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A Problem for Dialogue: Can World-Views be Rational?

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Abstract

This paper explores Otto Muck's metaphysical concept of *Weltanschauung* (world-view). My objective is to argue that world-views *can* be rational. To this end, I will first explain the notion of *Weltanschauung* and illustrate its relation to metaphysical convictions. Next, I will defend the meaningfulness of metaphysical assertions against two objections relating to verification and falsification. The core of the paper focuses on the integrative function of world-views and the criteria according to which one can evaluate their rationality, in particular, Frederick Ferré's criteria for the rationality of metaphysical systems. The thesis is that the rationality of a world-view can be evaluated in terms of the adequacy of the integrative function it performs. Finally, I will show why, within Muck's framework, dialogue between proponents of different world-views is a postulate of rationality.

Keywords

Otto Muck, *Weltanschauung*, word-view, rationality, dialogue

The plurality of world-views in existence today seems to lead inevitably to encountering divergent world-views. Life in such a pluralistic society can and does, as we painfully experience all too often, cause unsettledness and conflicts amongst proponents of different world-views with regard to culture, politics, religion, ethics, science, ontology, or personal moral convictions, to name just a few. If we do not want to live next to each other as strangers or enemies, dialogue is required and demanded. A problem and concern of world-view dialogue is the standard or criterion by which such a dialogue is conducted. Thus the question of the rationality of world-views arises in the context of dialogue between divergent world-views: Can a world-view dialogue be rational, that is to say, can world-views be evaluated rationally? If so, how can one evaluate the rationality of a world-view? In response to questions like these, Otto Muck (*1928),

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an Austrian philosopher and Jesuit, has spent his lifetime working on issues concerning dialogue, world-views and their rationality. His interest is in the philosophical dimension of these issues; indeed he advocates the view that philosophy, especially metaphysics, can help develop a rational order which gives theoretical and practical orientation in human life.

In this paper I will examine in depth Otto Muck's metaphysical concept of *Weltanschauung* (world-view) arguing that it enables us to evaluate the rationality of world-views with respect to their integrative function. In the course of the paper, I will name four criteria for the rationality of world-views and posit that dialogue is a postulate of rationality. The matter of dialogue is of particular interest since questions concerning the rationality of world-views arise specifically in cases of encounter with other world-views, and with the rise of awareness of clashes of convictions or of poorly integrated experience.[1] The aim of this paper is to encourage dialogue between world-views. This dialogue, I will argue, can be guided by the question of rationality.

1) What is *Weltanschauung*?

The term '*Weltanschauung*' is sometimes associated with ideologies or doctrines. It is used, for instance, to describe Marxism, National Socialism, or Catholicism. What I mean here, by contrast, when speaking of 'world-views' is equivalent to how Otto Muck introduces the term '*Weltanschauung*'. '*Weltanschauung*' (and thus my use of 'world-view') denotes a "personal, lived attitude according to which everything we encounter in life is spontaneously understood and evaluated."[2] Even though it is hard to find accurate terminology—one could speak of an 'attitude' (*Einstellung*/*Haltung*) or of 'life-carrying convictions' (*lebenstragende Überzeugungen*) or even of 'biodoxy' (*Lebensauffassung*)—,[3] I want to stress three

[1] Otto Muck, 'M. Bochenski on the Rational Aspect of *Weltanschauung*', *International Philosophical Quarterly* 52 (2012): pp. 63-78, here p. 76.

[2] Otto Muck, 'Rationale Strukturen des Dialogs über Glaubensfragen', in Winfried Löffler, ed., *Rationalität und Weltanschauung: Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Innsbruck/Wien: Tyrolia, 1999), pp. 106-151, here p. 132, originally published in Hugo Bogensberger, Franz Ferschl, Reinhart Kögerler and Wilhelm Zauner, eds., *Erkenntniswege in der Theologie* (Graz/Wien/Köln: Styria, 1998), pp. 107-150: "persönliche, gelebte Haltung, aus der heraus das im Leben Begegnende spontan aufgefaßt und bewertet wird." All translations from the Germin are mine.

[3] Otto Muck, 'Sprachlogische Aspekte religiös-weltanschaulichen Dialogs', in Winfried Löffler, ed., *Rationalität und Weltanschauung: Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Innsbruck/Wien: Tyrolia, 1999), pp. 63-80, here p. 73, originally published in *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 97 (1975): pp. 41-55; Muck, 'Rationale

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important features of Muck's account of *Weltanschauung*. First, according to Muck a world-view has both theoretical and practical components, namely, understanding and evaluating.[4] Thus, a world-view includes both thoughts and values.[5] Second, the term 'personal' indicates that what is in question is a particular person's world-view, rather than an abstract public world-view, that is, an ideology or doctrine such as Marxism or Catholicism, although it is possible for a person to adopt at least parts of such an abstract public world-view. Third, the term 'lived' indicates that a person actually possesses this world-view. This means that he or she operates on, and is affected by, this particular world-view. In theory, a lived world-view (*gelebte Weltanschauung*) can be verbalised or expressed; however, making an implicit world-view explicit (*formulierte Weltanschauung*) can be difficult, for it is not easy accurately to express the operative world-view.[6] If we take these three features into account, we can say that world-views are a set of personal life-carrying convictions or attitudes on which one's life, in particular one's speaking and acting, is based.[7]

In summary, then, according to Muck, everybody possesses a word-view insofar as he or she speaks and acts. This is due to the definition of 'word-view' as the personal life-carrying convictions or set of attitudes on which one's life is based. If one tries to articulate such a world-view, however, for instance in dialogue with another, discontinuity may arise between the lived and the expressed world-view. As I argue in this paper, such problems pertaining to the expression and defence of one's world-view might be tackled by taking metaphysical considerations into account.[8] In other words, metaphysics, understood as the "critical unfolding of the notion of reality which is operating in the lived world-view"[9], can help in developing and evaluating a rational world-view.

Strukturen', pp. 131f; Otto Muck, 'Ein Beitrag transzendentalphilosophischer Reflexion zum Verständnis von Metaphysik', in Winfried Löffler, ed., *Rationalität und Weltanschauung: Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Innsbruck/Wien: Tyrolia, 1999), pp. 247-259, here p. 257, originally published in Otto Muck, ed., *Sinngestalten: Metaphysik in der Vielfalt menschlichen Fragens: Festschrift für Emerich Coreth SJ* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1989), pp 53-65. For my use of English terminology, see Muck, 'Rational Aspects of *Weltanschauung*'.

[4] Muck, 'Rationale Strukturen', p. 134.

[5] Muck, 'Rational Aspects of *Weltanschauung*', p. 63.

[6] Muck, 'Rationale Strukturen', p. 132.

[7] Muck, 'Rational Aspects of *Weltanschauung*', p. 65.

[8] Muck, 'Ein Beitrag transzendentalphilosophischer Reflexion', p. 247.

[9] Otto Muck, 'Rationalität von Weltanschauung und Religion', in Horst Bürkle and Drago Pintaric, eds., *Denken im Raum des Heiligen: Festschrift für P. Ansgar Paus OSB* (Sankt Ottilien: Eos Verlag, 2007), pp. 30-46, here p. 40: "kritische Entfaltung jener Auffassung von Wirklichkeit, die in der gelebten Weltanschauung am Werk ist."

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2) Can a *Weltanschauung* be Rational?

This brings us to the question of the *rationality* of world-views. Despite the common use of the term, it is hard to define 'rationality' properly. For the present purpose, I will follow Muck, at least as I interpret him, in speaking about the rationality of a world-view in cases where (1) metaphysical (and thus world-view-related) assertions are *meaningful* and (2) one can evaluate the *adequacy* of a world-view. These are the two basic presuppositions for the rationality of world-views. To establish the central claim that world-views *can* be rational, I will evaluate both assumptions in turn. In section three I will focus on the meaningfulness of metaphysical assertions, and in section four, on the criteria for evaluating the adequacy of world-views. Rationality implies a third feature, namely, (3) *reasonable argumentation*. According to Muck, argumentation is essentially the tracing back of questionable assumptions to assumptions commonly held.[10] A line of argumentation is reasonable when it is (a) accompanied by openness to considering novel questions, (b) by avoidance of exclusively basing judgements on emotions, and (c) constituted by a habit of giving reasons.[11] The third assumption about rationality becomes significant in the context of world-view dialogue, which I will treat in section five.

3) The Meaningfulness of Metaphysical Assertions

There has been a lively debate in recent years over whether metaphysical, and in particular religious, beliefs are in any sense rational.[12] On the one hand, there is the problem of their *verification*. Logical positivists such as Rudolf Carnap claim that "the meaning of a statement lies in the method of its verification."[13] Since metaphysical statements cannot be verified empirically, they are not wrong,

[10] Muck, 'Rationale Strukturen', p. 113.

[11] Otto Muck, 'Wahrheit und Verifikation', in Winfried Löffler, ed., *Rationalität und Weltanschauung: Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Innsbruck/Wien: Tyrolia, 1999), pp. 81-100, here pp. 88f, originally published in Helmut Kohlenberger, ed., *Die Wahrheit des Ganzen: Festschrift für Leo Gabriel* (Wien: Herder, 1976), pp. 35-51.

[12] Otto Muck, 'Zur Logik der Rede von Gott', in Winfried Löffler, ed., *Rationalität und Weltanschauung: Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Innsbruck/Wien: Tyrolia, 1999), pp. 14-44, originally published in *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 89 (1967): pp. 1-28.

[13] Rudolf Carnap, 'The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language', tans. Arthur Pap, in Alfred J. Ayer, ed., *Logical Positivism* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1959), p. 76.

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sterile or uncertain but simply *meaningless*; they do not constitute statements.[14] As Carnap states:

> The metaphysician tells us that empirical truth-conditions cannot be specified; if he adds that nevertheless he 'means' something, we know that this is merely an allusion to associated images and feelings which, however, do not bestow a meaning on the word.[15]

Metaphysical statements are alleged statements, 'pseudo-statements' as Carnap calls them, because they do not have meaning. They assert nothing.[16] One way of responding to this objection involves arguing that the principle of verification advocated by the logical positivists fails as a criterion of meaningfulness and can only function as a criterion of demarcation between metaphysical and scientific statements.[17]

On the other hand, there is the objection of *falsification*. Antony Flew stresses in his parable of the invisible gardener that religious assertions are not falsifiable; that is to say, one is in want of a condition that would nullify these statements. Again, such statements assert nothing since they have suffered "death by a thousand qualifications."[18] In response, Richard Hare promotes the conception of *blik*, a pre-rational entity that cannot be rationally evaluated. A *blik* is not an explanation; it is the presupposition of an explanation. On the basis of *bliks*, we decide what counts as an explanation. Thus, once again, metaphysical statements are said not to assert anything.[19] In short, the objection is that metaphysical statements (a) *explain* and (b) *assert* nothing, since they are (c) *meaningless*.

In response to these challenges from logical positivism and its opponents, I wish to argue that we can critically evaluate the adequacy of metaphysical systems and, furthermore, the adequacy of worldviews, in ways I will explain shortly. The afore mentioned challenges, as Muck indicates, fall short in an important respect. The objections of verification and falsification correctly point out that there is a difference between scientific and metaphysical or religious statements. Thus, the distinction between science and metaphysics is justified. However, objectors fail to perceive the common function of these

[14] Ibid., pp. 60f.

[15] Ibid., p. 67.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Muck, 'Zur Logik', p. 27.

[18] Antony Flew, 'Theology and Falsification: A Antony Flew,' in Antony Flew and Alisdair MacIntyre, eds., *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1955), pp. 96-99, here p. 97.

[19] Richard Hare, 'Theology and Falsification: B R. M. Hare', in Antony Flew and Alisdair MacIntyre, eds., *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1955), pp. 99-103, here pp. 101f.

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disciplines: they both (a) *explain* something. The explanations only differ in how they perform their explanatory function.[20] Many hold scientific explanations to be prognostic. Metaphysical explanations, however, are integrative.[21] We call an explanation *integrative* "insofar as it performs an interpretative and evaluative coordination of the manifold encounter in its significance for the entirety ([Latin:] integrum) of our life."[22] As such, metaphysical statements do (b) *assert* something, namely a certain synthesis of understanding. And we can name a criterion for (c) the *meaning* of metaphysical assertions: the fulfilment of its integrative function.[23]

In short, then, metaphysical statements are integrative explanations. As such, they assert a certain synthesis, and we can name as a criterion of meaningfulness the fulfilment of the integrative function of metaphysical statements. Thus, the fact that metaphysical statements may not be directly verifiable or falsifiable (through isolated experience) does not imply that they cannot be rationally evaluated at all (as Hare supposed). In other words, it does not mean that metaphysical convictions are not attuned to experience. On the contrary, since metaphysical convictions are an important part of structuring and responding to our experience they must be sensitive to it.

Before we turn to the integrative function of world-views and the criteria of rationality, let me briefly clarify the relation between world-views and metaphysical assertions or convictions. Word-views contain and rely on metaphysical convictions. They are an important part of a world-view because of their integrative function. A world-view consists of many different kinds of convictions: scientific, moral, ontological, religious, and so forth. If a world-view is coherent, these different kinds of convictions will be related to each other. That is the function of metaphysical convictions. Metaphysical convictions thus play a key role in every world-view, especially in the (rational) core

[20] Otto Muck, 'Zwei Weisen der Erklärung?', in Paul Weingartner, ed., *Evolution als Schöpfung?: Ein Streitgespräch zwischen Philosophen, Theologen und Naturwissenschaftlern* (Stuttgart/Berlin/Köln: Kohlhammer, 2001), pp. 1-17, here pp. 2f.

[21] Otto Muck, 'Neuansätze zur Gottesfrage in der Philosophie', in Winfried Löffler, ed., *Rationalität und Weltanschauung: Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Innsbruck/Wien: Tyrolia, 1999), pp. 3-13, here p. 8, originally published in Walter Kern, ed., *Aufklärung und Gottesglaube* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1981), pp. 88-101. For further discussion of the distinction between metaphysical and scientific explanation, see Otto Muck, 'Metaphysische Erklärungen als ganzheitliches Verfahren', in Winfried Löffler, ed., *Rationalität und Weltanschauung: Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Innsbruck/Wien: Tyrolia, 1999), pp. 225-231, originally published in *Akten des XIV. Internationalen Kongresses für Philosophie: Band 2* (Wien: Herder, 1968), pp. 419-425.

[22] Muck, 'Rationale Strukturen', p. 134: "Insofern es um eine deutende und wertende Einordnung des vielfältig Begegnenden in seiner Bedeutung für die Ganzheit (lat. integrum) unseres Lebens geht".

[23] Muck, 'Neuansätze', p. 8.

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of a world-view which "determines the highest level of sentences that have the force of a universal integration of different fields."[24]

To conclude, world-views consist in and rely on metaphysical convictions. Even though they are not directly verifiable or falsifiable, metaphysical statements are not as such irrational or pre-rational. Instead metaphysical statements are meaningful assertions and integrative explanations. As such, they *can* be rational. The task of the next section is to show how the rationality of metaphysical assumptions and consequently world-views can be evaluated according to the fulfilment of their integrative function.

4) The Criteria of Rationality: Evaluating the Rationality of a *Weltanschauung*

In this and the next section I will defend the claim that, as Muck suggests, Frederick Ferré's criteria for the rationality of metaphysical systems can be applied to Muck's concept of *Weltanschauung*. My aim is to show firstly that world-views can be more or less adequate to explaining reality as we know it and secondly, that the rationality of a world-view can be judged according to its adequacy.

In his book 'Language, Logic and God'[25] Frederick Ferré states that theological speech necessarily includes beliefs. Religious statements intend to refer to reality. The 'facts', as Ferré calls them, to which religious statements refer, differ from the facts to which the empirical sciences refer.[26] Consequently, Ferré deals with the same problem we encountered above, that "[n]o straightforward experimental method for verifying or falsifying sentences claiming to state these 'facts' seems to be available"[27]. Ferré presents a solution to this problem. He introduces 'metaphysical facts' into his ontology as the facts to which theological speech primarily refers. Those facts play a key role in the general function of metaphysics, namely, *conceptual synthesis*. As such, metaphysical facts have to be considered relative to the specific metaphysical system in which they operate.[28] "A metaphysical system is a construct of concepts designed to provide coherence for all 'the facts' on the basis of a theoretical model drawn from among 'the facts'."[29] Hence, the confirmation of

[24] Muck, 'Rational Aspects of *Weltanschauung*', p. 77.

[25] Frederick Ferré, *Language, Logic and God* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode (Publishers) Ltd, 1992).

[26] Ibid., pp. 159f.

[27] Ibid., p. 160.

[28] Ibid., pp. 160f.

[29] Ibid., p. 161.

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metaphysical facts depends upon the adequacy of the metaphysical system.[30]

The crucial question, then, is: "Can metaphysical systems be judged *rationally* as to adequacy or inadequacy?"[31] The answer Ferré gives is this: "In so far as metaphysical systems have a definite function, they can be judged according to their success in fulfilling this function."[32] Ferré names four criteria for evaluating whether the metaphysical function of conceptual synthesis has been fulfilled in any instance. There are two internal criteria, to wit, (1) *consistency* and (2) *coherency*, which demand, as a negative criterion, the absence of logical contradictions and, as a positive criterion, a connection between the relevant principles. Moreover, there are two external criteria, (3) *applicability* to experience and (4) adequacy to *all* possible experience, which entail relevance to experience in the sense that the metaphysical system illuminates all possible experiences of a kind naturally and without distortion.[33]

As a next step, I argue that these criteria, as Otto Muck suggests, can be applied to world-views.[34] To this end, I seek to show that world-views have approximately the same function as metaphysical systems. In this connection, recall that Ferré's criteria evaluate the fulfilment of the *function* of metaphysical systems. I claim that the function of world-views is *sufficiently similar* to the function of metaphysical systems *in order to apply* Ferré's criteria for the rationality of metaphysical systems to world-views. That is to say, remaining differences are not relevant in relation to its functionality. I will call the function that is common to metaphysical systems and world-views an *integrative function*.

In order to fulfil the operative definition of the term 'world-view', world-views on this understanding must serve to interpret and evaluate what we experience. This, however, requires an *integrative function*, such that data "get clarified in their meaning and applicability as well as their limitations by means of relating them to an all-embracing whole."[35] World-views can only properly fulfil their

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., p. 162. Italics in original.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., pp. 162f.

[34] Muck, 'Zur Logik', p. 41; Muck, 'Sprachlogische Aspekte', pp. 78f; Muck, 'Rationale Strukturen', pp. 136f; Otto Muck, 'Phänomenologie - Metaphysik - Transzendentale Reflexion', in Winfried Löffler, ed., *Rationalität und Weltanschauung: Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Innsbruck/Wien: Tyrolia, 1999), pp. 232-246, here p. 242, originally published in *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 96 (1974): pp. 62-75; Muck, 'Rational Aspects of *Weltanschauung*', p. 75.

[35] Muck, 'Wahrheit und Verifikation', p. 81: "[...] in ihrem Sinn und ihrer Geltung aber auch Begrenzung dadurch verdeutlicht werden, daß wir sie auf eine umfassende Ganzheit beziehen."

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operative definition as being the set of "personal, lived attitude[s] according to which everything we encounter in life is spontaneously understood and evaluated"[36] when they perform an integrative function. This integrative function, however, is fulfilled by metaphysical systems as part of a world-view. To put it the other way round, whatever fulfils the function of integrating *everything we experience* is by definition part of the world-view.[37] As we have seen, world-views contain and rely on metaphysical convictions. Thus we can say that the function of metaphysical systems and world-views is sufficiently similar to apply the same criteria to them, insofar as a world-view is operating on metaphysical convictions which perform an essential part of the operative definition of 'world-view'. If my supposition is correct, then world-views as well as metaphysical systems have an integrative function and can both therefore be rationally evaluated according to their function. This means that we can apply Ferré's criteria for metaphysical systems to Muck's concept of world-views.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that these criteria represent the *minimum* requirement for a rational world-view, that is, with regard to world-views as metaphysical systems.[38] This means that they are necessary conditions of a rational world-view but are not sufficient to validate a particular world-view[39] "as definite and compelling for everyone."[40] This is due to the fact that, firstly, a world-view is rational relative to one's experience, or according to external criteria, and secondly it is very hard to see how the four criteria can be completely fulfilled. I therefore suggest we distinguish between a rational world-view and the rational acceptance of a world-view. While in the first case the world-view can be an implicit one, the world-view must be explicitly formulated in the second case. Only in the second case does the question of rationality arise. Thus, in everyday life, the question that surfaces first and foremost is not primarily whether one's world-view is rational, but whether one is rational in holding one's world-view. One holds a world-view rationally when, in discovering a deficiency, one modifies one's world-view in

[36] Muck, 'Rationale Strukturen', p. 132.

[37] The phrase in italics calls attention to two differences between a metaphysical statement or system and a world-view. First, a metaphysical statement or system is only a theoretical entity while a world-view is a theoretical and practical entity. Second, a metaphysical statement or system is only part of a world-view insofar as the metaphysical statement or system is personally accepted and operating within one's set of personal, life-carrying convictions.

[38] There might be other, for instance ethical, aspects of the function of a world-view from which further criteria could be derived.

[39] Muck, 'Rationale Strukturen', p. 136.

[40] Muck, 'Rational Aspects of *Weltanschauung*', p. 66.

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accordance with the four criteria of rationality.[41] Hence, in keeping with the latter distinction, these criteria should be regarded as guidelines for improving one's world-view in a rational way.[42] In short, a more rational world-view is one which is held in greater conformity with the criteria. Muck concedes:

> Admittedly, these are criteria which should be regarded more as minimal requirements for the rational tenability of such a [world-]view. They are not of the kind that one gets to a conclusive result that is generally accepted.[43]

Nevertheless, one should keep in mind that metaphysical systems, as well as world-views, have an ontological bearing.[44] Ultimately, therefore, the question of the rationality, and not just the rational holding, of a world-view is likewise important. For we commonly think that rational world-views say something about reality. As Ferré puts it: "[I]f some models are capable of providing a greater coherence and adequacy than others, we may begin to suspect that this tells us something not only about the models but also about what reality is like."[45] So we are convinced that some metaphysical systems and world-views are more capable of interpreting reality than others, namely those who fit the four criteria more closely.[46]

In what follows I will address two possible objections to this conclusion and then present two postulates of rationality. So far, we have seen that the claim of rationality demands that the integrative function of one's world-view is fulfilled in a consistent and holistic way. That, however, is the case if and only if the four criteria are met. Whoever has inconsistent or incoherent convictions, whoever makes no all-inclusive reference to experience—that is, not to exclude any field of experience a priori—has a deficiency in his or her integrative capacity. Therefore, his or her world-view is less adequate and viable. For these reasons, both claims seem to be established prima facie, namely, that world-views performing an integrative function can be more or less adequate and that the adequacy of a world-view can be measured and determined.

[41] This, however, implies that the rationality—as well as the rational acceptance of a world-view—has to be considered relative to one's capacities.

[42] Ibid., p. 64.

[43] Otto Muck, 'Evolutionäre Erkenntnistheorie - Welt/Weltbild', in Wolfgang Wickler and Lucie Salwiczek, eds., *Wie wir die Welt erkennen: Erkenntnisweisen im interdisziplinären Diskurs*, (Freiburg/München: Alber, 2001), pp. 243-272, here p. 268: "Allerdings sind das Kriterien, die man eher als Mindestbedingungen für die vernünftige Vertretbarkeit einer solchen Auffassung nennen kann. Sie sind nicht so, daß wir da zu einem endgültigen Ergebnis kommen, das allgemein akzeptiert ist."

[44] Ferré, *Language, Logic and God*, p. 164.

[45] Ibid., p. 165.

[46] Ibid.

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5) Two Objections

Two potential objections have been mounted against this account.[47] A first objection concerns the above mentioned reference to reality. The *reality* objection goes like this. The adequacy of a world-view does not rely on the fulfilment of the criteria but on the correspondence of the world-view with reality. A reply must emphasise the fact that these criteria are meta-criteria; they are criteria on the level of reflection. Hence, the crucial question is how to *evaluate* the correspondence with reality.[48] The criteria of rationality evaluate the integrative function of world-views. World-views which are more capable of interpreting the world (as we perceive it) in a consistent, coherent and all-embracing manner are, so the reply to the objection, more likely to depict reality (as it is).

A second objection might be to accuse this concept of *circularity*. Metaphysics and world-views have an integral concern. From its integrative function we derive criteria of rationality. We consider as rational what fulfils the integrative function. Only world-views which meet the criteria that evaluate the fulfilment of the integrative function are considered as rational. This view, according to the objection, presupposes a holistic function of guidance, namely the integrative function of world-views, and introduces the notion of rationality as the fulfilment of this integrative function.[49] In reply, we have to consider in more detail the *operative introduction* of the notion of world-views. The introduction of a notion is operative if we develop that notion on the basis of our everyday operations—that is, asking, asserting, deciding, acting, and so on.[50] The previously presented concept of world-views as well as the criteria of rationality rest upon an operative introduction. According to our definition, world-view is a "personal, lived attitude according to which everything we encounter in life is spontaneously understood and evaluated."[51] *Everyone*, insofar as he or she speaks and acts, has to have such a world-view. The question, then, is not *whether* but *which* such defined world-view one has. This gives us the opportunity to reply in manner of a *retorsion*. The operative introduction of the notion of world-view shows that having a world-view is necessary. Even a

[47] For example, Cyril Gehrer, 'Weltanschauung und weltanschaulicher Dialog bei Otto Muck' (Diploma thesis, University of Innsbruck, 2011), pp. 58-64.

[48] Muck, 'Phänomenologie', p. 243.

[49] Gehrer, 'Weltanschauung', pp. 59f.

[50] Muck, 'Rationale Strukturen', p. 118.

[51] Ibid., p. 132: "persönliche, gelebte Haltung, aus der heraus das im Leben Begegnende spontan aufgefaßt und bewertet wird."

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denial of what I called before the holistic function of guidance fulfils the operative definition of a world-view.[52]

Let me briefly recapitulate. A world-view is a set of personal life-carrying convictions. As such, every world-view has a certain function, namely an integrative one. The metaphysical assumptions which are part of our world-view integrate all personal experiences. This integrative function, and thus the world-view, can be evaluated. The four criteria of rationality evaluate this function. Thus, as a minimum requirement for rationality, one can demand the fulfilment of these criteria, without stating that these criteria have to lead to a certain, definite and conclusive world-view that is validated by everyone. In order to argue for the rationality of a world-view one has to make it explicit. Making an implicit world-view explicit can reveal inconsistencies in the world-view itself. This is where world-view dialogue comes into play as a privileged method, and even practical necessity, of ascertaining the rationality of world-views.

6) Dialogue as a Postulate of Rationality: The Role of Dialogue between World-Views

We now turn to the two postulates of rationality. These postulates do not (theoretically) have the status of criteria of rationality but (practically) lead to an improvement of the rationality of world-views. The postulates include (1) a readiness to engage in dialogue and (2) a readiness to revise one's world-view.[53] In the following I confine myself to the postulate of the readiness to engage in dialogue to illuminate the important role world-view dialogue plays as a *corrective*. Muck states:

> Because the mentioned criteria lead to a correspondence with reality and truth, the process of dialogue [. . .] can be understood as a mutual effort to gain greater accuracy regarding reality and to approximate the truth.[54]

By 'dialogue' Muck means a *discursive* dialogue. In a discursive dialogue, the dialogue partners argue (without any violence) for their respective contrasting world-view components and seek better to understand each other. One gives reasons for his or her convictions. The goal of such a dialogue is a better mutual understanding

[52] Muck, 'Phänomenologie', p. 243.

[53] Gehrer, 'Weltanschauung', pp. 56f.

[54] Muck, 'Sprachlogische Aspekte', p. 79: "Weil die genannten Kriterien der Weg sind zur Wirklichkeitsgemäßheit und Wahrheit, kann der Prozeß des Dialogs [...] als gemeinsames Bemühen um eine größere Wirklichkeitsgerechtheit und Annäherung an die Wahrheit verstanden werden."

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and a convergence of conviction, even though differences might persist.[55] In a discursive dialogue, we argue by way of *reasoning*. This means that we try to trace back statements to mutually accepted statements.[56] In this regard, we have to distinguish between personal and interpersonal reasoning. Interpersonal reasons are based on mutually accepted premises. Personal reasons are based on premises only one partner accepts.[57] In a world-view dialogue, giving personal reasons is legitimate. Personal reasons help us to understand the premises of the reasoning of our dialogue partner. Furthermore, stating personal reasons might lead to considering experience which was not yet taken into account by the other dialogue partner.[58] Another important feature of dialogue concerns the way it manifests the range of applicability of so-called limited interpretations.[59] By the term 'interpretation' Muck means the translation of an expression into another language or, more importantly, the comprehension of a linguistic term.[60] An interpretation is *limited* if the interpretation has essentially but not exactly the same meaning as the term it translates, or as the comprehension of the dialogue partner would suggest. The remaining differences, however, are not relevant with regard to the particular subject.[61] World-view dialogue can prevent the dialogue partner from uncritically absolutising limited interpretations of statements which do not respect the methodologically legitimate range of their applicability.[62] In short, the overall goal of a world-view dialogue is the extension of the common, mutually accepted basis of reasoning and understanding.[63]

If and insofar as the main function of a dialogue between world-views is the extension of the common, mutually accepted basis for reasoning and understanding, participating in reasoning for one's convictions and trying to understand the dialogue partner as well as oneself often leads to an awareness of deficiencies in one's world-view and hence provides an opportunity to modify it. In this sense world-view dialogue is a *corrective* to one's world-view and enhances its adequacy and rationality. The readiness to engage in world-view dialogue and to revise one's world-view are *postulates* of rationality

[55] Muck, 'Rationale Strukturen', p. 108.

[56] Ibid., p. 113.

[57] Muck, 'Neuansätze', p. 5. See also Muck, 'Sprachlogische Aspekte'.

[58] Muck, 'Rationale Strukturen', pp. 114f.

[59] Ibid., pp. 110f.

[60] Otto Muck, 'Zum Problem der existentiellen Interpretation', in Winfried Löffler, ed., *Rationalität und Weltanschauung: Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Innsbruck/Wien: Tyrolia, 1999), pp. 45-62, here p. 47, originally published in *Zeitschrift für Katholische Theologie* 91 (1969): pp. 274-288; Muck, 'Sprachlogische Aspekte', p. 64.

[61] Muck, 'Problem der existentiellen Interpretation', pp. 46f.

[62] Ibid., pp. 48f.

[63] Muck, 'Rationale Strukturen', p. 114.

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because they are, although not theoretical criteria for the rationality of world views, practically necessary means of attaining and holding a world-view rationally.

I wish to bring my exposition of dialogue as a postulate of rationality to a close on a practical note. In order not to fuel unreasonable expectations, Muck cautions us to keep in mind the specific characteristics of word-views in a world-view dialogue. For one, the application of the criteria does not easily lead to a rational world-view, especially not to one that is acceptable to all people. World-view convictions furthermore require something akin to personal compliance. The classical notion for this is 'certitudo libera'. Only if one accepts such fundamental assertions as his or her own convictions does reasoning on this ground become convincing. Reasons without conviction do not lead to agreement.[64] As Muck puts it:

> Due to its performative nature, i.e. the fact that a world-view exercises its interpretative and evaluative force only as a personally accepted one, the [certitudo libera] and hence the unenforceability of world-view opinions are explicable.[65]

For this reason a world-view fulfils its function only as a personally accepted and lived one.[66]

7) Conclusion

The experience of living in a world where a plurality of divergent world-views exists can be challenging. This is especially true if and because we are confronted with different word-views on a nearly daily basis. In response to this challenge, I have explored Otto Muck's metaphysical concept of *Weltanschauung* in this paper, which takes into account the philosophical dimension of world-views. Based on this concept, I argued that seeing world-view dialogue as a postulate of rationality can help in gradually coming to understand different world-views, as well as one's own. Contrary to claims that we cannot rationally speak of and evaluate world-views, I have argued that world-views have an integrative function and can be evaluated according to their capacity to fulfil this very function. I defended the view that the rationality of world-views depends on an orientation out of integration. I named four criteria which evaluate the

[64] Muck, 'Sprachlogische Aspekte', p. 79.

[65] Muck, 'Phänomenologie', p. 243: "Wegen des performativen Charakters, also der Tatsache, daß eine Weltanschauung erst als persönlich akzeptierte ihre deutende und wertende Kraft ausübt, ist auch die freie Gewißheit und damit Unerzwingbarkeit weltanschaulicher Auffassungen einsichtig zu machen."

[66] Ibid., pp. 242f.

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integrative function as minimum criteria for the rationality of world-views: (1) *consistency*, (2) *coherency*, (3) *applicability* to experience and (4) *adequacy* to *all* possible experience. These criteria assess how well a world-view provides orientation through a consistent, coherent and all-embracing view of the world. If we take these considerations seriously, we see how metaphysics can help firstly to understand what a world-view is, and how it operates, and secondly to guide one in improving one's world-view rationally and engaging in a world-view dialogue that seeks a better understanding of ourselves and the world. This, I suggest, is a solid ground on which dialogue between different world-views can and should be built.

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