accelerating ecological catastrophe, protecting the ontological fact of pluriversality and promoting its ethico-political aspects preserves desperately needed alternatives to the genocidal inheritances of modernity-coloniality and associated capitalist logics currently pushing the planet past the brink of catastrophe.[23]

Pluriversal dialogue describes a constellation of practices that reflects both the ontological and ethical valences of pluriversality, in which dialogical encounters grounded in non-reductive, relational conceptions of difference enable participants to communicate across irreducibly plural ways of knowing and being.[24] Decolonial accounts of pluriversal dialogue largely focus on instances of 'South–South' dialogue and collaboration, reflecting both the importance of such practices for survival among the worlds persisting on the relative exterior of modernity and the lack of pluriversal relational resources among those who have internalized modernity's universalizing self-narrations.[25] Within 'South–South' encounters, however, diverse conceptions of relationality frequently serve as the 'ontological starting point' for dialogue.[26] Pluriversal dialogue is always mediated through – and in a real sense marks a mediation between – various forms of relationality, especially (though never exclusively) the relations imposed by differentiated experiences of coloniality. Within given instances of pluriversal dialogue, negotiations of multiple, intersecting relationalities can thus include both vertical negotiations (as with 'the clash between an indigenous world and the world of a destructive colonial modernity') and more horizontal negotiation (as in 'between different worlds inhabited by different participants in resistance') in which epistemic and ethical differences might also be exacerbated by divergent experiences of coloniality and intersectional 'inequalities in power and resources among those participants'.[27] Pluriversal dialogue thus implies the negotiation between diverse forms of relationality on their own terms and in their specific entanglements within the artificial (but deeply materially consequential) hierarchies of coloniality.[28] As a result, 'rather than romanticizing a "pluriverse" where everybody gets along',

[19]Kimberly Hutchings, 'Decolonizing global ethics: Thinking with the pluriverse', *Ethics and International Affairs*, 33:2 (2019), pp. 115–25.

[20]Enrique Dussel, 'Transmodernity and interculturality: An interpretation from the perspective of philosophy of liberation', *Transmodernity*, 1:3 (2012), pp. 28–59; Ramón Grosfoguel, 'Decolonizing western uni-versalisms: Decolonial Pluri-versalism from Aimé Césaire to the Zapatistas', *Transmodernity*, 1:3 (2012), pp. 88–104.

[21]Dunford (2017) pp. 392–3.

[22]Behr and Shani (2021); Dunford (2017) pp. 392–3; Hutchings (2019) p. 117; Mignolo (2011) p. 292.

[23]Garrett FitzGerald, *Pluriversal Peacebuilding: Peace Beyond Epistemic and Ontological Violence, E-International Relations* (2021); Maggie FitzGerald, *Care and the Pluriverse: Rethinking Global Ethics*. (Bristol University Press, 2022).

[24]Dunford (2017); Hutchings (2019); Querejazu (2016).

[25]Enrique Dussel, 'Agenda for a south-south philosophical dialogue', *Human Architecture*, 11:1 (2013), pp. 3–18.

[26]Mignolo and Walsh (2018) p. 11n1; Trownsell et al. (2019) p. 4.

[27]Hutchings (2019) p. 121.

[28]Walter D. Mignolo, 'On pluriversality', available at: {http://waltermignolo.com/on-pluriversality/} accessed 15 October 2018.

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pluriversal ethics stresses the cultivation of practices that 'not only acknowledge the existence of different realities but also the power plays within and between them'.[29]

Decolonial practices like pluriversal dialogue tend to resist procedural or institutional formalization,[30] but discussions around the possibilities for South–North pluriversal dialogue frequently emphasize the enabling role played by specific *connectors*, seemingly cognate 'fundamental concept[s]' like democracy, peace, human dignity, and development.[31] Although these decidedly Westernized concepts have been forcibly globalized through often-violent colonial processes, this ubiquity has resulted in a simultaneous presence and distinct specificity of meaning across different epistemologies, ontologies, and cosmologies that allows them to serve as potential bridges between various experiences of and resistance to coloniality.[32] Taking the exploration of such connectors as the discursive grounding for contingent practices of encounter, pluriversal dialogue reflects the ontological fact of pluriversality by acknowledging the existence and validity of these concept's irreducibly plural meanings across different ways of knowing and being. This acknowledgment in turn enables the possibility of concrete, contingent practices of dialogue and potential collaboration on decolonial projects that promote the ethico-political aspects of pluriversality while remaining mindful of the radical differences and incommensurabilities that attend such efforts.

One well-documented example of the challenges of navigating pluriversal dialogue around a particular connector might be found in the decolonial resignification of 'democracy' by the Zapatista movement of southern Mexico.[33] The Zapatista's decolonial resignification of this concept so central to modern liberal discourses, instead entwines it with Mayan cosmology and notions of subjectivity as expressed through the Tojolabal language, in which it is impossible to express concepts like 'nature' or 'other' as objects that are not intersubjectively linked to one's own sense of self.[34] By reconceptualizing democracy 'in terms of Maya social organization based on reciprocity, [and] communal (instead of individual) values' and deploying this reappropriation in their negotiations with the Mexican government, the Zapatistas demonstrated how democracy can function as 'a connector through which liberal concepts … and indigenous concepts of reciprocity and community social organization for the common good must come to terms'.[35] Democracy as a connector here offers discursive grounds for pluriversal encounter between multiple modes of relationality, potentially enabling 'partially connected heterogenous socionatural worlds [to negotiate] their ontological disagreements politically'.[36]

However, as the fraught history of negotiations and the fragile, negative peace between the Zapatistas and the Mexican government also make clear, interlocutors working from within liberal, Westernized political frameworks frequently lack the relational resources to recognize or engage in genuinely pluriversal dialogue. In the absence of such resources, possibilities for pluriversal dialogue are foreclosed by the misrecognition of the diverse significations assigned to particular connectors – or of the very fact that connectors like 'democracy' hold different significations for

[29]Martha Chaves, Thomas Macintyre, Gerard Verschoor, and Arjen E. J. Wals, 'Towards transgressive learning through ontological politics: Answering the 'call of the mountain' in a Colombian network of sustainability', *Sustainability*, 9:1 (2016), p. 21.

[30]Louiza Odysseos, 'Prolegomena to any future decolonial ethics: Coloniality, poetics and 'being human as praxis'', *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 45:3 (2017), pp. 447–72.

[31]FitzGerald (2020); Walter D. Mignolo, 'Introduction: Coloniality of power and de-colonial thinking', *Cultural Studies*, 21:2–3 (2007a), pp. 155–67; Mignolo (2011).

[32]Garrett FitzGerald, 'Our way that was from before words travelled: Democracy as liberal discipline and pluriversal connector', in Marcos Scauso (ed.), *Indomitable Others and Liberal Violences: Critique, Contestation, and Resistance in World Politics* (Bristol University Press, 2026), pp. 215–31.

[33]FitzGerald (2026).

[34]Grosfoguel (2012); Mignolo (2011) p. 228–33.

[35]Walter D. Mignolo, 'The many faces of cosmo-polis: Border thinking and critical cosmopolitanism', *Public Culture*, 12:3 (2000), pp. 721–48.

[36]Marisol De La Cadena, 'Indigenous cosmopolitics in the Andes: Conceptual Reflections beyond 'Politics'', *Cultural Anthropology*, 25:2 (2010), pp. 334–70; Mignolo (2011) p. 230.

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the parties involved.[37] Within the study of global politics, a similar lack of facility with pluriversal encounter is further complicated by decolonial theorists' uncompromising insistence that marginalized communities bear no responsibilities for the methodological needs of scholars operating within Westernized intellectual traditions.[38] The field's emergent 'relational turn' indicates that applying 'a relational logic' to key concepts such as 'conflict/peace, governance, democracy, social contract, treaties, diplomacy, and rights and obligations' might improve the field's ability to navigate questions of epistemological, ontological, and cosmological difference.[39] But despite increasing interest in the 'decolonial bandwagon',[40] the success of any 'relational pluralizing' of the field of International Studies still requires new methodological resources to provincialize and pluriversalize 'the [discursive] grounds upon which interlocutors take part'.[41]

The decolonial availability of Wittgenstein's later thought

To help meet this need, the remainder of this article examines uniquely relevant conceptual and methodological resources for approaching practices of pluriversal dialogue found in the work of Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. While Wittgenstein's work on logic and the philosophy of language earned him acclaim as one of the most important European philosophers of the 20th century, later scholars have applied Wittgenstein's methods to critical intellectual and political projects that depart dramatically from his own investigations and would likely have received little interest or support from Wittgenstein himself.[42] Interpreters note scattered biographical hints of Wittgenstein's sympathies for non-Europeans and his antipathy towards the broader project of European modernity, including declarations that he felt 'no sympathy for the current of European civilization and do[es] not understand its goals, if it has any'.[43] But anecdotal evidence indicates that Wittgenstein's views on contemporary politics, such as they were, often ranged from apathetic to downright reactionary.[44]

This biographical ambiguity notwithstanding, Wittgenstein's approach to philosophy nevertheless offers important methodological and ethical contributions towards questions never addressed by Wittgenstein himself. Wittgenstein's later work, in particular, developed a non-essentialist view of language as inextricably bound up in the specific contexts and activities within which it is employed that has been profoundly influential on critical approaches to social theory.[45] By framing meaning as a function of use rather than a positivist referent to any sort of objective, external reality, Wittgenstein's work marked a fundamental shift in Western philosophy to an understanding of language that is not 'referential but pragmatic', in which 'language does not describe reality so much as it entwines the world'.[46]

To illustrate the role of language in structuring our ways of knowing and being, Wittgenstein introduced the technique of inventing and analysing *language games*, snippets of real or imagined language use that illustrate how language is inextricably bound up with the 'stream of life' and

[37] FitzGerald (2026); Mignolo (2011) pp. 225–50.

[38] Eve Tuck and K Wayne Yang, 'Decolonization is not a metaphor, decolonization: Indigeneity', *Education & Society*, 1:1 (2012), p. 40.

[39] Trownsell et al. (2019) pp. 4–5.

[40] Leon Moosavi, 'The decolonial bandwagon and the dangers of intellectual decolonisation', *International Review of Sociology*, 30:2 (2020), pp. 1–23.

[41] Shilliam (2011) p. 651; Trownsell et al. (2019).

[42] Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (Cape, 1990).

[43] Miguel and Tamayo (2020); Monk (1990) p. 300; Sayyid (2015) p. 90; Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value* (Blackwell, 1980a).

[44] Cressida J. Heyes, *The Grammar of Politics: Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy* (Cornell University Press, 2003); Monk (1990) pp. 72–3; Sayyid (2015) pp. 81–2.

[45] As Wittgenstein most succinctly notes: '[The] meaning of a word is its use in the language' Ludwig Wittgenstein, 'Philosophische untersuchungen = Philosophical investigations', eds G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009).

[46] Sayyid (2015) p. 84.

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the practical uses towards which it is employed.[47] Since language's meaning cannot be understood when abstracted from its use, language games always include the performance of other embodied activities related to speech, as well as speech-acts themselves.[48] Wittgenstein's analysis showed how language games solidify through iterated practices of *rule-following* around the use of specific words or concepts in practice.[49] But these rules reflect that knowledge of a word's definition, much like knowledge of a given algebraic formula, can convey only a limited sense of understanding; neither a word's definition nor a formula itself can illustrate (never mind exhaust) all possibilities of its use in practice.[50] Rather, understanding of a concept's meaning is gained only through mastery of its practical use in relation to other concepts within specific *grammars*.

Grammar, in the Wittgensteinian sense, '[establishes] the place of a concept in our system of concepts, and thereby in our world. It controls what other concepts, what questions and observations, are *relevant* to a particular concept'.[51] The limits that specific grammars impose are in turn 'held in place' (always contingently) only by their continual re-inscription through the iteration of myriad relational 'small acts: daily, habitual practices of speaking, acting, judging'.[52] Grammars therefore shape 'how people react or respond, practically and bodily, both to each other and their circumstances in practice … how they "go on" with each other' in a world of complexity and difference.[53] Wittgenstein viewed the grammars in which concepts function as arbitrary, unrelated to any sort of 'reality' or 'essence' of the concepts they connect; grammars instead simply indicate a concept's established usage within the rules of a series of language games.[54] This key fact reflects the profound sense of relationality underlying Wittgenstein's thought. By rejecting a positivist, correspondence theory of language, Wittgenstein renounced the possibility of claims about a single, knowable world 'out there' to which language refers, showing instead how language itself becomes the site for negotiation within and between different ways of knowing and being in the world that are themselves structured according to specific grammars. As such, no one grammar can lay claim to conveying a 'metaphysical given', marking instead only one possible 'form of representation, which sets limits to what it makes sense to say'[55] – a framing that renders Wittgenstein usefully ambivalent on issues of epistemic and ontological difference.

The accretion of language games, grammars, and associated practices defines what Wittgenstein called different *forms of life*,[56] the 'whole hurly-burly of human actions' within which specific, shared linguistic practices construct meaning and enable mutual intelligibility.[57] Reinforcing the centrality of practice to establishing meaning in use, a form of life marks 'an open-ended series of [interlocking] language-games integrated into the actions and lives of its speakers'.[58] As the 'inherited background' against which the use of language plays out, given forms of life and their constitutive grammars enable certain modes of inquiry and communication while inevitably constraining one's ability to consider the world – never mind *other worlds* – from unfamiliar perspectives.[59] Importantly for the discussion to follow, Wittgenstein understood forms of life

[47] Monk (1990) p. 330.

[48] Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice: On the Significance of Ludwig Wittgenstein for Social and Political Thought* (University of California Press, 1972); Wittgenstein (2009) p. 8 § 7.

[49] Wittgenstein (2009) pp. 80–95 § 185–242.

[50] Pitkin (1972) pp. 46–9. As Wittgenstein makes clear, following a rule is not a question of intellectual assent, but a learned practice. Wittgenstein (2009) p. 87 § 202.

[51] Pitkin (1972) pp. 116–9.

[52] Linda M. G. Zerilli, 'Doing without knowing: Feminism's politics of the ordinary', in Cressida J. Heyes (ed.), *The Grammar of Politics: Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy* (Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 129–48.

[53] John Shotter, 'Now I can go on:' Wittgenstein and our embodied embeddedness in the 'hurly-burly' of life', *Human Studies*, 19:4 (1996), pp. 385–407.

[54] See Wittgenstein (2009) p. 146, 150 §§ 497, 520.

[55] Zerilli (2003) p. 136.

[56] Peter Hacker, 'Forms of Life', *Nordic Wittgenstein Review* (2015), pp. 1–20.

[57] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology* (University of Chicago Press ; Basil Blackwell, 1980b).

[58] Hacker (2015) p. 6.

[59] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, eds G. E. M. Anscombe and G. H. von Wright (Harper, 1969).

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in a fairly anthropocentric way. While not actually denying the possibility of non-human entities attempting to communicate with humans in something resembling a language, Wittgenstein suggested such efforts would prove unintelligible due to a lack of shared grammars and the iterated communicative practices that structure them, as summarized in one famous passage: 'If a lion could talk, we wouldn't be able to understand it.'[60] However, the implications of these anthropocentric limits for engaging with forms of life that maintain substantively different relationalities with the more-than-human world will be discussed below.

Despite functioning as the 'bedrock' upon which situated understandings and judgements rest, forms of life are hardly static,[61] constituted as they are through dynamic and ever-evolving 'entanglement[s] of rules, customs, habits, examples, and practices'.[62] But through uncritical repetition and self-authorizing claims made by particular grammars (such as Westernized academic discourses), language use can become sedimented in ways that obscure the contingency of its origins and use.[63] These calcifications of language develop into 'pictures', preconceptions or 'pseudo-theses' that shape one's experience and understanding of the world, including the metacognitive ability to critically reflect on the very concepts and criteria that structure one's way of thinking.[64] Pictures of the world taken to be prior to (instead of subject to) judgement directly constrain possible ways of thinking and behaving in the world, thereby effecting a false naturalization of one's inherited assumptions termed 'aspectival captivity'.[65] Because grammar determines whether and how we understand certain concepts in relation to others, a given grammar and the pictures into which it coalesces 'lets us do some things with language and not others; [they fix] the degree of freedom' within which we can think and act in the world.[66] As Wittgenstein suggested, '[what] is, and what is not, called (logically) possible depend wholly on our grammar'.[67]

To overcome our aspectival captivity within specific grammars and the pictures of the world they impose upon our judgement, Wittgenstein employed language games as methodological 'therapies' to denaturalize the grammars that structure particular instances of language use.[68] Language games thus offer ways of 'seeing connections' based on '*an overview* of the use of words' within given grammars and forms of life, and on the conditions of possibility for thought and action that these enable and constrain.[69] By bringing the grammars that structure language use into view, Wittgenstein's method seeks to 'establish an order in our knowledge of the use of language: an order for a particular purpose, one out of many possible orders, not *the* order'.[70] Such a self-consciously practical and contingent knowledge of language improves the 'surveyability' of specific grammars and the concepts they employ in the 'struggle' against the 'bewitchment of our understanding by the resources of our language' by unmasking tacit, unspoken assumptions baked into regular language use.[71] Through this method, Wittgenstein's later work sought to illustrate how perceived philosophical problems resulted more from 'bewitchment' via unreflexive language use than from grappling with the 'true' nature of reality. The insights gleaned from such inquiry therefore sought

[60]Wittgenstein (2009) p. 235 § 327.

[61]Wittgenstein (1969) p. 15 § 94–9.

[62]Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome: The Constitution of Emersonian Perfectionism* (University of Chicago Press, 1990); Veena Das, 'Wittgenstein and Anthropology', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 27 (1998), pp. 171–95.

[63]Wittgenstein (2009) p. 11 § 18.

[64]David Egan, 'Pictures in Wittgenstein's later philosophy', *Philosophical Investigations*, 34:1 (2011), pp. 55–76.

[65]David Owen, 'Genealogy as perspicuous representation', in Cressida J. Heyes (ed.), *The Grammar of Politics: Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy* (Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 82–96.

[66]Monk (1990) p. 291.

[67]Wittgenstein (2009) p. 150 § 520.

[68]Wittgenstein (2009) p. 57 § 133.

[69]Wittgenstein (2009) pp. 54–55 § 122.

[70]Wittgenstein (2009) p. 56 § 132.

[71]Wittgenstein (2009) p. 54 § 122; (2009) p. 52 § 109.

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to dissolve rather than answer philosophical puzzles, enabling the inquirer to say, 'Now I can go on!' with the practical quotidian business of moving through a world of plurality.[72]

This brief account of Wittgenstein's later thought focuses primarily on the 'therapeutic scepticism' it fosters around practical language use and the grammars according to which it is structured. This deconstructive reading importantly serves as the primary interpretive lens for scholars interested in Wittgenstein's political applications, as it helps to denaturalize and de-essentialize phenomena ranging from international politics to the very categories of race and gender.[73] Vital to the discussion at hand, Salman Sayyid employs this deconstructive reading in his important decolonial retrieval of Wittgenstein, which utilizes Wittgenstein's therapeutic method to reveal modernity's Eurocentered and Eurosupremacist discourses as particular grammars that function to obscure, naturalize, and preserve modernity's violently exclusionary hierarchies by conceptually precluding the recognition of non-Westernized forms of knowledge *as such*.[74] While Wittgenstein's method is already broadly concerned with relational questions around how 'discourse is *internally* related to its social conditions', Sayyid introduces key *decolonial* applications by applying this deconstructive method to the relationships between specific modern-colonial grammars, the forms of life they structure, and the intersecting social and material relations within which they are embedded.[75] When read through a decolonial lens, Sayyid suggests that Wittgenstein 'helps to unravel the strands by which the European episteme tied in with a world centered on the Western colonial order',[76] exposing the co-constitutive relationship between the grammars of a Eurocentered modernity and the material structures of exploitation and domination they uphold.[77] By revealing the self-reinforcing picture of modernity that lies within its grammars *as a picture*, Sayyid shows how Wittgenstein furnishes a particular set of tools for disclosing modernity as 'a socio-economic project … but also as the embodiment of a philosophical outlook' whose grammatical particularities perpetuate the epistemic and physical erasure of those racialized, gendered, and territorialized as Europe's constitutive Others.[78]

However, the prevailing emphasis on the deconstructive applications of Wittgenstein's method leaves his more dialogical offerings under-theorized in both International Studies and decolonial literatures. The sections that follow therefore extend Sayyid's analysis of Wittgenstein's decolonial applications by linking the decolonial concept of pluriversal dialogue outlined above to Wittgenstein's method of *comparative dialogue*. The important epistemic and practical analogues between Wittgenstein's comparative dialogical method and decolonial practices of pluriversal dialogue indicate how these similarly open-ended and perpetually unsettled practices might foster contingent encounter with modes of relational thinking and political praxis that scholars of international politics continue to struggle to engage with on their own terms.

Dialogical comparison as method

Wittgenstein's potential contributions towards fostering practices of pluriversal dialogue emerge from the method of *dialogical comparison*, also important to his later philosophy.[79] Reflecting the dynamism of language use within and across different forms of life, Wittgenstein's method

[72] Shotter (1996).

[73] Jana Cattien, 'Feminist epistemology and the question of difference reconfigured: what can Wittgenstein Tell Us about 'Women?', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 18:3 (2017), pp. 5–18; Fierke (2010); Frost and Lechner (2016); Richard A. Jones, *The Black Book: Wittgenstein and Race* (University Press of America, Inc, 2013); Pin-Fat (2019); Woolley (2015).

[74] Sayyid (2015).

[75] Terry Eagleton, 'Wittgenstein's friends', *New Left Review*, 135 (1982), pp. 64–90.

[76] Sayyid (2015) p. 89.

[77] Polat (2011).

[78] Sayyid (2015) p. 86.

[79] Michael Temelini, 'Dialogical approaches to struggles over recognition and distribution', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 17:4 (2014), pp. 423–47; *Wittgenstein and the Study of Politics* (University of Toronto Press, 2015).

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of dialogical comparison 'accepts irreducible plurality and contest both within and among forms of life but also accepts the possibility that such contested ways of life can be reconciled' through 'practice[s] of ongoing, open-ended, imperfect negotiation and comparison aimed at a kind of reconciliation among forms of life that is always open to periodic revision and reconsideration.'[80] Such 'reconciliation', importantly, does not imply agreement or consolidation between different forms of life but rather the negotiation of degrees of mutual intelligibility and attendant possibilities for cultivating shared practices even in the absence of perfect comprehension.

Similar to the role of pluriversal connectors discussed above, dialogical interpretations of Wittgenstein's later work emphasize that surveys of language use are most efficacious when dialogically comparing the meanings and uses of seemingly cognate concepts with inhabitants of other forms of life.[81] This claim makes intuitive sense from a Wittgensteinian perspective; Wittgenstein's deconstructive linguistic therapies show how we are 'entangled in our own rules' of language,[82] but such surveys are also necessarily grammatically constrained by the 'fly-bottle' of our own form of life.[83] By contrast, encountering those who do not share our form of life and its operative grammars forces the 'challenge of recognizing in practices not our own interests, purposes, and desires that make them humanly intelligible', and of accounting for one's own form of life from the perspective of those who do not take its grammatical presuppositions for granted.[84] While affirming the context-specificity of the grammars from *within* which particular inquiries into language might be launched, practices of dialogical comparison around particular concepts *across* forms of life can therefore better reveal such concepts' inherent indeterminacy, permeability, and capacity for transformation.

The striking similarities between Wittgenstein's dialogical method and practices of pluriversal dialogue around particular 'connectors' indicate the former's potential for helping Westernized scholars of international politics better approach epistemic, ontological, and cosmological differences in ways that reflect the ontological and ethico-political valences of pluriversality. In practice, Wittgenstein's comparative dialogical method seeks to disclose and dissolve aspectival captivity by assembling multiple instances of a given concept's use within and across different forms of life, assisting us in 'seeing connections' and 'finding and inventing *intermediate links*' between the various usages and meanings.[85] Within these dialogical surveys, specific concepts function as '*objects of comparison* that, through similarities and dissimilarities … throw light on features of our language'.[86] Much like pluriversal connectors, seemingly cognate concepts might share 'superficial similarities' across different forms of life, yet these similarities 'disguise very important differences of meaning' disclosed by their operation within distinct grammars and embedded practices of language that structure different forms of life.[87] In comparing the uses of seemingly cognate concepts, one must therefore '*look and see* whether there is anything common to all.… For if you look at them, you won't see something that is common to *all*, but similarities, affinities, and a whole series of them at that.'[88] Wittgenstein termed these similarities 'family resemblances', patterns of 'indirect affinity' that make analogical comparison across forms of life possible while rejecting the need for (or the possibility of) any essentializing 'fibre' that connects diverse uses of like concepts.[89]

Wittgenstein explained this approach to dissolving aspectival captivity most explicitly in § 99 of the 'Early Version' of the *Philosophical Investigations*:

[80]Temelini (2015) p. 67.
[81]Temelini (2015) p. 77.
[82]Wittgenstein (2009) p. 55 § 125.
[83]Wittgenstein (2009) p. 110 § 310.
[84]Linda M. G. Zerilli, *A Democratic Theory of Judgment* (The University of Chicago Press, 2016).
[85]Wittgenstein (2009) p. 54 § 122.
[86]Wittgenstein (2009) p. 56 § 130.
[87]Monk (1990) p. 547.
[88]Wittgenstein (2009) p. 36 § 66.
[89]Wittgenstein (2009) p. 36 § 67.

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> We then change the aspect by placing side-by-side with *one* system of expression other systems of expression.—The bondage in which one analogy holds us can be broken by placing another [analogy] alongside which we acknowledge to be equally well justified.[90]

The equality of justification that Wittgenstein noted here between the uses of various concepts and the forms of life within which they are embedded offers another vital nod towards the epistemic and ontological parity – the 'equality and difference' – promoted by pluriversal ethics. However, this justificatory relativism does not preclude ethical argumentation; Wittgenstein also affirmed the importance of dialogical comparison for achieving contingent forms of *understanding* and even *persuasion* across forms of life. Since, on Wittgenstein's telling, '[every] view of the world is equally significant' given the impossibility of their *a priori* hierarchization in determining standards of certainty or correctness, it follows that 'convincing members of one "form of life" of the unsuitability, inadequacy or irrationality and so on of their view of things … *must* be a matter of persuasion between "forms of life"'.[91]

From a Wittgensteinian perspective, persuasion does not reflect the triumph of any sort of positivist account of that which is 'right', 'correct', or 'true' about 'the world', though there are certainly grammars (like many Westernized academic discourses, for example) that might stake such claims. Persuasion instead reflects a recognition of the contingency of one's own grammars and of *what it is possible to say* about the world(s) inhabited by other forms of life entwined within alternative grammatical resources for engaging relationally with the world(s) around us. So while comparative dialogue between forms of life 'does not guarantee the ability to persuade [an] interlocutor' that one or another understanding is 'correct' in any absolute sense, they can nevertheless 'expose a possibility for understanding a concept differently, or [they] may have the consequence that we actually see matters differently' as a result.[92] And particularly illuminating are those encounters in which one finds 'the most common concept' used in ways incompatible with the grammar of one's own form of life.[93]

Dialogue with inhabitants of different forms of life can thus reveal the underlying contingencies and contradictions of one's own form of life, along with the mutability and attendant possibility of transforming, per Sayyid, its various grammatical presuppositions and the social and political systems they underpin. For Wittgenstein, habituation into a given form of life and its constitutive grammars – including the epistemic and normative commitments they enable and the social, economic, and political systems which they sustain – implies a responsibility for the maintenance or transformation of these systems *in practice*.[94] After all, the conventions that define a given form of life are held in place by nothing more or less than our continuing to adhere to the rules and grammars that we have inherited. But as a result of the 'transgressive learning' that it can foster, dialogue across various forms of difference therefore carries patently political significance as an invaluable practice for inhabiting a world of plurality.[95] At the very least, such encounters underscore the dizzying diversity of human experience as expressed through language. At their most profound, they can fundamentally unsettle one's understanding of one's own form of life and its constitutive grammars and world-pictures, producing a 'disjuncture … between our ways of making sense of ourselves … and our cares and commitments'.[96] While unsettling, this dissolution of aspectival captivity opens new possibilities for thought and action in the world, indicating possibilities for

[90] Gordon Baker, 'Philosophical investigations section 122: neglected aspects', in Robert L. Arrington and Hans-Johann Glock (eds), *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations Text and Context* (Routledge, 1991), pp. 35–68.

[91] Wittgenstein (1969) p. 34 § 131; Ludwig Wittgenstein, Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough* ed. Rush Rhees, trans. A.C. Miles (Brynmill Press, 1979).

[92] Temelini (2015) p. 85.

[93] Stanley Cavell, 'The availability of Wittgenstein's later philosophy', *The Philosophical Review*, 71:1 (1962), pp. 67–93.

[94] Peg O'Connor, *Morality and our Complicated Form of Life: Feminist Wittgensteinian Metaethics* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008).

[95] Chaves et al. (2016) p. 4; Temelini (2015) p. 91.

[96] Owen (2003) p. 84.

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'different ways of how to orient and relate ourselves to the world, with knowing practically how to "go on" within it … with the other people around us'.[97]

For Westernized scholars of international politics, disclosure of the field's problematic epistemic politics and the grammars and forms of life within which they are entwined should mark precisely one such disjuncture, one that necessitates new ways of 'making sense of ourselves … and our cares and commitments' delinked from the Eurocentric pictures that lie within the field's grammars and prevent pluriversal encounters with diverse knowledges and alternate modes of relationality on their own terms. However, the field's recurrent failures to overcome this epistemic Eurocentrism indicate a need for additional methodological insights to enable pluriversal engagement beyond the field's current limitations.[98] Focusing on two recurrent challenges to engaging across various forms of epistemic, ontological, and cosmological difference, the next section further illustrates the utility of Wittgensteinian comparative dialogical approach as one method by which we might 'find echoes of ourselves in other worlds without letting our echoes colonize unfamiliar rhythms'.[99]

From comparative to pluriversal dialogue

Wittgenstein's method of dialogical comparison proves particularly adept at navigating persistent issues around *(in)commensurability* in the study of international politics that challenge the field's ability to negotiate questions of difference. Given the irreducible pluriversality of epistemologies, ontologies, and cosmologies and the corresponding diversity of experiences of coloniality among their inhabitants and practitioners, pluriversal ethics acknowledges the necessary persistence of certain fundamental incommensurabilities in ways of knowing and being and in associated horizons of decoloniality.[100] These incommensurabilities are not absolute, however, and do not preclude forms of contingent understanding and collaboration around various decolonial projects; pluriversal dialogue is celebrated by decolonial theorists for fostering precisely these conditions.[101] Attempts to move beyond enduring Eurocentrism in the study of international politics, by contrast, remain plagued by exclusionary perceptions of *absolute incommensurability* and universalizing assumptions of eventual *commensurability* – both of which can be addressed through practices of pluriversal dialogue and the proposed Wittgensteinian method of dialogical comparison.

In the study of international politics, perceptions of absolute incommensurability follow from an abyssal ontologization of perceived Otherness between Westernized modernity and non-Westernized forms of life.[102] Such claims of absolute incommensurability reinforce modernity's Eurosupremacist discourses, consigning to the 'waiting-room of history' those forms of social, political, and economic organization that diverge from the trajectory of Europe's own imperial self-narration,[103] often ironically blaming 'pre-/yet-to-be-modern subjects' themselves for their exclusion from authorized processes of ethical dialogue and inquiry.[104] This erasure in turn delimits 'possibilities for connections and solidarities between the West and the non-West' by asserting the '"fact" of basic and unbridgeable cultural-historical difference between the West and its others' that mask the co-constitution of these very categories and the hierarchicalized power dynamics

[97] Shotter (1996) pp. 398.

[98] Tucker (2018).

[99] María José Méndez, "The river told me': Rethinking intersectionality from the world of Berta Cáceres', *Capitalism Nature Socialism,* 29:1 (2018), pp. 7–24.

[100] Aimee Rowe, 'Settler Xicana: Postcolonial and decolonial reflections on incommensurability', *Feminist Studies*, 43:3 (2017), pp. 525–690; Tuck and Yang (2012).

[101] FitzGerald (2022); Hutchings (2019) p. 122.

[102] Mustapha Kamal Pasha, 'Nihilism and the otherness of Islam', *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 42:1 (2013), pp. 177–97; Meera Sabaratnam, 'Avatars of Eurocentrism in the critique of the liberal peace', *Security Dialogue*, 44:3 (2013), pp. 259–78.

[103] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000); Saurin (2006) p. 31.

[104] Shilliam (2011) pp. 650–1.

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they reflect.[105] Rather than philosophical or practical impasse, this lack of ethical reciprocity ultimately rests upon a centuries-old 'picture' of modernity outlined by Sayyid, a gramamtical substrate of racialized, gendered, and territorialized subjectivation that definitionally excludes non-Western subjects; their forms of social, economic, and political organization; and their underlying ways of knowing and being from legibility or recognition within authorized discourses.[106] The shameful responses in 'the West' to the on-going genocides in Palestine, Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo during this article's drafting underscore the deadly consequences of such abyssal logic and the lack of moral recognition it fosters for those deemed incommensurably Other.

Some readings of Wittgenstein share a similar context-determinism that delimits possibilities for criticism, comparison, and change by insisting that 'concepts and judgments [are] located within, and so circumscribed by, something else: a tradition, a culture, a society, a form of life', such that there can be no thick understanding or moral evaluation *across* or *between* other forms of life.[107] On these *strong contextualist* readings, a form of life marks an outer horizon for possible ways of knowing and being in the world, and where two forms of life do not share agreements, as to the meaning of, or the grammatical relation between particular concepts, coherent criticism and dialogue become untenable. Such claims directly challenge Wittgenstein's enlistment in the pursuit of pluriversal dialogue by foreclosing ethical valuations and contingent forms of understanding and collaboration between forms of life.

However, dialogical readings of Wittgenstein appeal to relational logics to reject claims that 'languages and cultures form discrete and clearly defined systems shared and applied by practitioners', suggesting that in practice the messiness of human language use and the worlds it entwines permit 'no hard and fast peripheries of cultures to demarcate, no bounded wholes of language that are inherently relation-less'.[108] Indeed, Wittgenstein's own applications of comparative dialogue regularly presume the ability to explore the family resemblances between various concepts across forms of life even in the absence of a 'common natural horizon' between them.[109] Wittgenstein suggested that other 'world-views' and 'ways of seeing' are never wholly 'imaginatively unintelligible', noting that while 'life runs differently' in different forms of life, 'our imagination can travel amongst them'.[110] Even apparent 'breakdowns' of intelligibility are therefore understood to be 'contingent and corrigible', resulting "from not having learned the practices [of a given form of life] rather than from not having the capacity to learn them.[111] As a result, seemingly insurmountable 'cultural differences' indicate not unbridgeable distances between different forms of life, but instead 'reveal the depth and range of possibilities' for participating in the entwining of the world – or of multiple worlds – through language.[112] While different forms of life can never be wholly reconciled given the irreducibility of the grammars (and associated epistemologies, ontologies, and cosmologies) by which they are structured, the capacity for dialogical engagement between them reveals myriad actual and possible interconnections and possibilities for cultivating new forms of relationality beyond modernity's Eurocentered hierarchies.[113]

Another persistent challenge to navigating questions of power and difference ironically follows from opposed expectations about the ultimate *commensurabilities* between Westernized and non-Westernized forms of life – but only within the epistemic parameters of Eurocentric grammars.

[105] Sabaratnam (2013) p. 262.

[106] Odysseos (2017).

[107] David R. Cerbone, 'The limits of conservatism: Wittgenstein on "our life" and "our concepts"', in Cressida J. Heyes (ed.), *The Grammar of Politics: Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy* (Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 43–62.

[108] Jason A. Springs, 'What cultural theorists of religion have to learn from Wittgenstein; or, how to read Geertz as a practice theorist', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 76:4 (2008), pp. 934–69.

[109] Temelini (2015) p. 92.

[110] Philip Tonner, 'Wittgenstein on forms of life: A short introduction', *E-LOGOS*, 24:1 (2017), pp. 13–8.

[111] Newton Garver, 'Beginning at the beginning', in Tamás Demeter (ed.), *Essays on Wittgenstein and Austrian Philosophy: In Honour of J.C. Nyiri* (Rodopi, 2004), pp. 137–54.

[112] O'Connor (2008) p. 76.

[113] Querejazu (2016).

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In the study of international politics, this tendency follows from the 'monological' assumptions that legibility within the field requires a shared 'inclusive language or conceptual framework within which [diverse claims] can be adjudicated'.[114] In practice, the search for a 'language or conceptual framework' sufficiently capacious to accommodate all particular cases often simply re-reads irreducible differences through universalizing – though ostensibly neutral – Eurocentric ways of knowing.[115] This perceived need to 'translate or reinterpret … self-descriptions into some general theoretical language'[116] leads scholars of international politics back to uncritical, universalizing grammars instead of maintaining the messy, partial understandings that can be gained through comparative and relational approaches to concepts that are unfamiliar or used in novel ways. This universalizing tendency underscores an important distinction between dialogue within and dialogue beyond the discipline; one maintains a hegemonic 'self-referentiality' and universalizing language of redescription, the other necessarily unsettles the same, bringing dialogue onto discursive terrains that do not presume the *a priori* authorization or centrality of specific agents, grammars, or forms of knowledge.[117] A Wittgensteinian approach necessarily rejects such universalizing tendencies towards redescription, instead promoting an epistemically self-limiting emphasis on the particular case and an accompanying ethos predicated on '[d]ialogue, persuasion, self-awareness and humility' similar to pluriversal dialogue as described by decolonial theorists.[118]

Pluriversal dialogue again rejects the possibility of any single 'correct' interpretation of the various connectors that ground it in practice.[119] Instead, the recognition of the ontologically pluriversal nature of a given concept's uses opens a site for dialogical comparison – and attendant footholds within different ways of knowing and being – delinked from Europe's claims as the historical, geographical, and epistemic locus through which such interconnections must pass. Wittgenstein's method similarly rejects the 'strict application' of generalizable theories and methods in favour of a commitment to 'discerning and demonstrating connections … without collapsing the (occasionally radical) differences'.[120] In taking the particularities of a concept's context-specific uses as the starting point for dialogue, this approach enables a comparative 'discourse among multiple others, a rich "alterity" of aspects' instead of a monological account of difference articulated through the cipher of Eurocentric thought.[121] In that sense, both pluriversal dialogue and Wittgenstein's comparative dialogue serve less as methods for establishing the 'meanings' of particular concepts than as means of bridging disparate relationalities by 'finding new ways of relating to ourselves and to each other in our pursuit of whatever we may think of' when we call these concepts to mind in dialogue with others.[122]

Beyond rejecting exclusionary Eurocentric perceptions of (in)commensurability, Wittgenstein's comparative dialogical method indicates how encounters with epistemological, ontological, and cosmological difference can actively restructure grammars and modes of relationality within and between different forms of life. Both comparative and pluriversal dialogue accept that they can lead only to 'partial connections' with other ways of knowing and being.[123] Yet these connections open new vistas onto complex webs of relationality and new possibilities 'to engage the pluriverse in transitions towards a more sustainable and inclusive future'.[124] Where decolonial theorists

[114] Tully (1995) p. 56.

[115] Sandra Halperin, 'International relations theory and the hegemony of western conceptions of modernity', in Branwen Gruffydd Jones (ed.), *Decolonizing International Relations* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), pp. 43–63.

[116] Temelini (2014) p. 424.

[117] Pasha (2011) pp. 685–6.

[118] Tonner (2017) p. 17.

[119] Mignolo (2000) p. 742.

[120] Springs (2008) p. 942.

[121] Jones (2013) p. 64.

[122] Hutchings (2019) pp. 120–1.

[123] Marilyn Strathern, *Partial Connections* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1991).

[124] Chaves et al. (2016) p. 15.

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again see opportunities for 'transgressive learning' in such encounters, Wittgenstein's work similarly suggests that the 'networks of conventions' and criteria emergent from practices of dialogical comparison can mark 'the foundation of intersubjectivity and interaction, of meaningful communication and meaningful practice' between different forms of life.[125] By bridging different forms of knowing, being, and relationality through dialogical encounters, 'new types of language, new language-games … come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten'.[126] This process happens naturally in the long course of language usage, but can occur more quickly and dramatically as part of a conscious decision to confront the arbitrary limitations of our own grammar. In such instances, '[rejecting] the grammar which tends to force itself on us' can enable 'a radical break with the idea that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose'.[127] Duly confronted with the arbitrariness of our own grammars, the world-pictures they provide, and the social and material relations they uphold, 'We cease to adapt the language-game[s] we know, but start again'.[128] For scholars of international politics professionalized into the exclusionary, Eurocentric grammars of the field, what might such a 'radical break' entail? In what ways might it enable us to 'start again?'

Listening to the pluriverse

Applying this Wittgensteinian framework to a specific instance of pluriversal exploration further indicates how the method's insights might function in practice. One illustrative example might be found in decolonial theorist María José Méndez's writings on Indigenous leader and environmental activist Berta Cáceres. Drawing on Cáceres' writings, speeches, and other public remarks made prior to her assassination in 2016, Méndez analyzes the concept of *intersectionality* as a pluriversal connector through which to engage the Lenca epistemic, ontological, and cosmological understandings that shaped Cáceres' life and advocacy. Stressing the incommensurability of Westernized liberal feminist understandings of intersectionality with Cáceres' Indigenous intersectional feminist activism – linked especially to Lenca experiences of the sacredness, agency, and intentionality of the Gualcarque and Río Blanco Rivers – Méndez indicates how Cáceres' situated deployment of intersectionality provides an access point to relationalities premised on fundamentally different understandings of (inter)subjectivity, agency, and freedom than their liberal Westernized feminist counterparts. But highlighting the possibilities for solidarity that persist despite these underlying epistemic, ontological, and cosmological incommensurabilities, Méndez concludes with a stirring call to unlearn modernity's capitalist, racist, and heteropatriarchal modes of knowledge production by '[cultivating] a disposition to listening to the rivers and not just acknowledging that the rivers constitute semiotic agents for indigenous peoples'.[129] By cultivating such forms of relationality, Westernized interlocutors might better comprehend the urgency of protecting the physical and epistemic geographies in which '[human], natural, and spiritual beings connect forming identities … that have tangible political effects, [and] non-humans have political agency, will and interest as well'.[130]

Méndez here offers a powerful investigation of intersectionality as a pluriversal connector, but it is this final call that indicates both the potential contributions and real limitations of a Wittgensteinian approach to bringing the Lenca form of life Méndez describes into dialogical comparison with patently incommensurable Westernized grammars. As noted above, forms of life are

[125] Fred R. Dallmayr and Thomas A. McCarthy, *Understanding and Social Inquiry* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1977).
[126] Wittgenstein (2009) pp. 14–15 § 23.
[127] Wittgenstein (2009) p. 109 § 304.
[128] M. J. Bowles, 'The practice of meaning in Nietzsche and Wittgenstein', *The Journal of Nietzsche Studies*, 26:1 (2003), pp. 12–24.
[129] Méndez (2018) pp. 21–2.
[130] Querejazu (2016) p. 4.

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malleable and can shift with some rapidity to accommodate the once unthinkable when their operative grammars are shown to be contingent – and therefore capable of transformation.[131] However, Méndez's exhortation to cultivate practices of listening to rivers points back to practical limitations imposed by Wittgenstein's anthropocentrism. As noted above, Wittgenstein's method retains anthropocentric presuppositions about language use that centre forms of life whose grammars do *not* view the more-than-human world as capable of intelligible speech because of insufficient shared practices and patterns of communication. Recalling Wittgenstein's famous example of the talking lion, for many readers habituated into Westernized forms of life, the world-picture provided by modernity's grammars simply will not allow the concept of 'river' to function in ways that reflect Lenca modes of relationality and practices of communicating with the more-than-human world.[132] Absent practical linguistic acculturation into the 'whole hurly-burly' of a Lenca form of life, it is doubtful that Westernized interlocutors would in fact be able to inhabit a disposition within which listening to non-human entities like the Gualcarque River makes grammatical sense. While dialogue can provide 'difficult and partial' glimpses of other ways of knowing and being, 'one cannot "go native"' at will within the grammars of another form of life, as Linda Zerilli explains in a particularly charged turn of phrase.[133] Wittgenstein's methodological anthropocentrism thus offers no direct guidance on how to engage with the more-than-human world from within anthropocentric Westernized conceptions of relationality.

However, for Westernized interlocutors stuck within this anthropocentric 'fly-bottle', this method *does* still offer insights into comparative and even pluriversal dialogical engagement with other humans whose forms of life *are* entwined within epistemologies, ontologies, cosmologies, and attendant relationalities that view the more-than-human world in fundamentally different ways, and indicates how such encounters can still become catalysts for radical change.[134] Despite these persistent incommensurabilities, Wittgensteinian comparative dialogue still holds out the possibility that those habituated to Westernized forms of life can engage dialogically with inhabitants of forms of life within which such claims *are* grammatically sound – where rivers, lions, and myriad other aspects of the non-human or more-than-human world constitute not only 'semiotic agents' but also beings with 'political agency' as Méndez describes.

These possibilities for communication, for (un)learning, and for change in the face of such persistent incommensurabilities underscore the rather astounding fact that ethical and political claims made upon us from within other forms of life are intelligible at all, even in lieu of full accessibility to the systems of meaning within which these claims are made.[135] Wittgenstein himself poignantly describes a broadly human capacity to empathize with the pain of others, even if we do not fully comprehend the form of life within which they might make meaning about the pain they experience.[136] Despite linguistic, epistemic, ontological, and cosmological differences, this approach can therefore accommodate ethical demands arising from the pains of coloniality's enduring legacies made prior to, or even independent of, any full understanding of the forms of life within which such pain is experienced. Sustained practices of comparative, pluriversal dialogue around Lenca notions of intersectionality, for example, might conceivably enable a reconfiguration of grammars and associated relational logics radical enough to one day allow non-Lenca peoples to truly listen to these sacred rivers. But even in the absence of such radical grammatical restructuring, such encounters reveal the deadly consequences for Indigenous communities and leaders like Berta Cáceres when liberal notions of human rights, development, and peacebuilding fail to capture or respond to Lenca experiences of modernity's extractive, exploitative, and exterminative violences. And as

[131]See Wittgenstein's discussion of the 'absurd' idea of space travel in Wittgenstein (1969) p. 15 § 93.

[132]Wittgenstein (2009) p. 235 §§ 327.

[133]Zerilli (2016) p. 220.

[134]Blaney and Trownsell (2021); Morgan Brigg, 'Old cultures and new possibilities: Marege'–Makassar diplomacy in Southeast Asia', *The Pacific Review*, 24:5 (2011), pp. 601–23; FitzGerald et al. (2026).

[135]Veena Das, 'Of mistakes, errors, and superstition: Reading Wittgenstein's remarks on Frazer', The Mythology in Our Language (HAU Books, 2017), pp. 155–79.

[136]Wittgenstein (2009) p. 235 §§ 324.

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examples like this and the experiences of the Zapatistas demonstrate, comparative and pluriversal approaches are vital to understanding that the full scope of the causes, consequences, and violences experienced by many Indigenous communities may not be properly understood by Westernized interlocutors failing to recognize when seemingly familiar concepts are being used according to the distinct grammars of unfamiliar forms of life.[137]

Here we see the crucial epistemic and ethical aspects of comparative dialogue as a potential analogue to explicitly pluriversal practices of dialogical encounter. A Wittgensteinian approach to comparative dialogue does not require those who would engage in pluriversal political struggle to protect the Lenca form of life to inhabit that form of life and its constitutive grammars. But the inherent conceptual limitations imposed by the method's *own* constitutive grammars similarly do not foreclose on the relational and ontological or cosmological validity of Lenca claims and practices. This in-built epistemic humility helps to free scholars of international politics from a perceived need to adjudicate difference within their authorized languages of redescription, thereby reframing such differences and the dissonances they produce not as abstracted puzzles of epistemology and ontology to be resolved, but as 'a series of practical problems requiring embodied and practical solutions' that allows interlocutors to move forward through the negotiation of contingent and even contestatory dialogical practices.[138] Even when persistent incommensurabilities result in situational collapses of dialogue, the epistemic and ontological friction such encounters generate can still foster 'greater awareness (amongst conflicting parties) of their own particular ontological presuppositions' in ways that open space for future 'pragmatic encounters' and 'ontological diplomacy'.[139]

For beyond their epistemic and ethical implications, both comparative and pluriversal dialogue must be understood first and foremost as concrete and embodied *practices*. Grammars and the world-pictures they constitute actively constrain the ability to imagine conversing with a river if one inhabits a form of life in which rivers are *not* viewed as 'semiotic agents' – these concepts are simply not allowed to cohere in a way that such grammars can recognize as plausible or 'true'. But dialogical encounters with those whose forms of life *are* entwined within such grammars offer new possibilities for thought and action, even in the absence of full understanding or in the face of the impossibility of justifying those claims within the grammars that structure our own form of life. As Wittgenstein notes, 'Giving grounds, however, justifying the evidence, comes to an end; – but the end is not certain propositions' striking us immediately as true … it is not a kind of *seeing* on our part; it is our *acting*, which lies at the bottom of the language-game.'[140] The chimera of perfect understanding can never guide us through impasse, but Wittgenstein's method offers us tools to 'go on' in making our way through the messy embeddedness in the whole 'hurly-burly' of language and the lives it entwines.[141] Challenging the exclusionary, hierarchical forms of relationality imposed by Eurocentric grammars through pluriversal and comparative dialogue enables the unsettling of these grammars and the cultivation of new forms of ethico-political recognition across epistemic, ontological, and cosmological differences. But as Wittgenstein advises: 'It is not interpretation which builds the bridge.… Only practice does that'.[142]

Wittgenstein's dialogical comparison thus facilitates a constructive tension that avoids the exclusionary logics of complete commensurability between forms of life, while also refusing to smooth out enduring incommensurabilities that inevitably arise through pluriversal dialogue. As Wittgenstein advises, '[what's] ragged should be left ragged.'[143] But by serving as a conceptual bridge into 'ongoing experience[s] of reflective interaction across and between different

[137] FitzGerald (2026).
[138] O'Connor (2008) p. 141.
[139] Brigg (2011); Chaves et al. (2016) p. 15.
[140] Wittgenstein (1969) p. 28 § 204.
[141] Shotter (1996).
[142] Gordon P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Rules, Grammar, and Necessity* (Blackwell, 1985).
[143] Wittgenstein (1980a) p. 45.

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ways of being', a Wittgensteinian framework of comparative dialogue offers scholars of international politics new 'capacities to work collaboratively to create something new, which may not be describable in the terms of any of the collaborators' worlds,' opening pathways towards new practices of pluriversal politics and the diverse modes of relationality beyond the field's prevailing Eurocentrism.[144]

Caveats and conclusions

In its origins, mainstream currents, and even in some critical manifestations, the study of international politics frequently remains shot through with exclusionary, Eurocentric logics.[145] Practices of pluriversal dialogue offer one possible path by which concepts central to the field might yet serve as the connectors or discursive grounds for novel forms of epistemic, ontological, and cosmological encounter that draw the field beyond itself, towards the cultivation of forms of relationality beyond Eurocentric hierarchies and associated practices of epistemic and material decolonization. Despite the lack of pluriversal relational resources within the Westernized study of international politics, Wittgenstein's method of dialogical comparison offers scholars of international politics a potentially useful methodological tool whose intriguing family resemblances to the practical and epistemic aspects of pluriversal dialogue may help addres many of the recurring pathologies that plague the field's efforts to reckon with difference.

However, interactions between situated forms of relationality remain saturated by the racialized, gendered, and spatialized hierarchies of modernity. Cultivating forms of relationality beyond the exploitative and exterminative dynamics of modernity thus cannot be achieved simply by relativizing epistemic and ontological differences between forms of life while ignoring existing power asymmetries and relative positionalities within colonial matrices of power. Instead, pluriversal ethics demands attention to the interconnections between forms of life in ways that enable the transformation of those relationships currently experienced as epistemically and ontologically destructive. Pluriversal dialogue in the fullest sense (reflecting both its ontological and ethico-political aspects) must therefore always be oriented beyond dialogue for its own sake and towards ensuring the survival of non-Westernized ways of knowing and being, and the words and worlds with which they are entwined.[146]

Wittgenstein's comparative dialogical method proves to be a potent analogue for pluriversal dialogue precisely because it promotes a profound epistemic relativization, revealing the necessarily partial and contingent character of the grammars within which specific connectors function across diverse forms of life. This approach is inherently relational in its rejection of objective or positivist accounts of worlds knowable prior to or beyond their entwining in context-specific linguistic and social practices. But the lack of in-built power analysis within Wittgenstein's approach also necessitates further relational resources to unpack the embeddedness of the parties to epistemic, ontological, and cosmological encounters within relationships of intersectional power dynamics – not least those mediated by the enduring violences of coloniality. While Wittgensteinian comparative dialogue offers a useful analogue for pluriversal dialogue and the pursuit of the deconstructive and dialogical aspects of pluriversal politics, it still requires a decolonial lens to fully apprehend the modes of relationality conditioned by modern-colonial power dynamics that shape dialogical encounters between forms of life within and across the colonial difference.

Other examples of potential pluriversal connectors and existing applications of Wittgensteinian comparative dialogue offer starting points for further pursuit of these methodological insights. In addition to the example of the Zapatistas above, the decolonial literature contains many

[144]Hutchings (2019) pp. 122–3.

[145]Branwen Gruffydd Jones (ed.), *Decolonizing International Relations* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

[146]Walter D. Mignolo, 'Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality', *Cultural Studies*, 21:2–3 (2007b), pp. 449–514.

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important reclamations and resignifications of 'development' that can be brought into dialogical comparison with prevailing (neo)liberal conceptions.[147] In North America, the pluriversal notions of democracy and peacebuilding maintained by Indigenous nations within what is now the United States and Canada reveal the contradictions of international 'peacebuilding' interventions launched by these liberal democratic settler-colonial states.[148] Without engaging with notions of pluriversality and pluriversal dialogue directly, James Tully has also drawn extensively on Wittgenstein's dialogical method to engage with comparative notions of constitutionalism and reconciliation between Indigenous nations and the liberal democratic tradition in the settler-colonial context of the Canadian state.[149] The role of Indigenous and Afro-descendant communities in Colombia's peace process over the last decade has driven significant interest in the pluriversal significations of 'peace' itself.[150] Bolivia's plurinational constitutional structure also offers unique opportunities for exploring practical negotiations between liberal democratic constitutionalism and pluriversal modes of Indigenous democratic governance beyond state-centric liberal ontologies.[151]

The comparative, pluriversal exploration of connectors central to the field of International Studies can enable a 'radical break' with Eurocentric language games and grammars, enabling the development of new grammars more consistent with forms of relationality beyond Eurocentric hierarchies. But such transformations require more than theoretical explorations – they will require Westernized scholars of international politics to engage deeply with their own intersectional positionalities and embeddedness within colonial matrices of power to consider what shapes their encounters with the pluriverse might take. More than that, such transformations will require actual, embodied, non-instrumental engagement with individuals and communities historically excluded by the field from producing or possessing knowledge deemed relevant to the study of international politics.[152] These methodological reflections can offer few concrete answers about the forms that such encounters might take on an individual level, as such forms are necessarily conditioned by particularities of identity and embeddedness within different constellations of power and relationality – we are left once again with a Wittgensteinian insistence on the importance of the particular case. But for those who share a 'particular imaginative bent', these reflections hopefully offer one more set of tools for thinking about how to 'go on' in the multivalent struggle for epistemic and material decolonization. As Wittgenstein always again reminds us: 'The deed, the activity, is primary'.[153]

Video Abstract. To view the online video abstract, please visit: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210526102101.

[147] Arturo Escobar, 'Sustainability: Design for the pluriverse', *Development*, 54:2 (2011), pp. 137–40; *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (Princeton University Press, 2012).

[148] Neta C. Crawford, 'A security regime among democracies: Cooperation among Iroquois nations', *International Organization*, 48:3 (1994), pp. 345–85; Garrett FitzGerald, 'Unsettling peace: The settler-colonial challenge to the local turn', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 18:4 (2024), pp. 401–18.

[149] Michael Asch, John Borrows, and James Tully (eds), *Resurgence and Reconciliation: Indigenous-Settler Relations and Earth Teachings* (University of Toronto Press, 2018); Tully (1995).

[150] Mahdis Azarmandi, 'Disturbing a discipline: Towards pluriversal peace and conflict studies', *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 8:4 (2023), pp. 386–400; María Cárdenas, 'Why peacebuilding is condemned to fail if it ignores ethnicization. The case of Colombia', *Peacebuilding*, 11:2 (2023), pp. 185–204; On pluriversality and governance: lessons from Colombia, *International Affairs*, 101:6 (2025), pp. 1957–74.

[151] Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, 'Liberal democracy and *ayllu* democracy in Bolivia: The case of Northern Potosí', *Journal of Development Studies*, 26:4 (1990), pp. 97–121; Cristina Rojas, 'Ontological disputes between Indigenous communities and the state in Bolivia', *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, 3:4 (2018), pp. 479–95; Marcos S. Scauso, *Intersectional Decoloniality: Re-Imagining International Relations and the Problem of Difference* (Routledge, 2020).

[152] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Zed Books; University of Otago Press; St Martin's Press, 1999); Eve Tuck, 'Suspending damage: A letter to communities', *Harvard Educational Review*, 79:3 (2009), pp. 409–28.

[153] Monk (1990) p. 306.

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