

# **Worldviews and Cultures**

EINSTEIN MEETS MAGRITTE: An Interdisciplinary Reflection on Science,  
Nature, Art, Human Action and Society

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# Worldviews and Cultures

## Philosophical Reflections from an Intercultural Perspective

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# **Worldview and Cultures: Philosophical Reflections from an Intercultural Perspective. An Introduction**

**Nicole Note, Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, Josef Estermann, and Diederik Aerts**

As editors, we realise that compiling a book is not self-evident. We began with clear guidelines and a straightforward idea of how the book ought to be composed. The potential authors received the guidelines and enthusiastically began their articles. When the articles were received, however, we noticed that some of the authors had deviated from the initial directives. We then had a choice: ask the author to rewrite the piece, or creatively try to make the article fit one of the three questions we posed. Since the articles indeed were very interesting, we decided to accept them in the final form in which they were written, even if we do not necessarily agree on all the viewpoints they articulate. A number of points we did discuss with some authors in cases where we disagreed. We believe, for example, that some written statements can be considered ethnocentric in an implicit way. However, we preferred not to publish these interactions as part of the book, since most of the authors had already taken our suggestions into account anyway.

The starting point for the book is “worldviews”. For us, a worldview reflects what generations of people have experienced, prior to any conceptual notions. These pre-conscious “experiences” have been and continue to be translated into comprehensible orderings which subconsciously explain how the world ontologically is, becomes, or is experienced. An example of these core beliefs in Western culture is the idea of the substantiality of each being. From these core beliefs, interpretations are deduced on a semi-conscious level, such as the autonomy of people. Both the notion of substantiality and autonomy manifest themselves culturally in language, in institutional structures, in daily habits and cultural traditions, in rules and norms. Once a person is embedded in these basic assumptions, it will be difficult to “believe” other orderings. Yet, in spite of deeply branched articulations and their long-lasting nature, beliefs may change over long periods of time. This is because the ongoing interaction with other cultures and experiences within one’s own culture, and personal lives, constantly reshape worldviews in an uncontrollable way.

Central to the notions of worldviews and culture in this book are two presuppositions. These premises seem mutually exclusive, yet they both need to be balanced within human thought in order to fulfil their important functions. The first is that in order for a worldview to have an orienting function, it is indispensable to people that they

perceive the basic beliefs of their worldview as “true” and “right”. The second assumption is that facilitating a genuine intercultural polylogue requires that these same people are able to relativise the basic categories of their own worldview.

Concerning the first presupposition, as stated above, we believe that a worldview has an *orienting* and a *comprehending* function. Orientation and comprehension are seen as two sides of one coin. By comprehending events, a worldview makes them meaningful. This suggested “explanation” is interiorised – semi-consciously or consciously – as insights. These insights then function as beacons, guiding people through their lives in two basic matters: ethical matters and matters regarding the “being”/becoming of the world. We believe that people need these broad beacons and cannot function well without them. Their loss may even lead to a sense of disorientation. People usually do not question these fundamental matters; their very role as beacons makes them almost unquestionable.

When taking a global perspective, however, one should be aware that the ontological status of these basic beliefs within a worldview can lead to absolutist or fundamentalist attitudes among their adherents. Within an intercultural global setting, an unconditional conviction of the trueness and justness of one’s own basic convictions hampers the possibility for a genuine polylogue between cultures. Such a polylogue requires a certain relativisation of one’s own understandings and a willingness to reconsider them. Without this, any intercultural encounter is doomed to fail from the start.

As is commonly known, however, cultural relativism also has its own danger. The absence of rational standards for judging can give way to the rational legitimization of indifference. It can also lead to existential uncertainty because of the discordance between what one “intuitively” and deeply experiences as ethically unacceptable and the discourses on relativism.

Our description of worldviews may create the erroneous impression that worldview is the overall basis determining the outcome of any personal or group decision. This of course is not our intent. For example, the decisions a person takes in life depend on many more factors, such as biological determination, personality, the subgroup one is attached to, past events, envisioned future possibilities or hindrances, and working and living conditions. The fact that we decided to focus on worldview in this book should not imply that it is the most decisive aspect in life. We do believe, however, that the influence of worldviews on the way we comprehend the world, others and ourselves, should not be underestimated or neglected.

We asked the contributors to take as their starting point this difficulty of balancing, on the one hand, the paradoxical discursive situation of maintaining the orienting function of one worldview with, on the other hand, trying to mentally open up readers for a basic comprehension of other worldviews. This can be done in three ways.

First, articles can focus on the orienting function of worldviews, while avoiding involuntarily underpinning absolutist, fundamentalist discourses and discourses on the supposed superiority of any particular worldview. One way to reach this objective is to compare one or more worldviews in a non-reductionist sense. Authors might look at two or more philosophical traditions and reflect deeply on the fundamental



meaningful categories of worldviews, more in particular, the homeomorphic equivalents the different cultures employ in their thinking and constructing the surrounding world. These comparisons might enable the authors to elaborate on the tentatively and socially constructed “universal” status of this essential comprehension. This means that the ontological “trueness” and “justness” are acknowledged as “true” and “just” within an intercultural perspective and not just from a one-dimensional perspective. Various authors succeeded in this regard.

Jameleddine Ben Abdeljelil starts with an interesting historical outlook, subtly bringing to the fore the fact that even if a cultural background has an orientating function – in the sense of a belief system – absolutist views are doomed due to the intertwinement of – in his case – Greek and Arabic culture. Other important contributions to this question were made by Ulrich Libbrecht and Bo Mou, who each in their own way establish a framework for cross-tradition understanding.

The article by Koen De Munter and Nicole Note is relevant here, even if it does not address so much the orientating aspect of worldviews, but rather introduces the concept of cosmopraxis as an inspiring means for people to walk through life. The article by Helen Lauer can also be mentioned here, for she questions the whole concept of worldviews, and more specifically, reacts against the presumed vision we, the editors, would have regarding worldviews. We ascribe her vision to a misinterpretation of our ideas on worldviews, which we described only very briefly. We decided, however, not to elaborate on this since we view this book – and philosophy in general – as a polylogue that is never finished, one in which no one will ever have the last word.

The second topic we introduce does not focus so much on similarities as on the fundamental differences, i.e. those understandings that we are unable to accept from one another as “true” or “just” regarding both ethical matters and matters of knowledge. Do they really exist? If so, is there a way to surmount these ethical and “scientific” questions in a polylogue?

The third subject discusses the fundamental, intricate issues referred to above by reconsidering them and/or by raising further fundamental questions that might be hard to answer.

The remaining articles we received are generally a mix of both questions, hence we address them together here. Many of the contributions centre on the idea of how to get beyond these differences, and the problems that such an exercise brings along. For most of the authors, a promising answer lies in an intercultural polylogue. Yet, these authors likewise believe that the difficulty of actually getting to such a level is rooted in an ethnocentric stance of Western philosophy. Many Western philosophers find it difficult to view the way reality is pre-conceptually perceived and re-enacted in other cultures as a tolerable starting point for knowledge acquisition about the world. Other knowledge systems or philosophical frameworks all too often are still considered mere cosmovisions, or knowledge systems; not “real” philosophy. Here we encounter the borders of what is acceptable as knowledge to Western thought. The authors do not judge this position as such. It indeed is a difficult exercise to actually give up the universal pretensions of a worldview.

Yet, a few philosophers in this book, while understanding thoroughly another person's worldview, nevertheless are disappointed and irritated with it.

Josef Estermann focuses on the inability of Western culture to really understand the other – in his case the Andean other – in an intercultural dialogue, because of its androcentrism and ethnocentrism. Raúl Fornet-Betancourt claims that a historical deconstruction is a precondition for a contribution by the Latin American continent to intercultural philosophy. Ricardo Salas, starting from the case of the Mapuche in Chile and in line with Fornet-Betancourt, argues for a new intercultural model of history that recognises the plurality of historical forms. Dina Picotti prudently emphasises the importance of an intercultural construction of what it is that we can consider rational and intelligible, by focussing on the notions of plurality, diversity and subjectivity. In conclusion, Rik Pinxten draws attention to the possibilities and the opportunities within the Western worldview for a pluralistic epistemological position.

Below follows a short summary of the different contributions, as written by their respective authors.

Jameleddine Ben Abdeljelil (University of Vienna, Austria) focuses on Arabic-Islamic culture. According to him, the Arabic language – as a language of poetry and the Koran and thus of the religious tradition – has had a very deep impact on Arabic-Islamic cultural history in its different branches, and therefore plays a central role. In the beginning, the development of the Arabic language and its consolidation served theological purposes. With the translation of Greek works into Arabic, the language gradually became de-theologised and opened itself up to other areas of knowledge. It expanded etymologically into new horizons that in turn influenced the theological discourses. Theology and religious dogma were developed and constructed with help of Aristotelian logic, philosophical terminology and argumentation methods. This could be seen as a step towards the rationalisation of the Islamic tradition, i.e. God and creation were interpreted rationally. Through this, the human being attained a central position, which was reflected in the different areas of philosophy, literature, theology, mysticism and so on. A hegemonic approach to humanism was not possible in this context, however. Instead, it was subject to antagonistic tendencies, dogmatic worldviews and other value systems.

According to Ulrich Libbrecht (em. Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium; School for Comparative Philosophy, Antwerp, Belgium), our academic philosophical horizon is largely restricted to our own tradition, one that is deeply rooted in Greek thinking. It is strongly influenced by the medieval Christian worldview, somewhat modernised since the Enlightenment and today identified more and more with science, resulting in “the End of Philosophy”. This philosophical tradition identified true Reality (\*Being) with rational reality (Being). Indian philosophy, on the contrary, did not focus on the being of beings, but on the Mystery of \*Being, which was interpreted as Emptiness, Void, i.e. as Non-being.

Consequently, religion lies at the core of its worldview, and Buddhism was the culmination of this philosophical evolution. In China, however, neither Being nor Non-being was prominent; the world was considered to be a continuous process of Becoming, as reflected in Taoism, the most important of the Chinese philosophies.

In order to bring together these very different approaches to \*Being into one comparative framework, he designed a comparative model. The basic obstruction encountered during this design was the fact that we always have a tendency to take our own worldview as criterion. To avoid this, he started from the paradigm-free basic axes of energy and information. From this co-ordinate system, he then derives three different worldviews, based on naturality, rationality and transcendent emotionality. Broadly speaking, these worldviews coincide with Taoism, Greek-Western rationalism and Buddhism respectively. His comparative model reveals the fundamental differences between these three worldviews, but at the same time makes them comparable.

In his paper, Bo Mou (San José State University, USA) presents and explains a meta-philosophical methodological framework of how to look at seemingly competing approaches for the sake of cross-tradition understanding and constructive engagement in our carrying out philosophical inquiries in a global context. For this purpose, he first introduces and explains a number of relevant conceptual and explanatory resources employed in the framework, especially the distinction between the methodological perspective and the methodological guiding principle, and makes some initial methodological points. Second, he examines two paradigm methodological perspectives – Socrates’ being-aspect-concerned perspective and Confucius’ becoming-aspect-concerned perspective – both for the purpose of highlighting their significant methodological visions and for the sake of illustrating relevant points. Third, he suggests six meta-philosophical adequacy conditions for adequate methodological guiding principles, which constitute one core portion of the suggested methodological framework. Fourth, he brings out three paradigm methodological-guiding-principle models, i.e., the Zhuang Zi’s, Yin-Yang, and Hegelian models, for the sake of illustrating the preceding six adequacy conditions and emphasising their respective roles in the enterprise of cross-tradition understanding and constructive engagement.

Koen De Munter (Ghent University, Belgium) en Nicole Note (Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium) explore, from a geocultural and ethnographical vantage point, the critical and hermeneutical possibilities offered by the concept of “cosmopraxis”. Cosmopraxis is presented as a necessary, pluritopical expansion of the concept of cosmovision or worldview. Drawing on long-term fieldwork with contemporary Aymara (a large indigenous group in the Andes), the authors show how several emanations of indigenous progression urge us to pay attention in the first place to the network of practices that makes people move on through timespace, and not so much to the ways they “view” or symbolically represent this moving on through timespace (the latter being an aspect of the former). Cosmopraxis is about how people constantly *enact* ways of coping with the world, according to their different life contexts. In order to approximate cosmopraxis anthropologically, the authors propose working with the heuristic concept of cultural intuitions. For the Aymara, the authors propose the intuition of contextualising to grasp the contextual value of their cosmopraxis.

For Helen Lauer (University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana), worldviews are routinely invoked to explain individual and group behaviour. She claims that on careful

reflection, it is not clear how to attribute worldviews as properties of individuals or of groups in any obvious way that avoids being trivial, circular, or tautological. By reviewing recent appeals to the notion of worldview in the literature that propose explaining ethnic violence and religious conflict, sometimes a diagnosis of “the root cause” of group antagonism appears vacuous, and at other times it seems simply mistaken – because the violence is construed as a conceptual or even as a logical consequence of certain fundamental “basic” beliefs and “core” values shared by members of a particular group with a common worldview embroiled in the violence. One of many theoretical problems that arise with respect to these models is simply how to tell when one belief or core value is “basic” and another is not.

For the author, many theorists and philosophers tacitly assume that worldviews are not only shared or in conflict, but also that they can change. One worldview is supposed to be able to transform, corrode, enlighten, or undermine another. But how, she asks herself, might changes in a worldview or in its effects be recognised in isolation from the contingent circumstances that specify the given environment – as geographically located, historically particular, politically unique, and economically characteristic – of the individuals or groups whose worldview has been depicted as undergoing change? Perhaps worldviews are not intrinsic properties of individual agents or groups after all, but rather emerge as characteristic features of the social field or environment wherein those individuals or groups interact. But again, it is not obvious how worldviews as emergent properties of a social field might be identified independently of the various contingent facts normally focussed upon when interpreting particular beliefs or values. Talking about worldviews as such is misleading when they are treated as a type of cognitive entity or abstract framework having an a priori structure and empirical content with a potential for reform; because such talk shifts our explanatory focus away from the specific conditions, historical episodes, and material circumstances that feature prosaically among the factors that influence individuals, singly or in groups, as they perceive their world, their options, and each other.

Lauer concludes that overall, it is not clear that worldviews display features or properties that could not just as well be attributed directly to their component thought sequences that are held routinely responsible for what individuals do and say on specific occasions. So it seems uncertain whether worldview imagery actually masks more than it illuminates both the subjective and the objective features of our social world.

The contribution of Josef Estermann (Instituto Superior Ecu­m­é­nico Andino de Teología; Catholic Bolivian University ‘San Pablo’; Universidad Mayor de San Andrés; La Paz, Bolivia) is an intercultural analysis of the underlying and invisible framework of the dominant tradition of Western philosophical thinking, through the eyes of the philosophical “other”, in this case Andean philosophy. From this point of view, by means of an exercise in “diatopic hermeneutics”, Occidental mainstream philosophy is characterised by a strong unconscious tendency towards ethnocentrism and androcentrism. Western philosophy has universalised its very cultural paradigm in a supra-cultural way, as if the peculiar European and North

American context and a predominant masculine way of thinking would be the only legitimate and true points of view.

The author shows that for Western philosophy, the problem of the “other” has been a constant threat and a challenge that it never really coped with, because it adopted a strictly intra-cultural approach. The ethnic, generic and philosophical “other” has been ignored, humiliated, marginalised, suppressed or even exterminated. Nevertheless, this very “other” appears in a real and open intercultural dialogue as a mirror showing the blind points of one’s own thinking. In this contribution, this philosophical “mirror” is Andean philosophy as one example of non-Western indigenous thinking.

In the first place, it reveals Western philosophy as highly ethnocentric, which is shown by referring to its underlying dualism, exclusive rationality, lineal conception of time and an anthropocentric conception of ethics. In the second place, Occidental philosophy is revealed also as androcentric, that is, strongly influenced by a male way of conceiving reality. This is shown by referring to the examples of logocentrism, analyticity, classificatory mania, strong dichotomies, reductionism and academicism.

Raúl Fornet-Betancourt (Missionwissenschaftliches Institut Missio e.V.; University of Bremen, and University of Aachen, Germany) made up his article in four sections. The first is an introduction to the subject, explaining the concept of intercultural philosophy that has served the author as a starting point for his reflections in this article. The second discusses the relevance and consequences of the rise of intercultural philosophy for the development of Latin American philosophy towards the end of the twentieth century. One of the many issues dealt with in this section is how the reception of intercultural philosophy has furthered a process of self-transformation in Latin American philosophy. The third section complements this analysis by demonstrating that in its turn intercultural philosophy is stimulated by Latin American philosophy in a way that is decisive for its present evolution and better positioning in today’s world history. Examples are the theory of liberation and the need to chronicle the concept of culture or social criticism as a function of intercultural thinking. The fourth and final section proposes several ways for intercultural philosophy to contribute to the criticism of neo-liberal globalisation and its tendency to level cultural differences in an ill-named ‘global culture’. In this respect, the article also makes a case for the idea that intercultural philosophy should not deny the pursuit of edification or wisdom that ought to characterise any philosophical discourse.

According to Ricardo Salas (Catholic University of Temuco, Chile) there is a link between historicity’s European philosophy, at least as presented in the Diltheyan hermeneutic and in Husserlian phenomenology, and current historical-cultural problems developed in intercultural philosophy. Within this framework of hermeneutic and phenomenological social science and historical philosophy, he wishes to present an intercultural perspective that guarantees the dialogue between human cultures, and especially one that allows progress in philosophical research concerning the diverse ways of accounting for history, one that highlights the central point of cultural experience, *ad intra et ad extra*. This article highlights the

categories of worldviews and life world, which will be re-elaborated for the intercultural theory upon the basis of paradigmatic examples of the view of history found in the Mapuche culture. According to the Mapuche view of history, there are various ways of narrating that have not been considered by European historians, i.e. by those that imposed their rational modes of explaining history. These different levels are what Salas calls 'reflexividad' (reflexibility). A consideration of these various forms of narrating will open unprecedented manners of understanding indigenous history and of gaining insight into the complex relationships between the subordinated indigenous societies and the dominant societies in colonial times. For Salas, this may be taken to its highest level of flexibility, as many authors point out in various papers, especially among the current Mapuche historians who take possession of writing, where "Mapuche history means recovering our past under our own epistemology, and constructing new knowledge from our culture". It is essential to make a new intercultural theoretical model of history, to permit effectively establishing the mutual connection between an oral and a written history. This can be found in the category of historical reflection, as the basis of a socio-historical experience that would articulate and open up to more radical scenarios of intercultural historical criticism.

Dina Picotti (National University of 'General Sarmiento', Buenos Aires, Argentina) takes as starting point the contemporary epistemological and methodological debates around the awareness of a scientific paradigm. The focus in particular is the task of restating attitudes, notions and categories that the human sciences have taken up in the face, among others, of observable facts, the reconfiguration of contemporary societies as influenced by technology and science, and the emergence of different social and cultural identities claiming recognition in the context of the tendency toward homogeneity. Belonging to this task is an explicit statement of the intercultural construction of intelligibility and rationality, despite the problems faced concerning the lack of adequate knowledge and the ambiguity of concrete history. A number of cases of the Latin-American historical experience are introduced.

For Rik Pinxten (Ghent University, Belgium), cognitive universalism and cognitive relativism have constituted an inseparable pair since time immemorial. He claims that this dichotomy is mistaken. In the wake of the naturalisation of epistemology, their status is being undermined. The author argues that recent research breaks away from the simple dichotomist format and seems to offer arguments for a pluralistic epistemological position.

In societal practice, this dichotomy now yields the most inadequate effects: groups in the mixed society we are living in go for the trenches of "cultural purity" and react against so-called multiculturalism in a rather blind way. Intercultural skills and capacities are a way out, Pinxten claims, provided we learn to appreciate the citizen as a learning subject. That is to say, the citizen should not be seen as container to be filled or a *tabula rasa* to be written on by socialisation. That idea aimed at a "once and for all" learning process for citizenship. Rather, the view defended here sees the citizen as a continuous learner, engaged in a lifelong process of adaptation, accommodation and reshaping. In the context of an urbanised and

open society, this means that the citizen of today is involved in a continuous process of meeting and learning to cope with difference because of the religious and cultural diversity of the contexts he lives in. It is at this point that social sciences and the humanities offer a new epistemology, for the first time in the history of theory of knowledge, with their focus on interculturality as the human capability to cope with a culturally mixed environment.

# Ways of the Intellect: Forms of Discourse and Rationalization Processes in the Arabic-Islamic Context\*

Jameleddine Ben Abdeljelil

Prior to Qur'anic revelation the Arabic language played an important role, which must not be reduced to its communicative function, but, rather, has a basic cultural, social, and even political value. The central significance of pre-Islamic poetry and the social fame enjoyed by the old poets are witness to this fact and reinforce the assumption that Arab culture during this era was a culture of the word. Here, the word was not yet consolidated or committed by writing since the oral tradition was strongly present. The art of poetry served as a form of discourse here and rhetoric was a necessary development. The imagery and figurative representation in the language were characteristic in order to express conditions of life, relationships, and even feelings and ideas. Also characteristic of this discourse were the expressive, descriptive and preaching functions and genres that were more dominant than the analytic function and structure. The themes of Arabic poetry in the pre-Islamic era can illuminate the attributes of the discourse and reveal the world-view of the people. In this context, it must be noted that the authenticity of collections of pre-Islamic poetry is controversial among some particularly modern, critical Arab historians of literature. The Egyptian literature scientist, Taha Hussein (1889–1973), approached this theme in his “*fī-aš-šir al-ġāhili*” (‘On Pre-Islamic Poetry’) in 1927<sup>1</sup> in a critical and analytic manner and thus sparked a polarizing polemic. His critique of the alleged authenticity of pre-Islamic poetry and the assumption that it might be of a later date was interpreted as indirect doubt about the authenticity of the Qur'anic corpus, which could relativize religious dogma with regard to the Qur'an.

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\* Translated by Ursula Bsees & Anthony Löwstedt.

<sup>1</sup>This was an important and dramatic episode in the life of Taha Hussein. He claimed that the dating of poetry may have been faked during ancient times due to tribal pride and competition between tribes. In his book, he also hinted indirectly that the holy Qur'an should not be considered as an objective source of history. This aroused the intense anger and hostility of al-Azhar and many other traditionalists. Hussein was prosecuted with the accusation of insulting Islam, but the public prosecutor stated that what Hussein had written was the opinion of an academic researcher and no legal action was taken against him. His book was banned but was later published with slight modifications under the title ‘On Pre-Islamic Literature’, “*fī-al-adab al-ġāhili*”.



It is known that the written collection of pre-Islamic poetry was carried out at the time of the Umayyad Caliphate, i.e. 200 to 300 years after the poetry came into being. Until this time of written consolidation, the poems were orally transmitted. Important in our context are the structural attributes of the values and the world-view that can be gleaned from these collections of poetry.<sup>2</sup> There is a consensus among researchers and historians of literature that pre-Islamic poetry delivers an important insights into various conditions of life in the Arabian peninsula before Islamic revelation. It shows the emotions, the values, and the various experiences that were of importance not so much for the poet as for his tribe. The poet was like a scribe or a documentary archive for his tribe and keeper of a collective memory. Through his poetry he establishes the most important events from his subjective point of view, events that are intrinsically important, but also significant for his tribe: the wars, the victories and the losses, the enthusiasm and the disappointment, the dead and Death, love and hate. The genres of pre-Islamic poetry and their themes, which deliver their stylistic determinations, also reveal the environment of the poets of yore, their social structures and the various dominant views and values. The genres are the following:

1. Description (Arabic: *al-waṣf*): In this realm the pre-Islamic poets were the word-smiths par excellence of their era. They have left us with beautiful, colourful pictures through language and placed everything in their environment under descriptive words. The female body was the chief theme for them, her beauty, hair, eyes, body structure, how she moves and how she does things. They also describe nature and the landscape of the desert, the sand and the tracks, the night and the sky, the moon and the stars, the heat and the wind, the plants and the game and the hunt, war, blood and killing. There is a high level of descriptive precision here.
2. Love Poetry: (Arabic: *al-ğazal*): These can be found as independent poems or, very often, as introductory verses to other poems on different topics. Not only the themes of eroticism and female aesthetics are treated here but also the ethical and moral preferences and evils in the relationship with a woman. The strong presence of the woman in this poetic genre also reveals an ambivalent stance with regard to her status within the tribal structure which is patriarchal and imprinted by man. On the other hand, this genre of poetry also amounts to a perfect example of the taming effect of language and its ability to describe and mediate emotions and feelings. This presence of love and feelings remained a central theme of Arab poetry and influenced it for all time. The latter-day Andalusian writer and scholar, Ibn Hazm (994–1064), in his “*Ṭawq al-ḥamāmah*”<sup>3</sup> counted 60 words in Arabic for love and its numerous states and forms of manifestation.
3. Heroism and Courage (Arabic: *al-ḥamasah*): This poetic genre relates the poet to his tribe and its bond. Here, one may ascertain full identification and fusion

<sup>2</sup> See Jabouri, Yahia (in Arabic): “*aš-šīr al-ğāhili, khaṣāʾisuḥu wa funūnuḥu*” (‘*Pre-Islamic Poetry, Characteristics and Arts*’), 6th edition, Qaar Younis, Libya.

<sup>3</sup> Ibn Hazm Al-Andalusī: “*Ṭawq al-ḥamāmah*”, *The Ring of the Dove*: Ibn Hazm (994–1064), translated by Anthony Arberry, London: Luzac Oriental, 1994.

between the two. The tribe and the family offer a space for survival and the necessary protection for the individual. The praise of familial and tribal bonds and values receive the highest priority here. Among them are the values of hospitality, courage, revenge, honour, and fidelity. The individual must stick to these in order to avoid bringing shame to the family. In this context, the shame complex plays an important role which determines the reputation and the status of individuals and of the entire family. The honour that is lost or impaired can often not be reinstated, and in some instances only through retribution or revenge. In this strongly binding collective system, there were individual poets who rejected their collective predestination and started out on their own. They rebelled against the injustice of the tribal system, aided the poor, and acted like Robin Hoods of the Arabian peninsula. They were known as “*ṣafālik*”, which means ‘losers’ or ‘vagabonds’.

4. Praise and Eulogy (Arabic: *aṭ-ṭanā*): Those praised by poets are mostly persons with power and riches within the social structures. The poets were properly remunerated for their praise. Elegiac or mourning poetry (Arabic: *ar-riṭā*) is a kind of praise of the dead, mostly for the warriors fallen in battles between the various tribes. Both could aspire to a form of personal eternalization, which in other cultural contexts might come in the form of sculpture or painted art.
5. Derisive or invective poems (Arabic: *al-hiḡā*): This kind of poetry was a kind of threatening weapon in the conflicts, because the word can be more fatal or wounding than the sword for the object of derision. For this person, the physical death is easier to handle than the death through reputation. This kind of poetry can target a group of people as well as a single person. The shame complex is at work here again as the feeling of having one’s honour or dignity disgraced, collectively or individually, and of “losing face”, is unbearable for the personality.
6. *Al-muʿallaqāt*: These are the greatest pre-Islamic collections of poetry, which, due to their great value to Arabs, were hung on the Kaaba. In very beautiful linguistic images they bring out the deepest human feelings and descriptively praise the collective values of honour, chivalry, and courage. The Kaaba was the most important and holy place to Arabians even before Islam. Hanging the poems on the Kaaba was not just a sign of the highest honour and respect towards the poet and his poetry; it also signifies the status of the Arabic language and its art at this time, on the eve of Qur’anic revelation.

In all these forms of poetic expression the pre-Islamic poet fuses with the collective subject of his society. His representations of values themselves become carriers of definitions and guidelines for current values, within his tribe as well as outside of it. Not only pre-Islamic poetry, but also much of the latter-day art of poetry in the Arabic-Islamic context kept its function of expressiveness and as a carrier of values and world-views of its time. This function cannot merely be reduced to neutral repetition; it determines and mediates unspoken structures in the collective unconscious through the poetic structure of discourse. The tribe and the collectivist, traditionalist structures of thought are decisive moments and elements that may be revealed here.

The discourse of Qur'anic revelation appears here as at least a transcending of the poetics discourse. Instead of the tribal community as a carrier of definitions it represents the alternative of the faith community, "*ummah*". The loyalty of faith and the ideal bonding replaces the enforced familial and ethnic bonds. In this manner, the Qur'anic Islamic discourse raises a universal ambition for the validity of its norms, which can be directed at all human beings.

In order to arrive at a more precise investigation and analysis, one should differentiate Islam in its Arabic context from other cultural and linguistic contexts in which it can also be found. The circumstance that Arabic is a cultural language and the language of revelation at the same time creates a specific and unique situation in which human thought inevitably gets in touch and often mixes with the Holy and the Sacred.

The consolidation of the Arabic language as a language of writing initially had the purpose of unifying the written religious text, the Qur'an. The goal was to unify the Arabic language in order to determine the Qur'anic text in a unified way.

On the other hand, this consolidation of grammar served to determine interpretive possibilities and to fulfil exegetic tasks. The study of the Arabic language was a branch of religious research. Moreover, checks of purely linguistic correctness inevitably led to recourse to the Qur'anic text. Here, the Qur'an is religious revelation but at the same time a linguistic authority and a standard.<sup>4</sup>

This is therefore the thought of standardization and unity as a maxim and a goal. The main message of the Islamic revelation is in fact the idea of unity and unification, "*tawhid*". The socio-cultural aspect of the strict monotheism postulated by Islam as a metaphysical maxim was the political, z, social, cultural, and linguistic unity of the Arabian peninsula. In order to overcome the tribal structure and tribal bond, or the "*aşabiyah*" as Ibn Khaldoun would later analyze it in the 14th and 15th centuries, the ideological faith-related bond appeared as an alternative.

The idea of unity is an expansive one according to the Qur'anic discourse. It is the idea that humanity was originally a unity<sup>5</sup> and always will be, because

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<sup>4</sup> Al-Afgani, Said: "*al-mūğaz fi qawā'id al-luğah al-ʿarabiyah*" ('Abbreviation of the Rules of the Arabic Language'), Beirut, 1970: 5f.

Al-Gazali, Abu Hamid: "*Iḥiyā' ʿulum ad-din*" ('Restoration of the Religious Sciences'), Vol. 1, Beirut, 2005: 373–389.

<sup>5</sup> The Qura'nic verses, quoted here, are based on the following translations:

- The Meaning of The Holy Qur'an by Abdullah Yusuf Ali:  
<http://www.wright-house.com/religions/islam/Quran.html>
- The English translation of the Qur'an by Dr. Rashad Khalifa: <http://www.quran-islam.org/93.html>
- Sure 10:19 (The people used to be one community, then they disputed. If it were not for a predetermined word from your Lord, they would have been judged immediately regarding their disputes)
- Sure 11:118 (Had your Lord willed, all the people would have been one community. But they will always dispute)
- Sure 42:8 (Had GOD willed, He could have made them one community. But He redeems into His mercy whomever He wills. As for the transgressors, they have no master, nor a helper)
- Sure 5:48 (... Had GOD willed, He could have made you one congregation. But He thus puts you to the test through the revelations He has given each of you. You shall compete in righteousness. To GOD is your final destiny – all of you – then He will inform you of everything you had disputed)

human beings are after all only created by God and equal.<sup>6</sup> The differences between humans are attributed to the differing natures of humans. The strategically desirable goal as the prophesied end result is the re-unification of humans in the community of believers. The central idea of the Qur'anic discourse, therefore, is that of the unity in its various aspects. Here the Qur'anic conception of unity containing heterogeneity and diversity must be emphasized. Differences and divergence between humans should not cut bonds and should not prevent them from getting to know one another.<sup>7</sup>

## The Theological Discourse

The development of the religious-philosophical discourses, schools and tendencies should be seen in the context of the total process of consolidation and canonization, because the religious leap was undertaken from revelation and text to theology. Out of this necessity the Arabic language was also consolidated, and the Arabic grammar appeared along with its associated scientific branches. It is important in this context to point out the uniform written fixation of tradition and the whole of cultural and religious life. This began with the uniform written fixation of the Qur'anic text and later with the written collections of the prophetic traditions of the "*hadith*" and the "*sunnah*". This important development from an orally orientated cultural tradition to a culture of writing determined and formed the encounter with other cultures, and in particular it enabled an exchange and reception of other cultural traditions through translation. The canonization of language and religion led to the genesis of grammar and of theology. Through methodological differences this canonization also led to the appearance of different schools and tendencies. This is the case especially in theology with its two realms: jurisprudence, "*fiqh*", and the articles of faith, "*usūl addin*". In Islamic terminology, the science that deals with the articles of faith is called "*ilm al-kalām*" or "*kalam*".

As opposed to the previously mentioned attributes of the Qur'anic discourse and its uniform general character, the theological discourse is a discourse of difference and of details. The beginnings of the theological jurisprudential discourse during the 8th century reflected the needs and the conditions of a new, urbanized, and settled Islamic community and accompanied the foundation and the development of new cities which often had a cosmopolitan character, e.g. Damascus, Baghdad, or Cordoba. The initial phase of this discourse must be seen as a normative consolidation

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<sup>6</sup>Sure 6:98 (It is He Who created you from one person: here is a place of sojourn and a place of departure: We detail Our signs for people who understand)

– Sure 7:189 (It is He Who created you from a single person, and made his mate of like nature, in order that he might dwell with her (in love)).

<sup>7</sup>Sure 49:13 (O people, we created you from the same male and female, and rendered you distinct peoples and tribes, that you may recognize one another. The best among you in the sight of GOD is the most righteous. GOD is Omniscient, Cognizant)

concerning Arabic language, Islamic jurisprudence, and the dogmatic fixation of religious principles. Here comes a first transcendence of the text through methodologically argued interpretation, since the various text sources of the prophetic tradition, “*sunnah*” and “*hadith*”, in addition to the Qur’anic text and the various ways of reading, enabled differing juristic deductions and judgements. The range of interpretation is regulated here as well, since it had been defined by a framework of jurisprudential rules. A certain amount of coherence can be ascertained here, between, on the one hand, the authority of tradition and, on the other hand, the intellectual abilities of people, because the development of Islamic jurisprudence is a manifestation of normative and juristic canonization of the prophetic revelation and world-view, e.g. argument by analogy (*al-qiās*) was, for the juridical regulations (“*usūl al-fiqh*”) and for any juridical procedure, an essential part of the juridical tools and sources, apart from the Qur’an, “*hadith*” and concordance, “*iğma*”. These make up the indispensable base for the architecture of Islamic law (Sharia) and determine the moral actions of the pious Muslim; moreover, they mark his self-perception, that is why they must be explained more thoroughly:

- (a) The first source of the legal system of the Sharia is the Qur’an and its sciences, such as the exegesis and interpretation of the Qur’anic text. Contained herein are those cases in which one verse complements and replaces another, this is called “*an-nāsikh-wa-al-mansūkh*”, and the special occasions for the revelation of certain verses, “*asbāb an-nuzūl*” (reasons or causes of the revelation), as well as the various branches of linguistics. Here the hermeneutics of the Qur’anic text is a separate branch of science, as well as a collection of instruments.
- (b) The Sunnah is the second source of Islamic jurisprudence and therefore everything originating from the prophet Muhammad is denoted thus. It encompasses his speech, his actions and his intentional silence.<sup>8</sup>

Concerning possible functions and roles of the Sunnah in the juristic procedure, the following remarks must be made:

- The Sunnah decides in the case of ambiguous statements in the Qur’an, e.g. the commandment of *zakāt* (obligatory tax) is presented in a general way for every form of goods. The Sunnah limited this general meaning and reserved zakat only for certain goods.
- The Sunnah explains the Qur’an, or its general statements, in detail, e.g. the right way to pray (*ṣalāt*), which were only established by means of the Sunnah.
- General commands in the Qur’an can be limited by means of the Sunnah.
- Branch questions can be attributed through the Sunnah to basic commands of the Qur’an.

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<sup>8</sup>“Intentional silence” denotes a situation, in which something happens in presence of the prophet – therefore with his knowledge – and he does not comment negatively on it. For the Islamic jurists (*fuqahā*, *‘ulamā*), the Sunnah (also called the hadith) is the second legal source after the Qur’an and possesses a sacralized character.

– The Sunnah and its associated science, “*ilm al-ḥadīth*,” can be divided into two main parts:

The first one deals with the statement’s text (*matn*) in form and meaning, the second one deals with the names of the men (*sanad*) who handed down the text (*matn*). Here one researches the credibility and character of these companions and accordingly the rightness and authenticity of the text is layered and fixed. Only thereafter can the decision be made, in how far this special tradition can be useful, especially in legal procedures.

(c) Concordance (*al-iğma*) is regarded as the third legal source and has two meanings:

- Concordance and congruence in a decision.
- The unshakeable will to act.

In Islamic terminology, “*al-iğma*” means concordance concerning a judgement after the prophet’s death, meaning that it is legitimate as can be deduced from the Qur’an and the Sunnah.

Jurisprudence knows various forms of concordance:

- Concordance of the prophet’s companions (*iğma<sup>c</sup> aṣ-ṣaḥḥābah*).
- Concordance of the ummah (*iğma<sup>c</sup> al-ummah*), meaning the Islamic community’s concordance in its entirety, although it is a matter of discussion if this concordance can actually be checked or verified.
- Concordance of the jurists (*iğma<sup>c</sup> al-ulamā*).
- Concordance of the prophet’s house (*iğma<sup>c</sup> ʿāl al-bayt*).
- Concordance of the carriers of conclusions and decisions (*iğma<sup>c</sup> ahl al-ḥall wal-ʿaqd*).

This concordance as a third legal source is of great importance, although not all scholars or schools actually accept it. Various opinions exist regarding the way of valid concordance.

(d) Argument by analogy (*al-qiyās*) is regarded as a fourth legal source and method.

In Islamic theological terminology, “*al-qiyās*” was defined as follows: It is the attachment of a legal judgement from one case to another, whose judgement exists under the condition that both of them are connected by the same legal proof (*ʿillah*). In the Qur’an, as well as in the Sunnah, commandments can be found which contain this proof (*ʿillah*); so it has been mentioned (revealed) why this commandment was imposed. In this case, the commandment’s existence depends on its proof; this means that if the proof exists, the commandment is valid, if the proof vanishes, the validity of the related commandment also vanishes. So, should there be a situation about which neither the Qur’an nor the Sunnah has spoken explicitly, but whose proof shows similarities or follows the same purpose as another matter mentioned in the Revelation, the mentioned matter’s commandment will be attached to the one that is not mentioned. Legal science calls this procedure “*al-qiyās*.”

The legal judgement achieved by “*al-qiyās*” can be helped by the proof (*‘illah*), traced back directly to the revealed verse or Sunnah text, and so it is existent therein. If the Qur’anic verse contains the proof, the whole verse functions as proof for “*al-qiyās*”, should it be found in *Hadith* or *iğma‘* (concordance), then this *Hadith* or *iğma‘* (concordance) is the proof for the attained conclusion, but “*al-qiyās*” should never be based on another “*qiyās*”.

In addition to this the remark must be made, that this argument by analogy is a logical demonstration and takes place on the base of human logic. “*Al-qiyās*” as a methodological tool in the architecture of Islamic law is indispensable as a guarantee for a continuous actualization of the jurisprudential entirety and its vastness.

It is important to mention that argument by analogy is a logical tool and thus part of logic, which is itself a part of philosophy. Here we see a subtle line-crossing between philosophy and *Sharia*, which is not unproblematic and which had important consequences in the history of Islamic thought.

With regard to its existential right and its claim to legitimacy, the theological discourse incessantly recurs to the authority of the religious tradition, as well as to a tautological, pragmatic, self-causing necessity: that the ever-changing conditions of life demand a normative guiding jurisdiction to fill the emerging hole. The categories of prohibition and commandment present characteristics and elements of determination for this discourse. They form its two extremes and give it a normative function. The theological-jurisprudential discourse contains two phases and moments, first there are the regulations, “*usūl al-fiqh*”, or general regulations, principles and mechanisms according to which a deduction procedure can lead to a law (prohibition or commandment), second there is the entirety of all laws and rules, which encompass individual and communal areas of life. Here, seen from the point of view of Islamic science, “*usūl al-fiqh*” is the “epistemology” of “practical Islamic reason”.

In the middle of the 8th century, another discourse in this Islamic context was developed, with certain overlaps regarding this particular “Islamic reason.” It deals mainly with metaphysical questions and is called “*ilm al-Kalām*” in the terminology of the history of Islamic thought. This phrase could be translated as ‘speculative theology’. To conserve strict monotheism and the principles of faith against the antagonists’ attacks were the Mutakallimuns’ main aims. The schools of Kalam mirror, on the one hand, polemic and apologetic debates and their dynamics in the Islamic context, they also present confessional schools and tendencies of their times. On the other hand, they shed light on the always tense relationship between metaphysics and historicity, i.e. between religion and politics, and also tell us about the secret, unspoken relations between theology, politics and society. Actually, Kalam is a theoretical, metaphysical reflection of the socio-political connections of its historical conditions.

The appearance of Kalam can be traced back to early schisms within the newly-born Islamic community after the prophet’s death and stands together with the end (suspension!) of revelation as a means to knowledge, explanation and decision, because after the prophet, who decided in each case of ardent debate, had died, the authority of his decisive words was moved from the text to its reading, i.e. from

revelation to interpretation. This movement of authority is characteristic for the genesis and development of the discourse of Kalam in its diverse forms. Interpretation was working independently for the first time and presented the initial moment for later theological discourses. The first issue of debate for the newly-born Islamic community was, immediately after the prophet Mohammed's death in the year of 10 H./A.D. 632, the question of *Imamah*, i.e. of succession, here we find first connections concerning arguments serving the different antagonistic positions between political and religious leadership. Later works, such as "*al-jmamah wa-as-siasah*" (leadership and politics) by Ibn Qutayba, bear witness to the consequently arising concepts and opinions. Two polarised basic positions appeared; one recurred to the tradition of the text and claimed, by demonstration through interpretation and explanation of some parts of the Qur'an, religious and political "*Imamah*" for Ali, the prophet's cousin and the husband of his daughter, Fatima, and saw him as the legitimate successor. Thus the concept of "*Imamah*" (political and religious leadership) presents itself as the prophets' necessary continuity. This bond between the principles of prophesy and "*Imamah*" made a certain amount of "theologization" of the discussion and of its demonstrations inevitable.

The other position comes from pragmatic, social connections but also searched for texts and the ways in which they could be interpreted for demonstration and justification. So this is a moment, in which the recourse to the text was insufficient, since, for the first time, different ways of reading the sacred text emerged and were being applied against the antagonist. The argumentation for one way of reading against another required additional forms of argumentation, which attained a different kind of quality in later decades and centuries.

Another event, which occurred immediately after the prophet's death and set off strong dynamics inside the young Islamic community, is the so-called 'apostasy wars', "*riddah*" (632–634). This is another moment in which politics and religion could not be separated, but it did not have grave consequences concerning theological or theoretical debates in the history of Islamic thought and remained somewhat repressed within historical memory. It is regarded as a kind of "meta-history" and is not really being dealt with.

Following the reception of these two moments in more intense and dramatic ways two decades later, rebellious Muslims who acted against his enjoying privileges and nepotism killed the third Caliph Uthman (successor of the prophet). Ali was elected caliph after Uthman and thus assumed leadership over the Islamic community. He moved Islam's capital from Medina (on the Arabian Peninsula) to Iraq and founded Kufa as the new capital, but his leadership's legitimacy came under increasing doubt, and so his rivals armed themselves physically and by means of argumentation against him and his followers. They reproached him with not being able to exercise justice against those who murdered caliph Uthman. In their argumentation, Ali was an accomplice to the murder. For his followers, Ali represented the only legitimate "*Imām*" and "*amīr al-mu'minīn*" (the believers' leader), so for them, he was not only caliph and the prophet's successor but another quality in the conception of leadership was added. Some took even more extreme, almost 'sacralizing' positions and saw him as the infallible, righteous Imam. The concept of



infallibility is connected with the “*Imāmah*” as a conceptual continuity of prophesy. Amongst Ali’s followers were also those who regarded Uthman as an illegitimate caliph, since he had used his power for his own advantage and to the detriment of the Ummah. Therefore they saw his death as a just punishment and as something demanded by the Islamic community. These two groups in Ali’s camp made up the appearance of the two large sects of Islam, the *Shi’a* and the *Kharijites*.

In reality, these polarized positions form the spectrum for the varieties of emergence and ways of formation for a mosaic of sects, as well as for theological developments.

The bloody wars between former prophet’s companions and later enemies in this early phase of foundation and consolidation gave rise to dynamics and activities attempting to describe these events by dealing with them by means of argumentation. These dynamics arose with the Umayyad dynasty (A.D. 661–749) and then with the Abbasid dynasty (A.D. 750–1258). Topics such as divine justice, free will and divine predestination, the sinner’s fate in the hereafter, reward and punishment, God’s attributes and nature etc. represented the basis of discussion for the theological debates.

This Islamic discourse must be placed in its context in the history of Islamic thought and this is necessary in order to show, on the one hand, its offensive/defensive, i.e. its apologetic, polemic and exclusive character; on the other hand, this approach can shed light on background ideas or on the ideological reservoir of inspiration for certain recent phenomena of the “theologized” political and cultural discourses in an Islamic context, because theological or Kalam discourses always played a certain political and socio-cultural role in the course of Islamic history. The Islamist discourse during the 20th century and in our times could be seen from this angle and comprehended as renaissance of the theological discourse of politics in Islam during the Middle Ages.

### ***Rationalistic Beginnings and Philosophical Discourses***

An increasing desire for theoretical and philosophical knowledge developed in a context of theological and religious-philosophical disputations. The first philosophical treatises in an Islamic environment can be found in the 8th century. At first they manifested themselves as translated and commented Greek works. The first translators and commentators of Greek scientific and philosophical texts into Arabic were mainly Syriac-speaking Christian scholars, usually Nestorians and Jacobites. Translations were also made by scholars from the city of Haran who belonged to the Sabaic sect. According to the doxographer, Ibn al-Nadim (died 995), some of the translations were made during the Umayyad era; but the mainstream translation movement belongs to the Abbasid era.

It began sporadically in the second half of the 8th century, then gathered steam and was well-organized and led by expert scholars during the 9th and 10th centuries, when the movement flourished. These scholars published earlier translations and

revised them. They commented on Greek works and sometimes themselves authored scientific and philosophical treatises. They were either directly or through their writings the teachers of the Islamic philosophers. Their achievement was remarkable, not only because of the great number of books that treated a wide spectrum of topics and were translated in a relatively short time span, but also because of the high scientific standard which they worked hard to uphold. One result of their effort was that Arabic, the language of the Qur'an, of the various religious sciences, of poetry and lyricism, and of disciplines such as grammar, philology, and history, would now also become the language of natural science and philosophy. This is unambiguously a process of 'de-theologization' and de-sacralization of the language of divine revelation.

The Abbasid caliphs, and sometimes their viziers or the influential families that belonged to their courts, deserve recognition for their sponsorship of this movement. The Abbasid caliph, Al-Maamun, is known in the Islamic history of ideas for his support of mu'tazilite theology as well as for the establishment of the house of wisdom, "*Bayt al-Hikmah*", a centre for scientific activity and the translation of Greek natural scientific and philosophical works. These two interests are reflected in a story that was told by Ibn al-Nadim. One of the reasons for the spread of philosophical books, according to Ibn al-Nadim in his "*Fihrist*", that the caliph al-Maamun met Aristotle in a dream, and held the following conversation with him:

I said: O Wise Man, may I ask a question? He said: Ask! I said: What is Good? He answered: That which Reason considers good. What comes next? I asked. He answered: That which religious law considers good. I said: What next? He said: That which is good in the opinion of simple folks. I then asked: What comes next? He answered: After that comes nothing.

The interesting thing about this conversation is that it represents an essentially Mu'tazilite ethical perspective in a way that is understandable to anyone. More precisely, it recounts the Mu'tazilite theory of moral actions, a theory that is intimately connected with one of its main principles, namely the one of divine justice (*al-'adl*). With the exception of the ritual and reverent actions that are prescribed by religious law, according to this theory, 'goodness', "*al-ḥusn*", and 'badness', "*al-qubḥ*", are objective moral qualities of actions. Reason perceives these moral qualities as such, independently of revelation. Religious law prescribes or prohibits these actions, because they are first and foremost good or bad by themselves. An action is not simply good because religious law prescribes it, but rather because it is intrinsically good.

Another version of this story, also recounted by Ibn al-Nadim, again emphasizes that Aristotle holds a Mu'tazilite position. Furthermore, it brings up the basic Mu'tazilite principle of the unity of God (*al-tawhid*). In this second version, al-Maamun asks Aristotle additional questions, and in his reply, the Philosopher implores the caliph to cling to the teaching of divine unity. Ibn al-Nadim then declares: "This dream was one of the decisive reasons behind the creation of philosophical books." He continues by reporting that al-Maamun sent scholars to Byzantium to seek out philosophical and natural scientific books and ordered such books back to be translated.

Whether the tale of al-Maamun's dream is true or fiction, it is not without symbolic importance. It shows, firstly, that a certain, alternating development took place in the Islamic context, which meant heterogeneity with regard to arguments and their legitimacy. Not only Revelation and not only the Prophet Muhammad guarantee the correctness and the convincing power of an argument; so do Reason and Aristotle. Secondly, the story shows that a philosophical attitude and a practical interest were very likely motives behind al-Maamun's and his successors' sponsorship of translating Greek oeuvres into Arabic. The oldest translations were mainly of works in the fields of medicine, astronomy, and astrology. Medicine and astrology, however, were not yet separate from philosophy. The study of medicine in the Nestorian schools included the study of logic. Astronomy and cosmology were also intimately connected with each other. An additional motive was probably to outdo Byzantium, and to make the Islamic realm the true heir of Hellenic wisdom. One should not exclude the additional motivation, that some sponsors were themselves interested in science and philosophy for their own sake, as this was an era of intellectual strife and curiosity.

The period of translations was to a large extent determined by two important traditions in Greek culture: One was the medical and philosophical school of Alexandria, which moved to Antioch at the beginning of the 8th century, to Harran in the middle of the 9th century, and from there to Baghdad. The other tradition was the Nestorian Academy of Gundisapur in Persia, which is known for its school of medicine and its hospital.

The translated philosophical oeuvres were mainly in the tradition of Platonic, Aristotelian, and Neo-Platonic thought. Aside from his medical work Galen's philosophical treatises were very influential, especially because they became a major source of knowledge of Plato for Muslims during the Middle Ages. No less important was the translation of a collection of Greek commentary – mainly on Aristotle – by men such as Themistius and Alexander of Aphrodisias.

Plato's influence on Islamic philosophy was greatest in the field of political philosophy, although his cosmology also made an impression on some philosophers. Ibn al-Nadim mentions that many of Plato's works were translated, among them *The Republic*, *The Laws*, *Parmenides*, and even *The Letters*.

Regarding Aristotle, things were somewhat different. Almost the entire body of Aristotle's works were translated; some of them were translated and/or revised several times over.

Neo-Platonic thought was known mainly, but not only, through two books. One is the so-called *Theology of Aristotle*, which was considered a *Commentary on Aristotle* by Porphyrius. The second work, which was less influential but still very important, was the book which is known in Arabic as "*fī mahḍ al-ḥayr*", 'On Pure Goodness', and in its Latin translation from Arabic as *Liber de Causis*. It is almost certainly a translation of Proclus' *Elements of Theology*.

The translation movement was thus, as outlined, very strongly influential upon the philosophical tradition in the Islamic context, but it also has an unmistakable influence on the Arabic language and its developments in different fields, and last but not least on intellectual life and intellectual conflicts and discussions between the various protagonists.

The promotion of this innovative translation movement took place at the “*Bayt al-Hikmah*” (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad, and it became a symbol for the era of intellectual flourishing. In the house, free-spirited events were held, such as the following, described by one of the participants: “At the first meeting at which I participated, I found not only Muslims of all persuasions, but also non-believers, Persians belonging to Zoroaster’s teachings, materialists, atheists, Jews, and Christians, in short, all kinds of individuals. All of these sects were represented by an educated leader in the hall, all rose out of respect, and nobody sat down before this leader did. The hall was soon filled with people; when it was full, a man spoke the following words: ‘We are united here in order to reason. You all know the conditions. You Muslims will not quote any proof from your book nor lean on the authority of your Prophet; because we will believe neither this nor that. Everybody must limit himself to arguments that are rational’.”<sup>9</sup>

This report underlines the spiritual and socio-cultural conditions that prepared a fruitful ground for philosophizing and for the appearance of a philosophical discourse.

Doxographically, one may therefore perceive Islamic philosophy as a continuation of Greek philosophy, but also as a continuation of the quest for truth and wisdom that originated in ancient Greece. “The goal of philosophy” – this is how Avicenna put it by simply repeating al-Kindi – “is to know the true nature of all things to the extent that Man is able to know them”.<sup>10</sup> In this statement, the ideal is Greek, and the language Aristotelian.

As the great number of their commentaries shows, the Islamic philosophers considered themselves guardians of the truths at which the old philosophers (*al-qudamā*) had arrived. At the same time, they admitted that reaching philosophical truth is difficult, and that common efforts by present and past generations are required. And that is why they did not merely repeat what their Greek teachers had said. They criticized and checked, refined and elaborated, compared and selected, investigated and made new distinctions. The Islamic philosophers redesigned concepts by developing new metaphysical syntheses, which were influenced by the insights and visions of their various creators. Thus they exerted themselves to harmonize a religiously revealed Qur’anic understanding of God and his Creation with a philosophical perspective that originated with Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus. Due to this, many of them arrived at a theory of exegesis which essentially belonged to a Platonic political theory, which they adapted to their needs and developed further.

In what manner did these philosophers attempt to harmonize a philosophical view of God and the world with the religious scripture, the Qur’an? There are different attempts. The first Islamic philosopher, al-Kindi (d. around 866), for example,

<sup>9</sup>Quoted in Alfred von Kremer: *Geschichte der herrschenden Ideen des Islam*. Third reprint – Hildesheim [among others]: Olms, 1984: 241–242.

<sup>10</sup>On Islamic philosophy, see, among others, Corbin, Henry: *Histoire de la philosophie islamique*, Paris: Gallimard, 1986; Rudolph, Ulrich: *Islamische Philosophie*, München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2004; Leaman, Oliver: *An Introduction to Classical Islamic Philosophy*, 2nd edition, Cambridge [among others]: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

argued at length to prove the creation of the world *ex nihilo*, as most Muslims believed, along with the teaching of the Qur'an. Aside from this, he defended the teaching of the resurrection of the body, and, according to a medieval report, he argued that God knew all individual things in their specificity. At least in these instances, al-Kindi delivers arguments that corresponded to the Qur'an. That means, he did not find it necessary to reinterpret the Qur'an in order to make it fit his philosophy. With the two greatest neo-Platonic successors to al-Kindi, however, with al-Farabi (d. 950) and Avicenna (ibn Sina) (d. 1037) the approach appears to have been entirely different.

Al-Farabi and Avicenna promoted the Aristotelian theory of the world's eternal existence and opposed the teaching of the resurrection of the body. Avicenna, moreover, was known for his assertion that God only knows individual things "in a general way". In case the revealed word was taken literally, religious teachings contradicted these theories. These philosophers replied that the language of Revelation was intentionally figurative in order to be understood by the non-philosophical majority of the population. Correctly interpreted, and only the philosopher can interpret thus, Revelation corresponds perfectly to philosophical truth. In other words: for these philosophers, Revelation must adapt to philosophy, not vice versa. This solution is unacceptable to their theological arch-critic, the Asharite, al-Gazali (d. 1111). In his critique of their philosophy, in his "*Tahāfut al-falāsifa*" (Destructio philosophorum – The Incoherence of the Philosophers), he attacked the theory of the eternal world as well as the theory that God knows individual things "in a general way" and the theory of the immortal soul that denies the resurrection of the body, and he says these theories are opposed to the Qur'an. He accused the protagonists of these theories of being non-believers, of being non-Muslims, *kufir*.

Al-Gazali's criticism of Islamic philosophy represents a turning-point in its history. On the one hand, his critique revealed that the conflict between the Islamic theologians and philosophers such as al-Farabi and Avicenna was about the nature of divinity. Al-Gazali did not question the sincerity of these philosophers when they confirmed their faith in the One God and in the prophecy of Mohammad. Rather, he questioned their concept of the single God and the prophecy. Before he judged these philosophers as non-believers, secondly, al-Gazali argued from rational premises that they had proven none of their metaphysical theories, as opposed to their claims. In case these theories had been proven and had been shown to be necessarily true, he would have accepted them. That is how his argument ran. Although the motivation behind his attack against the philosophers was theological, his arguments were therefore philosophical. In Al-Gazali's *Tahafut* there is indeed a wealth of ideas and exact arguments that are of profound philosophical interest, and that played influential roles in the development of Islamic philosophy and theology and of medieval thought in general.

One major effect of Al-Gazali's *Tahafut* was the counter-arguments that he provoked in the Islamic West (Andalusia and Maghreb). The philosophers, Avempace (ibn Bāḡḡah) (d. 1138) and Ibn Tufayl (d. 1185) reacted with mild stabs against the attacker. The most far-reaching rebuttal, however, came from the medieval

Aristotelian par excellence, Averroes (Ibn Rushd) (d. 1198), who answered Al-Gazali on the judicial as well as the philosophical level. The judicial defence, “*faṣl al-maqāl*” (The Decisive Tract), a short treatise, dealt mainly with Al-Gazali’s accusation that al-Farabi and Ibn Sina were non-believers. The detailed philosophical rebuttal was his “*Tahāfut al-tahāfut*” (Destructio destructionis – The Incoherence of the Incoherence). In it he quotes almost the entire *Tahāfut* of al-Gazali, by critically commenting section by section. The whole philosophical oeuvre of Averroes reminds us of this and proves that Al-Gazali’s reproach of the Peripatetic did not mean the end of philosophical activity in the Islamic context.

In Andalusia and around the Maghreb other philosophers followed Averroes, namely Ibn Sab’in (d. 1270) and the historian and philosopher, Ibn Khaldun of Tunis (d. 1406). The philosophical mystic, Ibn Arabi (d. 1240), must also be mentioned. He greatly influenced later religious and philosophical thought. This influence was especially great on the philosophers of the Persian ischraqi school (Enlightenment), whose philosophical foundation derived from Avicenna, yet revised and reformulated Avicenna’s concepts to construct new metaphysical systems. The first great member of this school, al-Sahrawardi (d. 1191), in his thinking, related back to Persia’s ancient religions. After him came a number of philosophers, including personalities such as Mulla Sadra (d. 1640) and his commentator in the 19th century, Sabzawari (d. 1866).

The philosophical tradition and philosophizing in the Islamic context went through various phases and transformations and are characterized by special continuities and upheavals. The diverse forms of philosophical discourse in the Islamic context aspire on the one hand towards intellectual and rationalistic emancipation, on the other hand they stay within an Aristotelian and Platonic horizon of concepts. The Aristotelian formal logic with its categories and causes, the Platonic theories of forms and of souls and the concepts of substance, accidents, and movement mark philosophical thought throughout its various issues and themes. Overcoming this philosophical spectrum persist in fact still impossible. That is how the failure of a specific philosophical Enlightenment manifests itself in the Arabic-Islamic context.

### *The Uneasiness of the Modernity*

The Westernized discourse of Enlightenment and modernity thus remains a challenging concern, which presents itself mainly on the philosophical discourse-creating level. The modern Arabic-Islamic contextual condition of philosophical questioning is characterized by a certain polarization. On the one hand, through Western modernity and its challenges due to its technical and socio-political achievements but also through its philosophical systems and constellations of world-views offering ethical values and epistemological concepts as alternatives. On the other hand a faithful constellation of world-views, aware of tradition, which defends itself against and resists any form of hegemonic dangers of assimilation. The immediate

historic confrontation with Western modernity, especially during the first half of the 20th century, provoked emancipatory resistance in the Arab context. This remains, however, within a self-conditioned Manichean system, in an erected dualism of “own tradition” on the one hand, and “Western modernity” on the other.

Within these tense relationships, however a tendency appeared in the Arab context around the turn of the century which constantly seeks “harmonization” to solve the new problems and conflicts in a conciliatory manner, in order to avoid an inevitable break. The goal for these thinkers was the foundation of an own “Renaissance”, an authentic Arab-Islamic Enlightenment, which would appropriate the achievements of Western modernity and copy them but still remain connected to its own tradition. The main representatives of this school, who saw themselves as thought reformers, were Jamaladdin Al-Afghani (1838/39–1897), Mohammad Abduh (1849–1905) und Abdurrahman Al-Kawakibi (1849–1902). It is important to note that this tendency of “harmonization” (*tawfiqiyah*) is to be seen in a self-made continuity within the Arab classical philosophical tradition.<sup>11</sup>

One of the five principles of the Mutazilites, already, was the principle of the “Sinner’s Positioning in the Middle” (*manzilah mā-bayn almanzilatayn*), and Al-Farabi made the attempt to harmonize Plato and Aristotle. Even Ibn Rushd (Averroes) tried patiently to prove that there is in reality no contradiction between philosophy and religion, between “*Hikma*” and “*Sharia*”, and there must not be any. The launching point of this philosophical attitude is the idea that the truth can only be one and it must be of a substantial nature. Therefore the conflicts between truths are irrelevant and removable. Plurality cannot be compatible with these mechanisms of thought. Thus, “harmonization” in this context remains a form of repression of an unspoken and unadmitted uneasiness, out of which a kind of double-philosophy developed. A philosophy which assumes both materialism and idealism and tries to unite them. The methodological and epistemological obstacles are impossible to overcome despite the naïve optimism of this tendency. This state of uneasiness and schizophrenia of thought more or less characterized, with a few exceptions, the philosophical attempts within the Arab context in the course of the 20th century. Due to this tendency the possibility of a clear solution was constantly postponed and no Hegelian dialectic was ever achieved. A possible, developing synthesis between the opposites was always strangled before it could grow. The socio-political forms of manifestation of this state were correspondingly fruitless and stagnant even though a repressed, inner, dramatic dynamic characterized the discourse.

In this context, it can hardly be difficult to guess the resulting question which gained a central presence in Arab philosophical discourse: the question of identity. An identity which questions itself anew and in a differentiated manner and which is not self-evidently construable. This question poses itself with regard to historical elements, whether they be of Arab, Islamic, or pre-Islamic nature, but also with

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<sup>11</sup> Al-Amin, Ahmad: The Crisis of Arab Philosophy between Harmonization and Modernity (in Arabic), in “Philosophy in Arab Countries in 100 Years”, 12th Philosophical Symposium, organized by the Egyptian Philosophical Society in Cairo, Beirut: CAUS, 2000: 43ff.

regard to Western modernity with its achievements and hegemonic claims. This question has occupied Arab thought during the last two centuries. The theoretical dealings with this problem led to a far from unproblematic reception of the own identity, relating to the Occidental tradition. The history of philosophy was received and appropriated in its Occidental version, and thus also the Arab-Islamic history of philosophy. Numerous Arab philosophers and their philosophical treatises were perceived, investigated, and adapted for the first time by European experts in the field or with their assistance. Their work has become an important constituent part of the reconstruction of the Arabs' and Muslims' own philosophical-historical consciousness. In order to write a philosophical investigation on one of the themes of Arab-Islamic philosophy in the Middle Ages, it is necessary to rely on a plethora of work written or edited by Western scholars. A passive reception here becomes an obstacle to the formation of philosophical and cultural identity, and even contradicts it. Because Criticism and self-criticism are a prerequisite to any philosophical enterprise. A slavish pursuit, which characterizes a passive reception, can only produce repetition, and no philosophical identity can develop out of this. Here on the socio-cultural level, the dominant, inadequate, self-critical climate in Arab society is obvious, which also noticeably influences intellectual and philosophical creativity. Perhaps because of this, extremely specialized academic themes of research offer an escape for many academics at Arab universities. These themes commonly restrict themselves to commentary and explanation of Western philosophers. Some Arab intellectuals and academic philosophers self-critically believe that the accusation, aimed at modern Arab philosophy, that it is merely imitation, either within a Francophone tradition in the Maghreb countries or within an Anglo-Saxon tradition in the Mashreq countries, could be partly justified.<sup>12</sup> This is also argued thus, that the Arab world now finds itself in an historical phase, in which philosophy must be imported again. With this transport of modern philosophy, its structures and mechanisms of thought, philosophy could again find a home in Arab culture, and become influential and develop anew.

In summary, philosophy, in its Arab context in the 20th century, has itself become a theme for philosophy. Such a theme would, however, also include questions such as those about identity, about modern Enlightenment, and complex, related sub-questions. It is obvious that these questions are different from those of classical Arab philosophy. At least this is a sign of life of a philosophical resurrection, which must take on newer forms than the traditional ones. This unmistakable uneasiness, this plethora of unanswered questions and their resultant increasing dynamic – not only in philosophical spaces, but also beyond them, in socio-political and human structures – represent the pains of a new formation, in which it is also a task of philosophy to participate. Along with these philosophically steeped forms of discourse and intellectual arguments, which aim for an Arab-Islamic Enlightenment and the foundation of a modernity, additional, ideal and social structures and processes are,

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<sup>12</sup>Triki, Fathi: The Tunisian Moment in the Philosophy of Michel Foucault (in Arabic), in "Philosophy in Arab Countries in 100 Years", 12th Philosophical Symposium, organized by the Egyptian Philosophical Society in Cairo, Beirut: CAUS, 2000: 319ff.



however, also present. This state is more complex than many of the simplistic and abbreviated attempts to represent it have fathomed.

Because in Arab countries a certain modernization can be ascertained. It is, however, restricted to a material, consumption-oriented level. The hegemonic social structures and cultural processes play an inhibiting role for a more complete modernization to take place. These are, however, neither genuinely traditional nor modern, but rather a hybrid form between modernity and tradition. The Palestinian intellectual and former professor at Georgetown University, Hisham Sharabi, analyzed this phenomenon of socio-cultural transformation in Arab societies with regard to forces of modernization and anti-modernization. Especially in his 1988 publication, *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*,<sup>13</sup> Sharabi delivers a far-reaching investigation into the reasons why enlightened thought is not rewarded and why the Arab World has thus missed an opportunity to connect with modernity. Among other things here he brings up “the position held by Hisham Djait, according to which neither the secularists nor the religious reformers of the 19th century succeeded in bringing about a radical transformation of consciousness. The merely materially completed ‘modernization’ did not bring forth any genuine modernity. It only redesigned the patriarchal structure of Arab society in modernized forms.”<sup>14</sup> Sharabi deals with the social structures in the Arab World and tries to uncover the inhibiting mechanisms that prevent real access of the peoples living there to modernity and thus also to democracy. He considers this task as a basic prerequisite for any understanding of the political situation in the region, and as a key to change it.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, the situation is characterized by the existence of a dominant power which is controlled by two very similar systems, patriarchy and neopatriarchy:

With patriarchy Sharabi means “a certain form of authoritarian, male-dominated society and culture and a system of values along with certain patterns of practice that are tied to it”.<sup>16</sup> Neopatriarchy, on the other hand, replaces the unfulfilled form of modernity and appears under the aspect of modernization. It represents “the appropriate analytical category for explanation of dynamic processes of social change in its distorted form”.<sup>17</sup> Here, power lies mainly in the hands of regimes, whose members stem from patriarchal society and who stand for a process of modernization of economic and social structures, however without upsetting the political

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<sup>13</sup> Sharabi, Hisham: *Neopatriarchy: A Theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1988; the Arabic translation appeared under the title: “*an-niẓām al-‘abawīwa iškaliyat taḥalluf al-muġtama‘ al-‘arabī*”, Beirut: Nelson, 2000.

<sup>14</sup> Heller, Edmunte & Mosbahi, Hassouna (eds.): *Islam, Demokratie Moderne, Aktuelle Antworten arabischer Denker*, München: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1998: 17.

<sup>15</sup> Turki, Mohamed: *Herrschaft und Demokratie in der arabischen Welt. Überlegungen zur Phänomenologie der Macht*; in Polylog (*Zeitschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren*) Nr.17, 2007. Wien. (in print).

<sup>16</sup> Sharabi, Hisham, *Moderne und islamische Erneuerung: Die schwierige Aufgabe der arabischen Intellektuellen*, in Heller, Edmunte und Mosbahi, Hassouna (eds.): *Islam, Demokratie Moderne, Aktuelle Antworten arabischer Denker*: 48.

<sup>17</sup> Sharabi, Hisham: *Moderne und islamische Erneuerung*: 49.

mechanisms and institutions of domination in the sense of radical change. To a certain extent, neopatriarchy is a hybrid form of patriarchy and simultaneously a distorted appearance of modernity, since it oscillates between two opposing world-views and serves itself according to the situation, namely tradition and modernity.

Therefore it is no wonder, how the so-called 'liberal' or even 'progressive' regimes rule with the same unlimited political authority as with patriarchy. Thereby they attempt to legitimize their power with the seal of institutional legality and seeming democracy.<sup>18</sup> Through this separation, which is relevant for the analysis of socio-cultural transformation, Sharabi clearly emphasizes the difference between the modern state and that claimed and led by patriarchy or neopatriarchy. Accordingly, "the first is determined by law, while the second is governed by the potentate, even if this state is equipped with a Constitution. In the first, the citizen is a sovereign, whilst in the second the citizen is merely a subject".<sup>19</sup> On the basis of this distinction, Sharabi exposes the essential inhibitions of political leadership and refers to the difficulties of any basic transformation of dominant relationships in the Middle East.

The hegemonic socio-cultural structures analyzed by Sharabi really make up a foundation for the oppositional forms of discourse, and they could explain the dominant situation of uneasiness and tension in the Arab-Islamic context. A survey of books published, of systems of education, and of the media in the Arab world in our time will confirm that the forms of discourse outlined above – with all of their contradictions – have presence and actual influence. In my view, since the Arabic language is the language of writing and the language of intellectual discourse, a structural break with tradition and its world-views and values remained impossible. History and traditions are just as present as new events. Through the Arabic language the immediate access to pre-Islamic poetry, to the Qur'anic text, to the classic works of the Middle Ages, is guaranteed. This is a phenomenon that we can hardly find with such intensity and presence in any other cultural context. This situation, on the one hand, is dynamically wealthy, but on the other hand, it can contain a constellation rife with conflict and lead there. In the face of this uneasy situation, the elites and the intellectuals in the Arabic context must widen criticism and self-criticism and establish a new critical and simultaneously rooted discourse of Enlightenment. Because a dogmatic, monoculturalist, distorted, and simplistic perception and form of discourse, whether from the inside or the outside, can surely lead to a collision and a false understanding. On the other hand, an intercultural approach may point out self-perception as well as perception of the Other in its complexity and lead to a better way of understanding and of communication.

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<sup>18</sup>Turki, Mohamed: *Herrschaft und Demokratie in der arabischen Welt*: Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Turki, Mohamed: *Herrschaft und Demokratie in der arabischen Welt*: Ibid.

# Comparative Philosophy: A Methodological Approach

Ulrich Libbrecht

Since the passing of its founder – Charles Moore – in 1967, the Hawaiian ‘Philosophy East and West’ has approached comparative philosophy as synonymous for ‘non-Western philosophy’. This is not in agreement with what I consider comparative philosophy to be. To me, the focus remains on the word ‘comparative’: only by real comparison do we bring cultures closer. Those who limit themselves to a purely descriptive juxtaposition lay the load of comparing on the shoulders of the reader, who is often not best placed or equipped to successfully do this, through lack of experience and knowledge. Comparison is the task of philosophy.

What is this comparison? It is most certainly not the search for similarities, because these are often trivial. Dissimilarities are much more interesting to explore; they represent furthermore the characteristics of civilizations. Additionally, the sum of all these dissimilarities can be used as the basis for a world-encompassing meta-philosophy. But it is not my purpose to construct a World philosophy.

A model, however, is a frame in which one can place different worldviews, although – as described elsewhere – as a model, it needs to be non-contradictory, i.e. it should be able to house both affirmation and negation of the same item. For instance, it has to incorporate both theism and atheism. A world philosophy, on the other hand, would be obliged to make a choice between both, in order to respond to the principle of non-contradiction.

Because the comparative philosopher is himself always part of a specific culture, he is often tempted to take his own civilization as the criterion: but this only results in a deformed image of the other cultures, and – as a rule – only those foreign themes then tend to get highlighted that are recognized in categories of the own culture. Some philosophers try to avoid the difficult assignment of comparison by posing incommensurability, which isolates cultures into ‘culture islands’ and reduces everyday life to a market: we do buy one another’s goods but not ideas.

To compare in an objective manner requires first and foremost the acknowledgment of the equal value of all cultures c.q. philosophies as starting points. None of them should be the criterion against which the others are compared. To achieve this, we need to develop a model that starts from objective categories within which the different world-views can be reduced to a basic set of formal themes. However, it

is clear that all cultures are heterogeneous. Yet those who are familiar with a specific culture know its fundamental characteristics, which unite in an ideal type. Our article explains what we mean by this approach. Ordinary falsification is of no value here.

I restrict myself in my approach to Greek, Indian and Chinese philosophies, because I am familiar with all of them. My structural insight in African, Islamic and Jewish philosophy is not detailed enough to integrate them in my field of research. I dealt with them in a general way in my book ‘Within the Four Seas’. As comparative philosophy is not identical to world philosophy, it does not have to be all-encompassing, it can be partial; and realistically speaking, nobody can be expected to be fully acquainted with ALL the world-views. However, to me the Islamic and Jewish (next to the Christian) philosophies are highly tributary to Greek thought, and are in a way historical sub-models of Greek philosophy. As a first step, within this sub-model, these need to be mutually compared. Their degree of difference will not be as deep as that between Greek, Indian and Chinese thinking.

I have elaborated on this philosophical work-model fully in my ‘Inleiding Comparatieve Filosofie’ (4 vols., 1995–2005) and in ‘Within the Four Seas’ (2007). In this article, I only try to show how this model can be applied in practice.

## **Comprehensive Description of Three Different World-Views**

The following world-view descriptions are the result of active reduction. I try to construct the inner logic of these different world-views in a hermeneutic circle. Starting from this hermeneutical approach I design, in an initially intuitive way, a first model that I then check and recheck in the light of further text analysis. I do accept the axiom that philosophers everywhere in the world try to construct coherent world-views. Some Chinese and Buddhist texts may give the impression to be less coherent, but by reconstruction of their inner logic we do detect a coherent system, of course based on very different axioms than we use in Western thinking.

But, as already mentioned, comparative thinking is not in search of similarities – which are mostly very trivial in nature – they look for the dissimilarities. The basic mistake often made is that one approaches Chinese or Indian philosophy as a whole. What would be the coherence of ‘Western philosophy’ if it were considered as one single philosophy? We should reflect on what we actually mean when we mention things like ‘Asian philosophy’ or ‘African philosophy’. We dealt with these problems extensively in our books and refer to these for more information, since it is impossible to repeat all in the present article.

### ***The Chinese World-View: The ‘Self-Existent’ and the Tao***

The most obvious ontological aspect of Chinese Culture is found in its Taoist world-view. In this philosophy the world is *tzü-jen*, ‘by-itself-so’. This means that

the cosmos is the ultimate reality; there is no deeper level or origin. The world was not created by a God, but has always existed. Existence is a process of becoming: nothing is everlasting in the cosmos, everything is incorporated in a process of continual change. The world consists fundamentally of *ch'i*, energy, which is omnipresent. This *ch'i* would remain unknown to us if it did not manifest in the form of structured patterns or order patterns. These patterns are summarized in the transcendental concept<sup>1</sup> of Tao or the Way. Every phenomenon passes along a path, and this can be observed in nature. This path is like a biorhythm which cannot be further explained and remains the mystery of the universe. However, this path cannot be linear: a tree cannot grow forever, and so time must be cyclical. Every phenomenon will first go through an expansive phase, developing fully, followed by a phase of contraction, returning to its *ch'i* basis and to finally disappear from the world of phenomena. Life and death are two phases of the same process. Traditionally, the first phase is called yang and the second yin.<sup>2</sup> All phenomena are subjected to this eternal rhythm; nothing is invariable, neither atom or substance, nor soul or god.

As the universe is a *ch'i*-space, all is related to all by a field of force. Contrary to western thinking, action at a distance is here quite normal. Every event in the cosmos influences all others and consequently the entire universe is in resonance.<sup>3</sup> Man, through his ancestors<sup>4</sup> also a product of this universe, has his individuality expressed in his 'decree from heaven', but 'heaven' "does not speak",<sup>5</sup> it invests our nature with talents. Man is the only being that can somewhat resist the Tao-rhythm, because of a limited amount of free energy. His Tao is not purely definite, this personal Tao is called Te. The wise man will always try to protect his deepest Tao: that is why he will never harm nature. Hence his motto of wu-wei, no action: i.e. not resist the natural patterns of order, but live in complete harmony with the rhythms of nature. Confucianism does not accept this non-action, it attempts to create a perfect society. It distinguishes "the great man" from "the small man": the former doubles his talents, the latter uses them for his own profit.

This Tao is an inexplicable mystery, and it satisfies the human religious need by its sacredness. It also satisfies the rational need: "science" does not exist in the analytical knowledge of the phenomena, but in the careful observation (*aisthèsis*) of the patterns; which could even be used to develop environment-friendly technology. Economics is not the imposition of a rational model on the Earth, but the unfolding of natural trends, e.g. agriculture, which is a refinement of nature. This is a coherent world-view, which satisfies our need for logic.

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<sup>1</sup>This means that there are as many paths as there are phenomena. We indicate all these paths together with the term Tao. However, this is an abstraction: the Tao does not exist *an sich*, it is not a kind of God. It is the same as with man: the abstraction 'man' does not exist, there are only individual men.

<sup>2</sup>Actually yang is the sun-side of a valley, yin the shadow-side. But the sun-side in the morning is the shadow-side in the evening.

<sup>3</sup>This is the reason why magnetism was not mysterious, but quite natural.

<sup>4</sup>This is a very modern idea: the genome of each person is the result of his ancestry, and so we are all children of the cosmos.

<sup>5</sup>Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, part I, p. 115.

## *The Western World-View: Between Reason and God*

The Western Weltanschauung is double-faced, depending on whether we regard it scientifically or religiously. The scientific world interprets the phenomena: our starting point is the world of becoming. We consider this world of becoming as real but imperfect, because we accept that perfection is eternal and invariable. For Plato this invariability lay beyond the phenomenality in the realm of Ideas, while for Aristotle it lay in general concepts; in both cases a common core present in the things themselves. Also, if motion is not eternal, then there has to be a starting point, and this was Plato's *deus faber* or Aristotle's 'unmoved mover'. They put the *causa causarum* outside the world, so that the ultimate reality does not belong to the world, but brought it into existence. Consequently, physics is insufficient to understand the world, one also needs metaphysics. The eternal element in the cosmos is God, conceptualised as a world-spirit; the eternal element in man is his soul that survives him after death; the eternal element in matter is the atom, or the chemical elements. All phenomena must be explained within a causal interrelationship, their internal structure can be revealed by analysis. This constitutes science. This knowledge can be applied back on the phenomena, and so new structures with new characteristics come into being: this is the technology that can make our precarious existence more comfortable.

Medieval philosophy was theontic in character. It drew its inheritance not only from classical antiquity but also from the Jewish religious tradition. Rationality diverged from the phenomena and was directed at revealed truths, which, in a theology, were made acceptable to our rationality. The Greek 'logic' was used as long as it did not contradict the given truths. This religiosity has a dualistic character: the eternal and invariable transcend the world, and are called God. The phenomenal world is created by God but is neither divine nor sacred. To use the Buddhist image; the waves of the ocean are whipped up by the divine wind which 'blows above the water'. But this ocean, the primeval chaos, is itself created by God out of nothing. The Mystery is therefore not immanent to the world. Man is ethically obliged to obey God's commandments. He is rewarded or punished after death, but his soul will exist eternally.

At the time of the Enlightenment it became clear that we would never acquire any knowledge of the phenomenal world by speculative and theontic metaphysics: neither Greek philosophy nor Christian religion can teach us to understand the world in a rational way; only the phenomenal world itself can do this. Hence we use Greek 'logic' to question nature, convinced as we are that the truth about the cosmos is stored within the cosmos. This anchoring of thought in the phenomenal world is the origin of modern experimental science. The Greek ideas of substantiality (self-identity) and causality provide the mental framework within which we interpret the world; but nature provides the basic data. If we prefer not to consider this world self-sufficient, and so question its origin, we are linking science to a transcendental principle (*causa causarum*) or God. This insight into the structure of things soon gives relatively powerful control over them: this is the birth of modern technology.

Until now, this remained the western logic. Is it also the universal logic? Or is it just one aspect of reality?

### ***The Indian World-View: Between Appearance and Void***

Indian philosophy is very complex and difficult to reduce to a single basic system. But we can say – from a pure philosophical viewpoint – that Indian philosophy culminated in Buddhism. In Buddhist philosophy the ultimate reality is the unknowable foundation of all things. To our rational comprehension it is empty (*śūnya*), and remains forever a Mystery. Because it is not easy for westerners to follow Buddhist logic, we shall use an illustration: the Mystery, which is the true reality, we will imagine an ocean. To our rationality this ocean is a no-thing, i.e. it is not an object that we can approach rationally. It is a Void, but then there is nothing as full as the Void (this is definitely not nihilism!). The ocean generates waves, i.e. phenomena that are perceptible and can be analysed mentally. But these waves only have a relational reality: they appear in time and later disappear, and so do not constitute true reality. But the waves are interrelated and can ‘observe’ each other. From this arises a false perception of reality: we think the sum of all the waves – the set of all phenomena – is the reality. Buddhists call such a ‘reality’ *māyā*, i.e. phenomena that are mere apparitions in comparison to the true reality: these waves are causally dependent on one another, and the nature of something that is caused by something else is not absolute. Even here we do not encounter a God-concept (if one claims that Buddhism is an atheism, then one should qualify this term; there really is an absolute reality, but because human rationality sees it as empty, there is no God-*concept*. A wave, in its deepest being, is ocean. This means that the deepest nature of each phenomenon is the ocean-nature, i.e. the buddha-nature (this is not the nature of the Buddha, but the true nature of every living being, also of plants and animals). Gautama Siddharta was the first to ‘realize’ this nature, the first Buddha, i.e. the enlightened one.

Man also is a revelation of the Mystery: he is a wave that appears and disappears in the ocean. He does not appear as an unwritten page, but is bearer of a cosmic past whose origins we cannot determine but whose phenomenal flow generates him. Since man possesses an amount of free energy, he can give his own wave a certain impulse through his deeds (*karma*): this wave will have an influence on all following waves. When my life-wave disappears, there is no substance or soul that remains for eternity: Buddhism is the doctrine of an-*ātman*, not-soul. This does not mean that I completely disappear when I die, because my *karma* has become a part of history. History, an evolution towards “spiritualisation”, i.e. the realization of the complete buddha-nature of the universe, is partly determined by me. But, as I am entranced by my faulty reality-consciousness, I must first become enlightened: I have to realize that the buddha-nature (ocean in me) is my true nature. This enlightenment forces me into deliverance; I have to release myself from my natural ego-intentionality, which is related to the idea that the waves constitute the real

world. I also have to let go of the idea that the Mystery can be understood and realize that any statement about the ocean is nonsense. What remains is: to entrust myself to the Mystery.

In China, Buddhism came into contact with Taoism. Buddhism was very much transcendently-oriented: it sought nirvāna in the non-phenomenal world and did not focus its attention on the phenomena, unless as a starting point on the path to deliverance. Taoism kept Buddhism's feet on the ground, however. The consequence is that sacrality lies in nature itself. This leads to the formation of a non-dualistic religiosity: this is Zen.

Buddhism, as philosophy, is highly coherent. But at the same time it is very different from western logic. For instance, there is no principle of identity; the real Reality cannot be known, it can be experienced. The real is not the rational, the rational is not the real – adversus Hegel. Nevertheless there exists a real Buddhist logic.

## Comparison of Chinese, Greek and Indian World-Views

Can we interpret the Chinese, Indian and Greek-western philosophies more meaningfully and compare them without using our own world-view as criterion? Let us, on the basis of a series of headings, examine their characteristics, to define the fundamental differences between these three major philosophies of life. We are here clearly dealing with ideal types, since cultural patterns do not occur in such black and white form, despite the fact that they form the hard core of the Taoist, Greek-Western and Buddhist views respectively.

The selection of the three headings of our model is most certainly not exclusive. It is based on my long personal study of these three world-views over many years. The selection of criteria was, to be honest, not surprisingly first inspired by my own western world-view, but this cannot be taken as an argument against. When we compare, we can never compare things as a whole: how could we possibly compare two persons as there is, from a purely logical viewpoint, an infinite set of characteristics. Consequently, any comparison is actually theoretically impossible.

Before starting off on the path of comparative philosophy, we need to thoroughly discuss the meaning of the term 'comparison'. My viewpoint is not in the first place a theoretical, but a practical one: how can I explain Buddhism to Western people? Or can I explain Greek logic to Buddhist philosophers (remembering that there is no identity principle in Buddhism, no substance and no individuality)? So we have to make a choice. What I avoid is selecting paradigmatically bound characteristics, such as 'soul', 'God', 'substance', etc.

On the other hand, 'energy', for instance, is not a typically western item, because Chinese thinking is based on this same concept, called ch'i. The same holds for concepts such as time, space and causality. Those who maintain that Eastern thought does not know 'concepts' are saying that the Chinese and Indians are not able to think. They are inspired by the prejudice that there is only one type of



philosophy, viz. the Western type. In that scenario, Western thinking provides all the criteria for comparative philosophy and other philosophies are only valuable in as far as they have an intersection with the Western world-view. However, let us remember ‘das Ende der Philosophie’, the ‘rationality crisis’ and the religious wars. I am not at all convinced of the claim that the apogee of thinking lies in Western philosophy – and definitely not in applied philosophy.

So, if my selection seems in some way personal and somewhat arbitrary, I never suggested that it is the only way of approach. But at least what I am doing is not theorizing about comparison in the first place, yet constructing a provisional comparative model to practically apply – it has not at all the pretension to be exclusive.

The rationale of my selection can be rendered as follows:

**Energy/matter** and **Form** (in-forma-tion) are the basic features of our objective world. Discussing the position of the subject, I have to investigate its **epistemological** relation to the object. We can only describe this object within a framework of coordinates: it is clear that the phenomena can only be described within the categories of **space** and **time**, which make **motion** possible. Motions are interlinked by **causality**. We can reduce the objective world to its **ontological** basis, the subject to the way it displays itself in the world: this requires a **philosophy of life**. The relation between subjects is determined within a **social context**, i.e. an **ethical community**. This requires communication in **language**. Finally we stay in relation to the Mystery of being in **mysticism, c.q. religion**.

The *headings* for the description of these three cultures are:

1. Energy
2. Information
3. Epistemology
4. Coordinates, including:
  - (a) Time
  - (b) Space
  - (c) Motion
  - (d) Causality
5. The ontological status
6. Philosophy of life
7. Ethics (social dimension)
8. Mysticism/religiosity
9. Language

### *Chinese Taoism: Tzŭ-Jen and Tao*

The Chinese world-view is based on three pillars: Confucianism, Taoism and (Chinese) Buddhism. The most typical ontologically, is Taoism, to which we limit ourselves here, bearing in mind that it pervades all Chinese thought.

In Chinese, **nature** is called **tzŭ-jen**, the ‘by-itself-so’. This means that nature is the irreducible ultimate reality. It is not the creation of a god: Chinese thought does not include a God-concept. Furthermore, the world has always existed and hence is itself the absolute. This does not mean it is immutable, on the contrary: placing immutability synonymous to perfection is a Greek idea. But is a stone more perfect than a tree? Perfection can also exist in a perfect dynamic.

Let us now analyze this tzŭ-jen.

1. *Energy* is tied to fixed patterns of behaviour, which are phylogenetically inherited. This energy sustains the structure of the system, but at the same time activates the dynamic balances, i.e. the action by which energy is converted into deeds. This energy is not specific to the action alone, but is present everywhere in space [compare to a space of pure radiation]: this is the ch’i concept. In living creatures energy is also employed to maintain anti-entropic structures by the dissipation of energy, i.e. heat loss.

The Universe consists of ch’i (energy): this means that space is a force-space. Every point in space is charged with energy. If this force-space were homogeneous, nothing would occur and there would be nothing to observe. But I see that well defined forms exist in the phenomenal world. I also see that all these forms are constantly changing: a world of becoming: existing means changing. There is no ontological category other than Becoming. Ch’i sometimes translates as ‘matter-energy’, because matter is nothing but concentrated energy (in older writings this is compared to water and ice, water standing for energy, ice for matter). Ch’i is different from the Greek energy, that which enables the working to happen. Greek physics was based on matter and form. So, in order to dynamize the world, energy had to be added. But a world of becoming is itself ch’i; ch’i is not added, it is fundamental.

2. The *information* consists of patterns of becoming, which in Taoism are summarized under the name *Tao*, the Way. These patterns can be read *aesthetically*<sup>6</sup> in nature and experienced as *biorhythms*. Becoming does not follow random paths: every phenomenon develops in a particular way (tao). Tao is actually a transcendental concept: the sum of all tao’s is called the Tao.

Things are not substances that remain identical to themselves – my so-called ‘identity’ is nothing other than my life-path. This means that the Tao is a creative principle: it brings about every being’s life-path. The principle of identity is meaningless. Tao does not exist on its own somewhere outside the universe, like some God. It is immanent to the universe. Hence it is said that Tao is non-existing. The question of the origin of Tao is inadmissible: we know from the phenomenal world itself that this order pattern exists, but there is no transcendental being that created it.

3. *Epistemology*: Rationality and emotionality are not separate. Knowledge arises by aisthesis, i.e. by a receptive presence in wordless experience. This knowledge is not analytical, but comprehensive – it is a vision on existence.

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<sup>6</sup>For the concept ‘aisthesis’ cf. infra.

Aisthèsis is ‘attentive presence’. It was characteristic for Chinese epistemology. He who wants to know a reticular whole, cannot achieve this by subdividing the causal network into a set of binary relations within closed systems. Example: an ornithologist knows that he cannot study the ethology of a bird by dissecting its corpse nor by observing its behaviour in a cage; he can only do this in the wild by non-interfering, aisthetical observation. From old, the main feature of ‘science’ in China was aisthetical, which is different from occasional or directed observation.

Aisthèsis brought an overwhelming amount of knowledge (printing, gunpowder, compass), which – according to Francis Bacon<sup>7</sup> – changed history but did not lead to modern science. There are many sociological reasons for this, some of which are convincing, as e.g. that philosophers and technologists never did meet. But there is also an important philosophical reason, namely that aisthèsis is holistic and consequently cannot give rise to modern science; this can only be done by directed experiences in closed systems, linked to theories.

*Unknowable Tao:* Taoists do not believe that we can ever explain the Tao, i.e. the full dynamics of nature. This is in contrast to the western scientific conviction. As rationalists we imagine that we can penetrate the Tao through our power of reason in phenomenological analysis. We are in search for the cosmic formula, to give us final power over the totality of the phenomenal world. This conception follows from the idea that the universe is a pure rational structure and thus intelligible; it is not a mystical field, i.e. a fundamental mystery. A thorough analysis must open the gate to the cosmic secret. But for Taoists the universe is also the expression of the mysticity of being, and Tao is an irreducible mystery; it cannot be analyzed in a rational way. This explains the anti-intellectualism of Taoism. However, Taoists realize that by means of the rational function we can learn a lot, yet there is an insurmountable limit to all our knowledge: one can never elucidate Tao in depth; I cannot say why biorhythms are as they are. True knowledge can only describe the tao-patterns of the phenomenal world. Is this really knowledge? When one asks what the smell of the rose is, there is no analytical answer, like the chemical formula or the Latin name; I can only ask ‘to go along’ with the rose and to inhale its aroma.

In an immanent context knowledge cannot be analytical, only analogical. As subjects that are part of the object, we can never objectivate things, but all dynamic patterns existing in the object can also be detected in the subject. This idea follows from the principle of structural identity, which is a kind of analogy reasoning. The term ‘identity’ is however somewhat misleading, because it gives a static impression. Actually ‘resonance’ is the right term. In Taoism this

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<sup>7</sup>“It is well to observe the force and virtue and consequences of discoveries. These are to be seen nowhere more conspicuously than in those three which were unknown to the ancients, and of which the origin, though recent, is obscure and inglorious. Namely, printing, gunpowder, and the magnet. For these three have changed the whole face and state of things throughout the world, the first in literature, the second in warfare, the third in navigation; whence have followed innumerable changes; insomuch that no empire, no sect, no star, seems to have exerted greater power and influence in human affairs than these mechanical discoveries.”, *Novum Organum*, book 1, aphorism 129. We give the modern version from J. Needham, o.c., vol. I, p. 19.

resonance model was attributed to the whole cosmos. ‘Law’ means here: model, pattern. In heaven some dynamic patterns become visible: those are determined by the dynamics of Tao (we should say by fundamental physical laws, like gravity and electromagnetic forces), and this cannot be explained further. This spontaneity creates resonance patterns on earth, like day/night, phases of the moon, seasons ... Man lives within these biological rhythms with his daily rhythm, menstruation, seasonal work ... The universe is one mighty resonating whole.

Man can vibrate sympathetically with the cosmic harmony: he is in experiential relation with Tao, to which he is related by heaven and earth. Resonating with Tao consequently means: resonating with nature.

#### 4. *Coordinates*

(a) *Time* is cyclical. This is defined as the yin-yang principle. No linear transformation can exist – this would lead to a runaway phenomenal world (e.g. trees would continue to grow forever) – so time has to be cyclical. However, this time does not exist as an autonomous, absolute parameter, it is the way we measure the transformation. Becoming is thus conceived as a wave-like movement from existence to non-existence and vice versa. This means the ‘ten thousand things’ are born and perish in an eternal Tao rhythm.

But what does existing and perishing mean? Existing means that the ch’i produces forms and develops according to a particular Tao. At the end of this life the phenomenon disappears once more into the undifferentiated ch’i field. Since every process of becoming is cyclical, it has an expansive phase (yang) and a recessive phase (yin).

##### *Conception of history*

The Chinese conception of history is that life on earth started from a paradisiacal situation within an intact natural environment, but this situation deteriorated quickly because of the development of civilisation. Hence the idea that history is actually the history of decline. Duration, continuity of the good, recurrence of the same are highly elevated above continuous change, which has to lead to increasing perfection – the unrest of western civilisation.<sup>8</sup> “Changes are, in old China at least from the end of the Chou dynasty, considered to be deviations from a fixed, permanent ideal, which was realized in an ‘absolute’ past”.<sup>9</sup> Every new beginning in history was interpreted as an attempt to restore this eternal order, so that the past became normative for present and future. Each dynastic cycle was a new beginning, necessarily to lead to decline, after which followed a new beginning. This was the “cyclical approach and deviation of a permanent ideal”. For Confucianists this ideal was situated in the

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<sup>8</sup>“Chief characteristic of traditional Chinese conception of history is the consciousness of duration. Herein it differs fundamentally from the traditional European-western historical consciousness that history consists of motion of time towards a goal,” Bodo Wiethoff, *Grundzüge der älteren chinesischen Geschichte*, p. 32.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 32.

Chou-period,<sup>10</sup> for Taoists it was in a remote past when human beings still lived harmoniously with nature.

- (b) *Space* is a ch'i space. No place exists without ch'i. It is not an empty mathematical space. Space is an *open* system and not a set of closed subsystems. Such a force-space is a ch'i continuum, where everything is linked to everything else in a reticular causality (holism). The ch'i is in eternal movement, but this movement is not locomotion; it is inner transformation, which is the Tao of the phenomenon.
- (c) *Causality* is reticular (network causality): everything is linked to everything else. The system is holistic and open, yet not in a multiple linear causality. In Chinese thought distant action was not a problem because space was not empty but full of ch'i. This means that everything resonates with everything and that the universe is a ch'i-continuum. Consequently each local vibration is transmitted through the whole universe.

Actually this was a kind of organicist thinking, typical of live beings, characterized by intrinsic rhythms: beings never remain for an instant what they were. Consequently mechanistic thinking (billiard ball causality) cannot be suitable for a transformative reality. This explains why mechanistic thinking never dominated in China, and the aversion of Taoists for technical tools. Taoist philosophy was indeed a process philosophy.

- (d) *Motion* is transformation: since every phenomenon is a process of becoming, it is constantly changing. The Herakleitean idea of self-transformation and that there are no eternal unchanging beings, only phenomena, is fundamental to Chinese philosophy, which is based on the observation of living nature (tzu-jen). Eternal motion, as feature of the universe, has no starting point and so this universe is the 'eternal return of same'.
5. *The ontological status* is Becoming: the cosmos is an event. The differentiation we observe in the phenomenal world is explained by the form being stored and transmitted in the seed. This seed can again develop into a phenomenon by the 'spirit of the seed' or the vital spirit, which is the Tao impulse. The life-force is present everywhere in the universe, and it is a property of ch'i.

## 6. *Philosophy of life*

*Authenticity*: In nature, life is struggle for life, but with built-in constraints. A young child comes closest to authenticity: its life is pure spontaneity, it follows the Tao without resistance. In his immanence, an adult remains a young child all his life, the child of nature. Even when part of his energy frees itself, he takes care that this transcendence does not harm his immanence.

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<sup>10</sup>Cf. John T. Marcus, *Sub Specie Historiae*, p. 58: "In the classical Confucian perspective, the Golden Age was conceived as having occurred in the past. The essence of Chinese civilisation was its sense of tradition, preserved in the rituals of life, the forms of civility, and the continuity of the family. The purpose of historical thought, consequently, was to perpetuate the ideals of the ancient sages and the image of a former social order, and the function of the individual was to live up to them."

The natural, spontaneous and ‘female’ always contrasts with the artificial, cultural and ‘male’.<sup>11</sup> Since Antiquity, cultural heroes have since antiquity changed the world through civilisation, but ‘the spirit of the valley never dies: it is the mysterious female nature’,<sup>12</sup> that which is immanent. That it never dies means that life always survives, whereas human constructions easily decay.

*Taoist virtues:* Now, on by some romantic perspectives on life, one might imagine that the Taoists were sentimental about nature, idealising it and considering it the absolute good. But their realism forced them to recognize that nature is ethically indifferent: nature brings us youth, strength, health and beauty, but it will also take them all away again. For this reason one must not attribute to it any ‘Confucianist’ virtues such as humanity, justice, love or warm-heartedness. These virtues are simply natural, the natural human does not realize that they exist. Morality is a proof of decline. A natural human is always mild, moderate and humble.

It is therefore not surprising that the great principle of human life is *wu-wei*, non-action. The less one transcends nature, the better the tranquil balance and happiness will be preserved. Plants and animals do not act purposefully, and yet they carry on their lives. We westerners always want to plant adult trees for immediate results, while the Taoist plants young trees and lets them grow. For the Taoist, the virtue of virtues is the mysterious force that arises out of life itself. One consequently has to cultivate this force, and then will have sufficient *ch’i* for a flawless life. The opposite picture is the rationally planned life, which expects all benefits to come from the action. Thus, the virtues of the Taoist are caution, not purposefulness, seriousness, flexibility, genuineness, frankness, responsiveness, gentleness, contentment, spontaneity and authenticity or, in one word, naturalness.

The Taoist’s fundamental attitude is *anti-intellectual*; we can never get to know the deep secret of the Tao by conceptualisation. Taoism is also *anti-cultural*, because culture is anti-natural. Consequently, Taoism is *anti-technological* too. And Taoism is *anti-religious* because it does not have any such transcendental value as God or *nirvāna*. It is indeed not a monotheism nor monism. But it finds satisfaction for its mystical needs in the sacredness of nature. Life is good and one tries to achieve longevity, but not to escape from this vale of tears.

*Te 德, the personal tao:* As stated earlier, the Tao is a transcendental concept. The individualised tao, the personal potency is called *Te*. It is a fact that not all beings have the same ‘life amplitude’ and are not synchronous with each other. In man, this *Te* also concerns his free energy. By contrast with animals, it allows him to disrupt the Tao pattern.

7. *Ethics:* The question ‘whether or not it is possible to have a satisfactory ethics without a religious or metaphysical basis’, was posed by missionary-sinologist

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<sup>11</sup> Female does not mean: woman; male does not mean: man. This is proved by the use of characters. ‘Female’, in Lao-tzu, ch.6 and 61, is represented as *p’in* 牝, female animal, and in ch.28 as *tz’u* 雌, female bird, in contrast to *hsiung* 雄, male bird. These terms makes no sense in their literal translation; these are in all probability endeavours to express the abstract concepts ‘femaleness’.

<sup>12</sup>Ch. 6.

D.H. Smith in *Confucius and Confucianism*.<sup>13</sup> Taoists believed that the categories of good and bad were meaningless for the universe, and indeed, where death is bad for the individual, it is not so for mankind. Hence nature is good and bad, or neither good nor bad. Of course, we cannot build a society without ethical principles, because of man's free energy. China never knew a religious or philosophical sectarianism, so that many Confucianists were also Taoists at heart. Confucianists focussed on ethics. Confucianism built up a high-principled ethical system, containing the highest virtues such as love, righteousness and respect for the feelings of others (li). However, this system was not based on a divine commandment, as there is no concept of a personal God in China. When Confucius says that Heaven commands, he says also that Heaven does not speak. This means that the universe has inscribed in man, as a being disposing of some free energy, a categorical imperative, which was called 'command from heaven' and which is, according to the *Chung-yung*,<sup>14</sup> your own nature, i.e. your innate talents. In this way ethics is not abstract, general and legalistic, but personalized: he who does not double his talents behaves unethically; it is insufficient to obey rules.

*Wu-wei*: Not disturbing the course of nature. Taoists realized that nature survives in its pure form only in remote mountains, and many of them retired to these lonely places. Culture with its orientation on transcendental values disturbs spontaneity. It was believed – as in so many cultures – that long ago there was a period in which people lived in full harmony with nature. But then culture-heroes arose who wanted to reorganize nature.

Chuang-tzū believed that moral qualities belong to immanence. Man is by nature good, not a 'fighting beast' (he becomes that rather in transcendence). If human nature is fundamentally good – an idea we find also with Mencius – then Confucianist virtues belong to human nature. Mencius however thinks that we have to cultivate our good nature to guard it from becoming bad. Chuang-tzu thinks the opposite: when we bring nature into culture, nature becomes bad. Human reason believes that it can order nature better, yet although nature knows a restricted 'struggle for life', reason did not bring peace in the world: on the contrary, it brought confusion, unrest and many wars. Ever since, culture was no longer an aspect of human nature, but was opposed to it.

*Nature is ethically indifferent*: Taoists are not back-to-nature philosophers and they do not know a romantic nature sentimentalism typical of city inhabitants alienated from nature, who ascribe moral qualities to it. Taoists teach that nature is ethically indifferent: neither good nor bad, or both good and bad. Nature gives and takes: life, youth, health, beauty ... Taoists reject the Confucianist ethics that say that virtues such as human-heartedness and justice (which are imparted by education – i.e. artificially – can bring about better people and a better society. They believe that happiness is dependent on *wu-wei*. According to Chuang-tzū,

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<sup>13</sup> p. 62.

<sup>14</sup> The *Chung-yung* (Doctrine of the Mean) is a small book of the Confucian school, now contained in the *Li Chi*, ch. 28. Translation by J. Legge in *The Chinese Classics*, vol. 1, p. 383.

the original natural morality decayed and was replaced by artificial ethics. He who disturbs the natural balance, is left with 'weeds', because he harvests out only the useful herbs. The fact that a mother feeds her children, had nothing to do with goodness, only with naturality.

*Immanent love:* There are some strange texts in the Tao-te-ching, which we would expect only in the context of transcendent religions. "The wise has no unshakeable heart. He considers the heart of the common people as being his own heart. For those who are good I am good. For those who are not good I am also good. Te is always good. For those who are sincere, I am also sincere. For those who are not sincere, I am also sincere. Te is sincere. The wise man is in the world, peaceful and still. 'Making' the world disturbs his heart. People all keep their ears and eyes directed to him, and the sage treats them all as his children."<sup>15</sup> Love for the fellow-man is mostly monopolized by transcendent religions as Christianity and Buddhism, but here an immanent philosophy that believes in the innate goodness of nature, also developed this idea. Yet here the love-concept is not rooted in an illumination-redemption, which rejects nature as being no-illuminated and undelivered, but in the idea of the caring mother. She cannot break the pattern of life, and cannot put 'good' life opposite 'bad' death. The transcendental world-view considers the good as the eternal Being or eternal Non-being, but never as Becoming. The cycle of the seasons, of growth and decay, is bad in the view of the Absolute but in the natural rhythm of the 'Eternal return of the same', everything is good.

This goodness of becoming results in some high-standard ethical principles. Lao-tzu criticizes the unjustness of the world, where the rich enrich themselves and the poor become poorer.

*Human society:* Small is beautiful. Taoists defend the village society as the most organic. Urbanization always goes hand in hand with intellectualism, technology and culture, which are all anti-Taoist.

8. *Taoist mysticism* is not transcendental mysticism, but nature-mysticism. The mystery of being is omnipresent in the cosmos. The wise retire 'to the mountains' in order to experience the Tao in its purity. Today, man no longer lives in a natural context. The experience of nature is not continuous but a momentaneous happening which he has to actively seek.

Since we no longer live in a natural situation, we have to return meditatively to the Tao to be guided by the immanent experience. We will occasionally leave the everyday-life situation and let go of analytical thought (the 'fasting of the spirit') and the power of words, to experience the mysterious unity of the Tao.

*The Taoist saint:* In Taoism a 'saint' was called a man of the mountains, one who retired from society.

*Philosophy of the body:* The first thing we have to do is to keep the body in balance, since "your reason is your small wisdom, your body your great wisdom" (Nietzsche). K. Schipper draws attention to the fact that, in a non-dualist

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<sup>15</sup>Ch. 49.



philosophy of nature the subject coincides with its body, and his bodily landscape is in the frame of structural identity the correlate of the cosmic landscape.<sup>16</sup>

But also after death man remains part of the environment. “His higher souls (shen) become ancestor, whereas his bones (po) are buried according to the rules of Chinese geomancy, so that their power can be controlled and further benefit the survivors. For the souls of the dead are a treasure for the living: each family possesses a number of life spirits in the shen- and po-souls of their ancestors, they form a kind of charisma familiaris.”<sup>17</sup>

That life is the greatest value is reflected in the idea of ‘the lost souls’. A life that is not completed, and thus leaves unused ch’i, falls outside the cycle of existence. In the words of popular belief: ‘ghosts’ roamed about and threatened in the world of men. This is the popular rendering of a philosophical conception that the world is a cyclic dynamics, wherein the used yang starts the yin-phase. When the cycle is interrupted, this non-integrated ch’i becomes dangerous to the cosmic order, home of the Taoist.

So, for the common man, there is no reason to strive for salvation: “For the common man saving his soul – or souls – is completely superfluous, as his real benefit lies in the natural course of things.” There is no transcendental religion to save man from this earthly suffering. As life has value in itself, the wise man lives in harmony with nature, he will reach old age, become an ancestor, a shen. All this is far away from dualistic thinking: man is his body.

9. The *language* is a metaphorical language. This metaphorical use of language often generates the wrong idea that Chinese philosophy is a kind of intellectual poetry, and often text translations are too poetical. In my experience these texts are philosophical, but just like nature they are not explicit. Nature can only be described in an intelligible way by abstracting its features into a rational scheme, this means as a kind of natural science. Yet the Taoist world is one of resonance, and I have to resonate with nature. Rational language, as in physics, cannot trigger this resonance. On the other hand, not analyzing nature’s features in a rational way means I can only approach it by aisthèsis – i.e. without theories – and emotional resonance. I think that this is how Taoists describe reality. When I describe the behaviour of a bird, I use metaphors to communicate with other bird-watchers. Yet at the same time I cannot unhook my description from my own emotional experience.

Nature does not speak more than absolutely necessary: language belongs to the transcendental dimension. Lao-tzu says: “One who knows does not speak; one who speaks does not know.”<sup>18</sup> Words have no value by themselves: Chuang-tzu says: “A word is not only a puff of breath, he who speaks has always something to say; but this something is never completely defined by the word.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> K. Schipper, Tao, *De levende religie van China*, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> Schipper, o.c., p. 53.

<sup>18</sup> *Tao-te-ching*, ch. 56.

<sup>19</sup> B. Watson, o.c., p. 39.

## ***Greek Philosophy: Between Reason and God***

As Greek-western philosophy is multi-faceted, we cannot describe it here in its entirety. We shall restrict ourselves to classical Greek (Platonic and Aristotelian) philosophy, addressing only occasionally Stoic and Christian thought.

1. *Energy*: According to Hesiod the universe was first chaos, unordered primeval matter. This chaos was transformed into cosmos. But transformation requires energy, so where does it come from? From a God, himself eternal unchanging Being, functioning as an ‘unmoved mover’ (Aristotle)? Or from an archè, a primeval matter, which condenses and dilutes (pre-Socratics and also Aristotle)? But the question remains: where does the energy for this motion come from?<sup>20</sup> The alternative for chaos is the creation e nihilo. But what is this ‘nihilo’? Is it God (Eriugena), so that God is the eternal energy? Parmenides solved the problem by rejecting the phenomenal world itself.

En-ergeia is derived from en, in + ergon, work; energy = what expresses itself in work, it cannot be seen, only its action can be seen. We traditionally interpret energy as the cause of observable ‘workings’. ‘Working’ is the ‘moving’ of an object, and this requires a ‘force’. Is this conception not hidden Aristotelian substance-thinking? Everybody knows now that there are no fixed stars and that the whole universe is a huge process in continuous motion. But, does this process still require added energy, or is it itself fundamentally energy, ‘working’ being the equilibrating energetic tension expressed in the changes of the moving system, i.e. in its becoming?

2. *Information*: Matter is not informative as such; only forms are informative. New forms can be created by combinations of natural forms. But this is limited to what can be logically (Boolean) described, and excludes what is emotional. This information increases the order of the universe and is therefore negentropic (negatively entropic). ‘Heat’ (emotion, tapas) is a dissipation of energy and is considered to be a loss factor.

Greek informative thinking is tributary to Parmenides’ famous dictum: being and thinking is the same, i.e. the logic of thinking and the logic of being is the same. We accept that the phenomenal world hides a basic logicity. In modern science we try to detect this logicity in a hermeneutic circle. But Parmenides believed that logical thinking suffices and that the logicity of reality must necessarily correspond to the logical model we construct based on (seemingly) evident axioms. So we construct patterns of order on the three levels of formal logic: classification, attribution, relation. Following strict rules of derivation, we get the truth.

Plato says: “It is by means of problems, then, said I, as in the study of geometry, that we will pursue astronomy too, and we will let things in the heavens, if we

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<sup>20</sup> Compare to high- and low-pressure areas, which cause indeed the movement of the air; but they can only originate by increase or decrease of energy in the form of warmth.

are to have a part in the true science of astronomy and so convert to right use from uselessness that natural indwelling intelligence of the soul.” (Republic, VII, 530a v). This means that, if our geometrical constructions are logical, they must necessarily correspond to things in heavens. This is the only way we can approach the Ideas. And indeed Plato’s inspiration started from the Idea of the perfect circle, the actual circle never being perfect.

But there is more: logic can only be applied to ‘beings’, not to ‘becomings’. So the atomists started from unchanging particles, and explained motion as particle locomotion. The phenomena were reducible to ‘beings’ and inner transformation was nothing but appearance.

Plato’s ‘realism’ attributes autonomous existence only to ‘beings’ and considers the ‘becomings’ as faint silhouettes of these ‘beings’. These famous Ideas are not only non-falsifiable ‘gods’, but they are unusable for building a science, because science describes the phenomena which are ‘becomings’. But the Aristotelian conception that there is a core of being (substance) in the phenomena, is based on reduction of the attributes. The result of this reduction should not be nothing, but an elusive and dim thing that functions as bearer of these attributes. Not surprisingly, Buddhism and also Hume did not believe in this substance.

‘Being’ can be interpreted in three different ways. According to Plato it is an Idea, which exists eternally by itself. According to Aristotle it is a substance, which cannot exist without attributes: e.g. there is no human being without attributes. It can also be a concept, i.e. an abstraction that only exists in my mind. So, ‘being’ cannot be observed in the phenomenal world, it can only be constructed by a rational act through: conceptualisation, substantialisation and idealisation. As long as there was no human mind there was no ‘being’, only ‘becoming’.

### *Rationalism*

In general, one can say that Greek philosophy attributes no real reality to the world of becoming. This is why the empirical aspect of Greek philosophy was so weak, and why, before the Late Hellenistic period, little observation was done. The only exceptions are the Hippocratic writings. Plato in particular abhorred observation and thought that one did not have to look at the stars to be an astronomer. Although Aristotle made more use of empirical data, he also built major logical constructions on sparse facts, which as a rule he had himself not even checked. It was partly as a result of the negative influence of these two great philosophers that for two millennia natural science did not advance beyond natural philosophy.

What is becoming is transient and therefore imperfect. Behind this world of becoming lies the world of being. However, this cannot be observed, only conceived in metaphysics based on generalities that form the lasting and therefore perfect being of phenomena: they are self-identical. The great value of this rationality lies in the fact that science can indeed only be a science of beings and not of becomings.

The thinking subject can approach this world of being because it can use logical thought patterns. These patterns may assume the form of eternal Ideas (Plato); or class-logical models (Aristotle); or a propositional logic (Stoics).

In fact the whole of Greek philosophy – with the exception of Heraclitus and the Stoics – is a struggle against becoming, driven by the idea that the everlasting is the perfect. Christians also understand the perfection of God in this way.

3. *Epistemology*: Knowledge is oriented towards in-sight into the cosmic structure. The criterion is logicity and the fundamental postulate is ‘the *intelligibility* of the world’. Objective knowledge is realised by eliminating subjectivity in the Subject ↔ Object relationship (i.e. subject opposite to object). The subject is reduced to its rational dimension.

Greek philosophy was actually metaphysics. We can build up metaphysics either by pure logical thinking (geometry) or by reduction from the phenomenal world (astronomy). The Classic Greeks were bad observers (this alters in late-hellenistic times in Alexandria, but decays and disappears altogether in the Middle Ages that inherited the Greek way of thinking). Concerning the oldest Ionian philosophers, A. Pannekoek writes: “That they put forward conceptions about the universe that already by the slightest attentive observation of the heavenly phenomena could be rejected proves that they were absolutely not observers and not astronomers, but thinking technicians.”<sup>21</sup> This is a very important conclusion: there is very little attention for the phenomena, i.e. the world of becoming, but all attention for mechanical explanations and explanatory geometrical constructions, i.e. for the world of ‘being’. The great philosophers confirmed this logical attitude, which tries to elucidate the logos of the phenomenal world. Plato says: “Are you unaware that the true astronomer must be a man of great wisdom? I do not mean an astronomer of the type of Hesiod and his like, a man who has just observed settings and risings, but one who has studied seven out of the eight orbits, as each of them completes its circuit in a fashion not easy of comprehension by any capacity not endowed with admirable abilities.”<sup>22</sup> This proves the fact that “the Greek scholars were not observers, not astronomers, but extremely acute thinkers and mathematicians.”<sup>23</sup> They tried to get a logical insight in the cosmic events and “this concentration on the ideal aspect of things results in a underestimation by Platonists of the observation of phenomena”,<sup>24</sup> and in a retarded development of science, as remarked by E.J. Dijksterhuis: “The restraining influence, which Platonism could exert on the natural sciences, made itself known indeed; we shall find it mostly in times where the philosophically motivated disdain for empirical scientific research into natural phenomena was supported by a religiously motivated disdain for things material.”<sup>25</sup>

It is not surprising that G. Sarton concludes: “It must be admitted that few books created so much intellectual evil as the *Timaeus*; the only one which created a greater perversion of thought in the Christian world was the revelation of St.

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<sup>21</sup> *De Groei van ons Wereldbeeld*, p. 81.

<sup>22</sup> Hamilton, *Plato: The Collected Dialogues, Epinomis*, p. 1531.

<sup>23</sup> Pannekoek, o.c., p. 91.

<sup>24</sup> R. Hooykaas, *Geschiedenis der natuurwetenschappen*, p. 29.

<sup>25</sup> O.c., p. 15.

John the Divine.”<sup>26</sup> And “One of the most important works of Plato is the *Timaeos*, not, however, because of its intrinsic value, but because of its immense influence upon medieval thought. This influence was largely an evil one.”<sup>27</sup>

Aristotle attached more importance to observation, surely in the field of biology; but in things astronomical he was a child of his time: “He starts from a superficial observation and then he gives way to the general weakness of antique science: he builds up a big theoretical structure, obtained by syllogistic reasoning, on this narrow and weak fundament.”<sup>28</sup> and “After all even Aristotle’s science, as every Greek science, is the science of Being and not of Becoming”.<sup>29</sup> It was mainly based on philosophical speculation, as e.g. that the circle was the perfect shape and thus all in the universe must be circular; and that the celestial bodies were composed of the fifth element, ether.

As his world-view was adopted and blindly believed by the Church for over a millennium until Galilei, scientific progress was restrained for a long time.

#### 4. *Coordinates*

(a) *Time* is abstract, linear, infinite and autonomous. This time is mathematically divided into identical moments (cf. Newton). Already at the time of the pre-Socratics there were three different conceptions of time. For Anaximander and the atomists our world is only one of many worlds, all originating and perishing. For others (Anaximenes, Anaxagoras) the world originated, but remains forever. For Herakleitos and Empedocles the world always exists, but subject to a kind of eternal rhythm of originating and perishing (cf. yin-yang). Of course, these are all proto-scientific theories. But as soon as one considers the world to be a fabrication of God, it becomes hard to build a coherent world-view. A perfect God can only produce a perfect world; so it is not easy to declare how this perfect world can perish. Hence Plato accepted that the world is Gods handiwork, but it will exist forever. Aristotle disagrees on this one-sided eternity and conceives the world as eternal in both directions, but accepts that its dynamics depend on the ‘unmoved mover’. This poses the problem of the relation between time and timelessness, time being cyclical, given the seven planets (incl. sun and moon) passing through their own cycle. The Greek also believed in a Great Year, whereof the beginning is determined by the conjunction of all planets, calculated at once every 36,000 years. This Great Year also had its rhythms – at least according to the Stoa – the ‘eternal return of same’.

Aristotle believed the world to be eternal in both directions, i.e. the world was also not created. Every living being passes through its own cycle, but the species is eternal. With this we approach linear time as a spiral motion or epicycle.

<sup>26</sup> W.K.C. Guthrie, *History of Greek Philosophy*, V, p. 241.

<sup>27</sup> Sarton, I, *Introduction to the History of Science*, I, p. 113.

<sup>28</sup> Hooykaas, o.c., p. 37.

<sup>29</sup> Hooykaas, o.c., p. 36.

But fundamentally speaking the time of heaven and earth remains cyclic, because time is a measure for motion and all motion is cyclical. When God is not necessary as creator, He is totally separated from the world. However He still plays the role of ‘unmoved mover’: the dynamics of the cosmos is dependent on God.

J.L. Russell says: “that the Greek cosmic and historic time were infinite in both directions: the human race has no beginning and no end. History had a long-term cyclic pattern imposed by the planetary cycles, but it had no purpose beyond that of reflecting God’s eternity. It was not fulfilling God’s designs progressively nor moving to any final, irreversible consummation; man was there simply to be born, to perpetuate his species and to die.”<sup>30</sup> The final choice of the western time conception came from the Jews: time is linear in the sense that there is a starting point and a final point, between which God realizes his plan in history. Abraham Heschel says: “Judaism is a religion of history, a religion of time. The God of Israel was not found in the first place in natural phenomena [which are cyclical by nature]. He was talking through events in history.”<sup>31</sup> For the Jews history is not the eternal return of same, but a series of unique events. Christianity inherited from both Greek and Jewish traditions. For time, it accepted the Jewish idea that there is a start and an end – creation (Genesis) and the Last Judgment – and rejected the Greek eternal time. This was restored only in the Newtonian physics and became an independent linear variable, which could be measured by a mechanical clock.

(b) *Space* is abstract, empty and mathematically homogeneous. For Democritus and the atomists the universe is composed of atoms and empty space. There are an infinite number of atoms, eternal and uncaused, and differing from each other only in shape, arrangement and magnitude. They move through an infinite empty space.

For Aristotle the cosmos is finite and not empty. He defines space as that which encompasses a body, as the inner border of a encompassing body. Outside this border nothing exists, not even space. He distinguishes it from a mathematical space which is infinite, but this infiniteness exists only in our mind; the real physical world is finite.

(c) *Causality* is linear (binary). It is a billiard ball causality based on direct contact (collision). It can only function in closed systems. Movement is not fundamental, and so requires a cause.

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<sup>30</sup> ‘Time in Christian Thought’, in J.T. Frazer (ed.), *The Voices of Time*, p. 67.

<sup>31</sup> This does not mean that there was not also an undercurrent where time was cyclical. Stephen J. Gould drew attention to this point in *Time’s Arrow, Time’s Cycle*: “Time’s arrow is the primary metaphor of biblical history ... Many scholars have identified time’s arrow as the most important and distinctive contribution of Jewish thought, for most other systems, both before and after, have favoured the immanence of time’s cycle over the chain of linear history. – But the Bible also features an undercurrent of time’s cycle.” (p. 11). Very typical for *Ecclesiasticus*, I, 4–11.

The idea of causality originated in principal amazement (for Plato and Aristotle the starting point of all philosophy) but it was in the natural philosophy of Aristotle that the concept of causality was fully developed: nothing is without cause. He distinguished four types of cause: material, formal, moving or efficient, and final cause. It is important to note that this interpretation of causality is generally derived from mechanistic thinking. It is related to Aristotle's conception of motion: every motion, change of place and growth process is conceived as locomotion. This is only possible when a push brings a thing into motion [in Chinese thinking motion is fundamental and does not require a cause: existing is moving].

Does this mean that all under heaven is deterministic? If man has a free will, he can himself cause some of his acts. This is an object for ethics. Important is the idea of a causal chain, in which each cause has its own cause, but not ad infinitum. There must be a First Cause, a *causa causarum*, and this is identified with God, who is *causa sui* [in a reticular causal field the universe is the cause of phenomena].

Final causality – rejected by modern mechanistic science – can only exist where there is a degree of freedom, as in organic, psychic and spiritual life. This is a causal chain of goals and means, which cannot be infinite.

The cosmos is a machine constructed by a *deus faber*. This mechanistic viewpoint will dominate the whole western philosophy; God becomes a causal God, a 'dieu des philosophes', and the universe is linked to an absolute cause, which is its energy. How the perfect God – the Pure Being – could create an imperfect world of Becoming is an insoluble enigma. For Aristotle God was not the creator of the world but the dynamizer, the energizer of the eternal chaos. Such a God is entirely superfluous in a world-view where energy is fundamental.

*The archè*, the source of everything. The cosmos is considered to be a system derived from one unique basic material. Hesiod starts from chaos, Anaximander from the *apeiron*, which is perhaps an empty chaos surrounding the visible world; Anaximander equals this *apeiron* with air, etc.

Herakleitos opted for becoming, Parmenides for being, but the Pythagoreans opened a third way, which is still the modern way of science: the world is seen as a relational structure, which can be expressed in numbers. This is the start of the mathematization of the universe, not in the usual geometric sense, but in the algebraic sense. This means that the concept of causality is replaced by that of functionality. Finally, atomists reduced everything to a set of invariable atoms, which were always in motion, and so created the phenomena by simple translocation.

(d) *Motion* is locomotion. 'Beings', e.g. atoms, swap places and thereby explain change, the becoming in the phenomenal world. There has to be a Primary Cause, an 'unmoved mover' (God). In human consciousness, movement signifies 'thinking'.

Explaining motion was actually the chief problem in Greek philosophy, except for Herakleitos who accepted motion as the fundamental feature of all existence.

Everybody can see that the universe is in eternal motion, but in Greece the antithesis of in-variability was created and put equal to perfection.

The big question is how unchangeable Being can produce ever-changing Becoming? The Milesian philosophers accepted a unique unchangeable ground for the universe, and they explained change by condensation and dilution of the original matter. These systems are incoherent because they have to add a dynamic principle that enables the working of this condensation/dilution – actually energy is secretly smuggled in.<sup>32</sup> Parmenides by-passed the incoherence by accepting only one unchangeable being and rejecting motion, because it cannot be deduced from this eternal One. For him, motion is only appearance. This way of thinking, which annihilates reality was successful in Greece because we can easily build up a static logic, i.e. a logic based on unchangeable ‘atoms’ (principle of identity), not a dynamic functional logic, where the fundamental data are ‘actual entities’ that transform continuously. Describing relations between beings is much simpler than between becomings. But as Parmenides believed that being (material logic) and thinking (formal logic) is the same, the Aristotelian logic was directly applicable on reality.

Religious criteria developed in Christianity, were connected to eternal beings such as God and the soul that were not subjected to originating and perishing. This made Greek logic was useful for a Christian metaphysics in medieval philosophy. On the other hand, the non-real character of the phenomenal world can only open perspectives on a metaphysics and philosophy of nature in the Aristotelian sense, but not on natural science, which is fully based on the phenomenal world.

The only solution to the problem of motion came from Empedocles and Anaxagoras: they substituted the concept of transformation by that of locomotion: the elements, the atoms remained eternally the same, but they changed place. However, as motion is impossible in a full space, space had to be empty, but real. It was also a closed universe. In this empty ‘receptacle’ the homogeneous matter was atomized, i.e. subdivided into infinitesimally small particles, each of them a Parmenidean ‘being’: homogeneous, indivisible and unchangeable. Consequently, change could only be a change of place (locomotion), because internal transformation or transmutation of these elementary particles was impossible. What Greeks did not see is that motion within a world of being requires energy.

##### 5. The *ontological status* is Being: ‘Being’ indicates immutability.

Everybody can see that the universe is a process, but to the Greek motion is an imperfection and they developed the antithetical idea of changelessness. Non-change is of course a ‘negative proposition’ but was a dominant in classical philosophy. What we call (eternal) Being is not observable, it is actually the negation of Becoming: Being = Non-Becoming.<sup>33</sup> The unchanging is more

<sup>32</sup>In modern physics we say that high and low-pressure areas cause the movement of the atmosphere, but these areas can only originate when we add energy in the form of heat.

<sup>33</sup>The same holds for the concept of an atom. Nobody has ever seen an atom, it is a thought construction. ‘A-tom’ is a negation, meaning ‘the non separable’.



perfect than the changing; this is why in the West God was always considered to be an eternal immutable Being, transcending the world of becoming, the inferior form of existence.

Eleatic being could not tolerate becoming, and hence Parmenides and Zenon considered the latter as a form of non-existence, an illusionary world. Plato further responded by introducing a strange dualism that withdraws the real beings – the Ideas – from the phenomenal world. But we live in the phenomenal world as in a world of experiential reality. What is its status?

Although Platonic philosophy became the primary paradigm for Christian theology, it was completely useless for science. This explains why Platonic inspired theology flowered until the 12th century, but also why natural sciences remained underdeveloped. These required a more realistic philosophy, which they found with Aristotle who ‘solved’ the problem of being and becoming with his concept that motion is a transition from potentiality to actuality.

The big problem in all these constructions remains the energetic impulse that actualizes the change into the phenomenal world from the world of unchanging Being. Plato could only give metaphorical explanations, e.g. that one of the cave. Christianity inherited this philosophical predicament: why did the perfect God create this imperfect world? About Aristotle, Hooykaas writes: “Every becoming is a transition from potency into act ...a verbal solution which doesn’t explain anything.”<sup>34</sup> Indeed, what is the impulse that forces potentialities to actualize themselves? And what is the nature of the not yet actualized potentialities? B. Russell: “When the concept of potentiality is used as a fundamental and irreducible concept, this conceals always a confusion in thinking. It is one of the weak points in his system that Aristotle makes use of it.”<sup>35</sup>

## 6. *Philosophy of life*

What do we strive for in human life? For the Greeks this was in the first place eudaimonia, happiness. A first source of happiness was the will to power: ambition was always a typical feature of the Greek world-view. Everyone strives to be honoured by friends and feared by foes. Another source of happiness was lust, and related imperturbability (ataraxia), since a life of undisturbed lust did not exist. With Plato the *vita contemplativa* directed to the good, was the central ethical attitude, although he could not say what this meant in practice. Aristotle did focus his ethics on values that could be achieved in the historical world rather than absolute principles – which resembles somewhat practice-oriented Confucianism. For Aristotle ethics is based on nature; nature is good, but it must be developed in three transcendental dimensions: the spiritual, the corporeal and the social, in which he develops categories of virtue.

7. *Ethics – the social dimension*: The social dimension is regulated by rational precepts: *laws*. In sharp contrast to the Confucian society, Greek society is a

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<sup>34</sup>O.c., p. 35.

<sup>35</sup>*Geschiedenis der westerse filosofie (History of Western Philosophy)*, p. 166.

world of unrest: contending cities, internal revolutions, foundations of colonies and wars against non-Greeks. An individual can only protect himself, by pacts of friendship with like-minded others or by independence from others. Friendship is not based on flattery but on free open-mindedness. What we love in friends is not their similarity with ourselves, but their personal values, which can enrich our own restricted personality.

The political doctrine can be reduced to two fundamental questions: firstly, must power be in the hands of one person or has it to be based on the law? Secondly, should authority in accordance with the law be concentrated in one person, a king, or in a group of *aristoi* (the best citizens), or does it belong to the entire nation (democracy)? The purpose of the state is not the state itself, but the creation of possibilities for the development of each individual. The rulers must be integer, and to Plato these are the philosophers.

8. *Mysticism and theology*: Greek philosophy did not care much about mysticism, and when it deals with religion it talks about theology. Neither the Eleusinian Mysteries, nor the cult of Dionysius, nor even Orphism had a profound influence on classical Greek culture. It was only with Plotinus that mysticism, as a foreign element, penetrated the classical world. Christianity, which surfaced about the same time, inhibited free mystical development, mainly by its Christocentrism, power of the revealed word and authority of the dogma. Christian mysticism was to remain marginal. But it can be said of the Greek classicism that, because it was based on an axis of rationality, it did not allow mysticism to develop properly.

Did mysticism in the Indian sense of the word really exist in Greece, or is it just theology? In many histories of mysticism Plato is considered to be the father of Christian mysticism, but F.C. Happold states: "Plato may not be a mystic in the way St. John of the Cross was a mystic."<sup>36</sup> Plato only devised a philosophical frame of reference, in which mystical experience could come to self-understanding. G.C. Field says: "When we contemplate his interpretation of the nature of religious experience and the right behaviour of human beings towards God in general, everybody, who grew up in the Christian tradition, would be astonished by a striking omission. He says practically nothing about the necessity of any personal relation of man to God, which plays such a great role in the Christian doctrine. Pure religious experience, if it exists, does not take an important place in Plato's thinking."<sup>37</sup>

*Theology*: Traditionally the *theoi* were 'supermen', living on the other side of the earth. They have their own history told in *mythoi*. Real theological thinking originated from a philosophical reaction against this mythology. The 'divine' must be invariable and perfect – the birth of the idea that 'being' is divine, and hence that it is opposed to the 'becoming' of the phenomenal world. This 'divine' is unrelated to

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<sup>36</sup>F.C. Happold, *Mysticism*, p. 176.

<sup>37</sup>p. 156.

the mythological gods, who are the objects of cult. The process started with the pre-Socratics,<sup>38</sup> but culminated with Plato and Aristotle. Plato stated that God is good: it raises the problem that evil must come from somewhere else. Furthermore God is unique – monotheistic – and unchangeable. The idea of the God-craftsman also finds its origin with Plato: God created the world according to the eternal patterns of the Ideas. For Aristotle, God was a pure Spirit, who is eternally unmoved. His life is pure thought, its object himself. Consequently contemplation is the highest form of human existence. On the other hand this unmoved being is the mover of the cosmos. He is the perfect good and all creatures strive to become one with this goodness. For Aristotle the divine expresses itself in the eternal cycle of the stars, and even more in the divine ether, but also in living beings and in human spirit.

All these Platonic and Aristotelian elements strongly influenced Christian theology.

*Philosophy of the soul:* In Homeric times the psychè was only a principle of life, identified with breath. But with Plato the problem of death, and subsidiarily also mystical experiences, resulted in the conception of an everlasting soul. This soul was the real part of man, the body only the temporary dwelling of the soul. After death, the soul remains alive. The place where it then finds abode is heaven. However, the soul cannot be material, it was conceived as a spiritual principle, a *nous*. The consequence was a fundamental dualism: the soul – because it was connected to God, to eternal being and truth – could not be free and happy within the mortal body, its jail and also its tool. This means that a transcendent principle became the real core of human beings and that the phenomenal world was inferior. This dualism was inherited by Christianity and is still a paradigm of western thought.

9. The *language* is a logical language, with *mathematics* (geometry) as its ideal.

### ***The Indian World View, Culminating in Buddhism***

As the Indian world-view is very complex, we limit ourselves here to Buddhism,<sup>39</sup> which is its most original philosophy. However, as it cannot be thoroughly comprehended without its Upanishad background, we sometimes refer to the other philosophies.

1. *Energy is absolute reality:* The *energy* is free, but not directed at an act, i.e. not vectorial as in the world of rationality, but it forms a scalar field.<sup>40</sup> In contrast

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. Werner Jaeger, *Die Theologie der frühen Griechischen Denker*.

<sup>39</sup> This is not a description of Buddhism, either as religion or as philosophy. Here we restrict ourselves to Buddhist logic in the sense of Th. Stcherbatsky's *Buddhist Logic*: what is the formal background of this worldview? As Buddhism evolved from the elementary teachings of the Buddha into a real philosophy in the Madhyamika, we only try to reconstruct the fundamental constants.

<sup>40</sup> A scalar field can only fluctuate. For example a heat field fluctuates, but it can not be vectorially directed. So the oceans of the world contain a huge amount of heat, but cannot be focussed to boil an egg.

with a vectorial field which is object-oriented, a scalar field is subject-oriented. This means that the first can be focussed by the will, which is a transcendent drive; animal drives are aimed at an observed object (prey, partner ...), transcendent ones at a virtual object that only exist in imagination. But a scalar field is not oriented on anything, it cannot be influenced by the will, it depends only on the 'heat' of feelings, i.e. on the unrest of emotionality, which belongs to subjectivity. Thus my emotions fluctuate, but cannot be focussed on a goal.

To start with a metaphor: real Reality is an 'ocean' of energy and phenomena are waves on the surface. The 'ocean' in me is called my buddha-nature. This emotional core of my being is totally at rest, and receptive to the mystery of being. What I have to realize in meditation is to subdue the undulation of the field, i.e. the unrest of my immanent feelings. This rest is called nirvāna.

The oldest concept of energy in India is to be found in Sāmkhya philosophy, which is older than Buddhism. *Rajas* is the driving force of the universe, the primordial nature is called *mulaprakṛti*,<sup>41</sup> the dynamic basis of material reality – in contrast to *puruṣa*, the Mind. The dynamics of *mulaprakṛti* consists of three agents: *sattva*, the 'clear, intelligent lightness'; *rajas*, 'stimulating, moving, activity', *tamas*, 'restraining, heaviness'.

The Buddhist concept of 'energy' seems to be derived from this *rajas*.<sup>42</sup> "The Buddhist idea of a force seems to be that it is the subtle form of a substance."<sup>43</sup> However this is not a universe-pervading *ch'i* as in Taoism, but rather reminds of the Greek *en-ergeia*.

To find a basic concept of autonomous energy, we have to go back to the Buddhist real or ultimate Reality. However, the 'ocean' is inaccessible to our ratio and thus empty; we have to start from the energetic component of the phenomena. If the waves originate from the ocean, the ocean must be fundamentally dynamic. The waves are observable, but whence do they originate? They are surely not created by an external transcendental God. "The sensible world consists of *sensibilia* [these are the waves] which are but momentary flashes of energy. The perdurable, eternal, pervasive Matter which is imagined as their support or substratum is a fiction of the Sāmkhyas and other schools."<sup>44</sup> This means that the 'ocean' does not exist as a substance, nevertheless it must be energy: "It is clear that the fundamental elements of matter are rather forces or momentary quanta of energy than substantial atoms."<sup>45</sup>

How can we understand this dynamic ocean from a philosophical viewpoint? The real Reality must be energetic, because otherwise phenomena could not exist. Energy is fundamental, eternal, but unknowable; it creates bits of information, which are observable.

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<sup>41</sup> Mula = root, prakṛti = matter.

<sup>42</sup> Th. Stcherbatsky, *The Central Conception of Buddhism*, p. 22.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 100f.

<sup>44</sup> Th. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, vol. I, p. 79. n fact, also of Greek philosophers.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

The phenomenal world (the ‘waves’) has no independent existence, but derives its reality from the absolute (the ‘ocean’). Because of the phenomenal character of my own subjectivity, I can only approach the absolute by negation of the phenomenal world: the absolute is not the sum of all phenomena, nor is it itself a phenomenon, it is the ‘ocean’ that continues to exist when all the ‘waves’ have been subdued. Whether the absolute exists cannot be demonstrated purely rationally because the absolute cannot be described or defined: consequently, my intellect sees it as a ‘Void’ (*sūnyatā*). But I assume that my mystical experience has an objective counterpart, in the same way that I assume my subjective logic – the logicity of my consciousness – indicates the existence of an objective logicity. So it cannot be known, but can be experienced. “When one experiences directly one’s conscious state there is as yet neither subject nor object, and knowledge and its object are completely united. This is the purest form of experience” (K. Nishida).<sup>46</sup>

This absolute is the only real Reality, inaccessible to our rationality. The phenomenal world, in which Reality makes itself known, does not have its own reality, only a conventional ‘reality’, which we describe in science: since we are able to describe the mechanics of the waves, without knowing what energy really is, we imagine that we are describing Reality. Buddhists call this world *māyā*, phenomenon, i.e. that which appears, and is thus only ‘appearance’ in relation to real Reality.

2. *Information* is our only access to real Reality. “There is no other ultimate reality than separate, instantaneous bits of existence”.<sup>47</sup> However, we must keep in mind that only energy is real and that phenomena, considered as entities, are constructions of our mind. Every bit of existence is a part of a string of momentary events. Energy generates dharmas, which are only flashes of existence (like energy quanta), they last only for an infinitesimal moment, disappear and are followed by other dharmas. “But a thing cannot be the object of a purposive action and cannot be efficient otherwise than by its last moment” ... “Reality indeed is kinetic, the world is a cinema. Causality, i.e. the interdependence of the moments following one another, evokes the illusion of stability or duration, but they are, so to speak, forces or energies flashing into existence without any real enduring substance in them, but also without intervals or with infinitesimally small intervals.”<sup>48</sup> This means that only energy is everlasting and real, but that it phenomenalizes itself in quanta, i.e. dharma’s. The string of dharmas evokes the illusion that the phenomenon is stable.<sup>49</sup>

In Sāmkhya, but also in Taoism, the dharmas are interlinked in a continuous way: “the phenomena are nothing but waves or fluctuations standing out upon a back-ground

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<sup>46</sup> *Inquiry into the Good*, p. 3f.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>49</sup> Logically speaking, this is the same problem as we encounter in integral calculus. We integrate a series of infinitesimal small differentials and get a measurable magnitude.

of an eternal, all-pervading, undifferentiated Matter with which they are identical. The Universe represents a legato movement.”<sup>50</sup> This means that there exists a fundamental real ‘ocean’ (of energy), which undulates. But in Buddhism this was a discontinuous staccato movement: there is no supporting material ‘ocean’, there are only waves, i.e. energy pulses.<sup>51</sup>

Information about the ‘ocean of energy’ arises from personal experience, and is not transferable. What Buddhists call the buddha-nature is actually my own real Reality, the ocean in the wave I am. This means that the primeval energy, which generates my own dharmic string, is at work in me. As bound energy it manifests in my gravity, in the electromagnetic solar energy which provides my life energy, in food combustion which supports my (anti-entropic) body temperature. As free energy it generates my spiritual life ... In fact, I experience the oceanic energy everywhere in my existence. As I know that all phenomena are unreal, this information endeavours to ‘dis-order’ this false experience of being, or to strip it of all conceptualisation: the result is *sūnyatā*, the Void.

Nirvāna is sometimes considered to be a name for the Void (the object), but actually it is also the name for my own buddha-nature (the subject). It is a psychological concept. When I realize an-ātman, i.e. when I am stripped of every feeling of individuality (everlasting substance, a soul), and at the same time see the absolute reality as a pure void, I experience nirvāna. So nirvāna is not a transcendent thing, it is the ocean in me: when all my individuality has gone, I am one with my buddha-nature.

Buddhism is the doctrine of an-ātman. The energetic impulse of Buddha’s life survives with no remaining trace of individuality: it becomes part of the informative Emptiness. This free energy cannot be reactivated: it is in a situation of parinirvāna, the nirvāna of the other side. As all living beings are interconnected in a reticular causality, none of them can reincarnate as such. But the karma, i.e. the deeds done with free energy, influences the reticular field. No one can pinpoint where this energy goes, it spreads through the whole field, bringing the field of existence to a higher or lower level. So, rebirth does not mean rebirth of information – one or other individual – but rebirth of non-liberated energy. As this energy is no longer individualized but part of the whole energetic field, one can never say that a specific person is reborn.

The question whether nirvana is existence or non-existence is a false problem. If I look at nirvāna from the standpoint of energy it has real existence, but when I look at it from the standpoint of information it is non-existent. Or, in the traditional Buddhist imagination: the ocean is real Reality from the viewpoint of energy, but it is informatively empty, thus non-existing.

H. von Glasenapp writes: “Conversely, the old Buddhism denies categorically that in the world of ceaseless change something might exist to which one might attribute the properties of eternally remaining and being independent. Consequently it does not see the last elements or reality as material or spiritual

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>51</sup> This reminds us of the idea of Max Planck that energy is discontinuous and consists of energy quanta.

entities, to which certain states, qualities, etc. manifest themselves, but the mental powers with which we try to grasp and control the world, as well as the sensory perceptions and mental data that enter our consciousness, are themselves the factors (dharma) to which everything can be reduced.”<sup>52</sup> Buddhists see the world as a play between the dharmas, a sort of ‘actual entities’ (Whitehead) that only exist for an instant.

3. *Epistemology*: The Indian philosophers assume that the Mystery reveals itself (or in our metaphor: that the ocean generates waves, which can be observed). In the classical philosophical systems there are two paths that lead to knowledge: firstly natural intelligence, which enables us to discover the structure of the phenomenal world (science!), but which can also lead to a deeper metaphysical insight into the universe, the self, time, etc.; secondly, the revealed Vedic writings, the ‘Word of God’. Jainism and Buddhism do not accept the authority of these holy scriptures. The ‘free-thinking’ Buddhists teach that words are pure conventions, that philosophy cannot be reduced to words, but to personal experience: a philosopher must be his own doctrine. “It does not aim at mere intellectual conviction but at transforming such conviction into direct experiences. In fact, the word ‘darśana’ means ‘vision’. It stands for the direct, immediate and intuitive vision of Reality, the actual perception of Truth which cannot be discovered by mere intellect.”<sup>53</sup> (B.N. Singh)

‘Knowledge’ of the real Reality comes through Enlightenment, which changes the consciousness of reality. Enlightenment can only occur when one surrenders to the Mystery, and leads to Deliverance, in the religious act, from ego-intentional emotionality (with an-ātman as highest goal), as well as from the tendency to rationally interpret experiences rationally (with the goal of śūnyatā, the conceptual Void).

Epistemology in Buddhism is not easy to describe. The ‘cognition’ of Emptiness, cannot be achieved by rational analysis because there is nothing to analyze: “What knowledge is in itself we never will know, it is a mystery.”<sup>54</sup> But this does not mean that we cannot experience it.”<sup>55</sup>

Cognition in the field of phenomenology is handicapped by the pratīyasamutpāda, the fact that every phenomenon is linked to all other phenomena in a huge reticular field. When I analyse one phenomenon, I have to extract it from this reticulum, cutting its external relations and so falsifying it. Hence I cannot describe the phenomenal world as such: “what a thing is in itself, what its essence is, we never can express, we know only its relations”.<sup>56</sup> On the other

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<sup>52</sup> *Die Philosophie der Inder*, p. 302.

<sup>53</sup> *Dictionary of Indian Philosophical Concepts*, p. 81.

<sup>54</sup> Th. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, p. 147.

<sup>55</sup> Stcherbatsky speaks about direct and indirect knowledge. “The whole science of epistemology is built up on this foundation of a difference in principle between a direct and an indirect knowledge.” (o.c., p. 147).

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 146. Contrary to Indian and western realists (e.g. Aristoteles) buddhists do not believe that ‘essences’ exist.

hand, as each wave is a part of the ocean, the real Reality must be hidden in the phenomena themselves. Phenomena are the informative aspect of Reality, but their dynamics, their energetic aspect is the real Reality. Śūnyatā is pure, informationless energy. This energy is also detectable in the phenomena, and my approach to real Reality has to start from nature. The dynamics of life are not analysable rationally, but I can experience them all my life. The same is true for my consciousness. Experiencing the rajas is experiencing of the real Reality, i.e. Energy. However, as energy is always bound to structures, these disturb my experience of pure free energy. Taoists try to experience pure life, sometimes described as life before birth, in their meditative practices. Buddhists aim at experiencing pure consciousness, pure mental energy without images. Real Reality is the energetic aspect of life, the phenomenal structure its informative aspect.

Buddhism does not believe in the concept of ātman, self, soul. In the Vedic period the mental was seen as fine material. The idea that an autonomous spiritual substance existed only arose in the Upanishads. In some systems this spiritual substance became so dominant that matter was considered to have been born from the spirit (idealism). But Buddhism developed the doctrine of an-ātman, non-self. In Buddhism the ego-feeling belongs to the phenomenal world and not to the absolute. The wave has no existence separate from the ocean and its individuality is only temporary. The fact that we nevertheless have the feeling of being a self is a result of the ego-intentionality of our emotionality; this feeling is essential to survival, but the aim is to ultimately overcome it and no longer experience oneself as a wave but as ocean: this deeper nature is the buddha-nature. This is not the nature of Buddha, but that of all conscious beings: Buddha was simply the first to have achieved it. The goal of my life is also to liberate my real nature. It is not only from an ontological point of view that this is true. In meditation I also try to allow a consciousness to develop which is not my wave consciousness but my ocean consciousness. The an-ātman is thus only achieved in the religious act.

#### 4. *Coordinates*

- (a) *Time* is a spiral: one rises to full transcendence (nirvāna) through countless cyclical samsāras. In nirvāna time ends and timelessness begins (this is not the same as eternity, which is an infinitely continuing time).

The fundamental characteristic of the waves is their ‘temporality’: they appear and disappear. This is expressed in the concept of samsāra, the cycle of existence. But in essence they constitute only one facet of a succession of waves: they pass on the life impulse and generate new waves.

Reincarnation is therefore not a resurrection of the ‘deceased’ wave, but the continuation of the succession of waves. I have no ‘self’ that survives the phenomenal world. Buddhism is an an-ātman, non-self, teaching.

But Buddhism believes in the transcendence of the universe through karma. To understand the Buddhist concept of karma properly, one has to see it in relation to the an-ātman concept. I am a wave in a succession of waves. Since I have free



energy at my disposal, my deeds – karma (from kr: to do) – will give an impulse to the next wave. It is true that no one is born as a blank sheet, but inherits his starting programme from everything that has gone before. A Darwinist interpretation would be that they change the environment which influences my offspring. In both cases, the consequence of positive karma is that following generations are given a higher spiritual platform from which to start, and negative karma does the opposite. Human history consists of the totality of human deeds, i.e. karma. Every deed I do becomes forever a constituent part of history and can never again be separated from it. History is a karma flow towards the ‘spiritualisation’ of the world, i.e. towards the universal realisation of the true buddha-nature. Anyone who produces positive karma is acting well morally. He is not however rewarded for this as an individual, because this would contradict the teaching of an-ātman, and would carry the ego-intentionality on into the hereafter. Buddhism sees the personal eternal life as a form of egoism. What motivates me to act positively is the ‘Great Attractor’, the ocean, which expresses itself in the meditative attitude as an urge towards reaching the Absolute. The decline of self, i.e. the an-ātman, is the only reward. Since I am only a phase in the cosmic line, I have a responsibility towards the cosmos. It demands a mystical attitude at the highest level, whereby Subject = Object (experiencing myself as the Mystery, as ‘God’) is the ultimate aim of my existence.

(b) *Space* is a field space, which induces moods in our consciousness. These moods are caused by the Mystery and are thus transcendent by nature. The Mystery is only given to us as a field: a field cannot be described (it is a Void), we only know it by its effect: it is *experienceable*.

It is so that we not only deceive ourselves rationally by believing that the māyā world is real and think that we find the meaning of existence there (science, technology, economics, politics, etc.), but we are also emotionally tied to it by our thirst for life, which is a consequence of the energetic impulse given by the succession of waves. This manifests itself in a series of shackles to existence such as sexual desire, the urge for survival, material possessions and comfort, the hunger for power, etc.

I am not powerless against these impulses, because I have free energy that enables me to boost or subdue the impulse, i.e. increase or decrease the thirst for life. When I subdue the wave in meditative calm, this state is called nirvāna which I am able to achieve momentarily. If the succession of waves itself is subdued, it is called parinirvāna: at that moment the impulse has passed and the succession of waves has become one with the ocean of the absolute.

Space is a mystical space: the mysterious energy is everywhere around me and in me. Although it is unknowable, it is experienceable. Meditation is the wordless experience of this field. Prayers are replaced by transcendental moods, just as musical notes have to be replaced by musical emotions.

(c) *Causality* is a field causality (comparable to a magnetic field which affects a magnetic needle). Science is disclosing the causal links in reality. But is

this the real Reality? Phenomenal reality does not exist as a sum of waves, but as a dynamic aggregate of successions of waves, like cosmic strings, yet they are wave fields: every wave is the result of a field of waves, which are themselves the results of fields ... until in the end every wave is a product of the entire cosmos. This is by no means a speculative idea: 300 years ago I had – at least theoretically –  $3^{10}$  (1,024) ancestors; if I go back into evolution I will ultimately end up in the whole of humanity, and then beyond into the animal kingdom ... and then into the entire cosmos – not forgetting that all living things on Earth are products of solar energy.

In this world I am the subject that observes and that is moved, so I have the feeling to be in some way an individual, a person. According to Buddhism, my individuality is not real. It is in fact a process, a conglomeration of cosmic forces called skandhas. These cosmic forces are dynamically interwoven; together they form a dynamic pattern and they are subject to incessant change. I can observe this in my own life-process: it is not only my body that is constantly changing, but also my mind. However, I am only one of the countless products of the cosmos. This cosmos started as pure energy and developed ever-higher life forms; this means that all forms were already present in the primal energy: my body, my intellect, and my affectability have at all times been present in the cosmos. So contrary to Western materialist belief, not matter, but energy is primordial. The five skandhas, viz. matter, sensation, perception, conception, higher consciousness, are cosmic potentialities that were present from the very beginning, but which only made themselves explicit in the course of evolution, dependent on the environment. They represent five levels of freed energy. All five skandhas have been realised on the human level. At death they break up again and their energy is reabsorbed into the cosmic field. All that remains is the impulse, which in its turn will build new dynamic skandha-bundles out of the ocean of energy.

So man is simply one of these skandha-bundles and his deeper nature is the ocean. He is not a particular substance that possesses these skandha qualities and survives independently like a sort of soul after the bundle has broken up. The individual is nothing more than the sum of these skandhas: if the bundle disintegrates, the individual vanishes. Moreover, my apparent individuality is constantly changed by the internal dynamic and mutual influence of the skandhas: my life is a process. Because the cluster tries to maintain itself, for which it needs ego-intentionality, I have the impression of being a 'self', whereas in fact I am only a process.

(d) *Motion* is e-motion: the consciousness is 'moved' by the Mystery's field effect. The cycle of existence, *samsāra*, can hinder people from realizing their buddha-nature of the cosmos. This cycle is described in the doctrine of the twelve causes that make us continue to revolve in the merry-go-round of existence. These causes are: (1) *avidyā*, the non-enlightenment with regard to the true nature of phenomena; from this arises (2) a blind instinct for life (life is the only value and one wants to retain it), this awakens (3) a self-consciousness in

the subject (S) who thinks he can perpetuate life by intervening in objectivity (O) by developing the  $S \leftrightarrow O$  relationship (science); from this (4) the nama-rūpa world is born, the objectivity of names and forms; (5) this leads to the genesis of an ego-consciousness: I can face the world and learn, by way of my senses, to know and control it; (6) in this way we consider the phenomenal world as the real Reality; (7) from this comes the urge to dominate reality by perception and conception; this leads to (8) the desire for things; and (9) attachment to existence (kleśas), with the karmic burden as its consequence; (10) this results in an urge to perpetuate life (sexual desire); this leads (11) to the birth of new life and to (12) old age and death; but (1) leads again to rebirth in avidyā ...

Emotional life gives rise to suffering the border situations of life: disease, old age and death (as described in the life of the Buddha). Suffering is a consequence of frustration with the pointless cycle of existence. That is why I have to cultivate the real consciousness of reality that teaches me the buddha-nature of things. This is called enlightenment: it releases me from the avidyā and is not a rational insight but a mystical experience. After all, the ocean of the absolute remains a conceptual Void. My self-feeling becomes an-ātman, non-self. The experience of unity, Subject = Object, is called nirvāna, the subduing of the wave. I can experience this nirvāna momentarily. It leads to the deliverance of the succession of waves in the experience of unity with the ocean which is called parinirvāna. However the energetic impulse after deliverance survives without any trace of individuality: it becomes part of the informative Void. This free energy cannot be reincarnated: it is in a situation of parinirvana, the nirvāna of the other side, but the deeds influence the reticular field. The energy spreads through the entire field.

5. The *ontological status* is Non-Being. 'Non-Being' means: reality that cannot be conceptualised. Non-being = conceptual Void, but full of experience. Already the Upanishads acknowledged that there were two levels of reality: the empirical multiplicity of our observable world, and the Universal Oneness. The latter can be symbolised as the ocean, the former as the waves. Western positivism only accepts the waves, but every philosophy that has a mystical dimension assumes that a real Reality does exist. It is eternal, and one could call it 'God', on condition that it is an immanent God, and not a transcendent person.

The consciousness, the self or ātman participates both in the world of Multiplicity and of Oneness: in the Multiplicity because the ātmans have individuality, and in the Oneness because the ātman is identical to Brahman, but although in the Vedānta both are granted reality, it is assumed that Brahman is the deeper universal nature of ātman, thereby preserving the non-dualism. But in Rāmānuja's thinking (1040–1137), reality is attributed to souls, so that they continue to exist after death, and personality is attributed to the Absolute. Buddhism, however, opted radically for the doctrine of an-ātman: the ātman is not due any reality of its own, and it is illusory, like the whole of samsāra. The only reality is the

non-conceptualisable Void of the Mystery, but this is also the nature – the budha-nature – of my individual consciousness. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the phenomenal world has a ‘conventional truth’ – the ‘truth’ of the waves – as an introduction to the deeper truth of the ocean. According to Nāgārjuna, the phenomenal world is not due any being-value, it is no more than a ‘flickering’ dharma world; but the Absolute, which we try to understand as a Non-being, and call a Void, is inaccessible to us. Since this teaching brings with it a heavy psychological burden, the Pure Ideation theory was developed, which designates the Absolute as pure Spirit, and the phenomenal world as a projection of this Spirit.

The numinous in atheistic systems. Most Indian philosophies are atheistic. In theistic religions God is the source of cosmic and moral order, revealer of the truth, help in existential need and deliverer. In Buddhism causality is autonomous, not only in the physical, but also in the moral sense, in the form of karmic law and reincarnation. One can call on the devatās for help; they have limited power, but more than humans. However, man has to achieve deliverance by his own efforts.

## 6. *Philosophy of life*

Human existence is problematic. In the Vedic period, as in the Homeric period, life was the highest value. But Brahmanism in particular realized that death was an inescapable reality that destroys life. This is where the idea of reincarnation originated, derived from the cyclical time concept. The quality of the next existence is dependent on the karma of the present. One is thus imprisoned in an endless cycle which can only end when the karmic energy is exhausted. Buddhism chooses as its starting point this problematic existence, its worst form is the frustrating transience of existence, but one must therefore pursue a higher level of existence.

The notion of deliverance had a somewhat elitist nature: few understood that one had to transcend the false consciousness of reality. The concept actually only fully ripened in philosophical reflection. But it is important that one does not in the first place think of the deliverance of the personal ego – a conception that has held sway in the Western world since the Greeks – but of the liberation of cosmic energy. When I die, my life-energy will already have been passed on to my descendants (or I contributed to the spiritual environment), and the saṃsāra circle will not be broken. After a great many revolutions it spirals towards the total liberation of the cosmos. The dharma structure of the life-flow means that on a cosmic scale I only exist for an instant, so I cannot extrapolate anything from my own tiny existence. So, on what basis do I assume that a cosmic evolution towards spiritualisation exists? On the one hand we have the evidence of sages, who have understood this in a moment of enlightenment, and on the other the idea arises out of philosophical reflection: the world of transience is experienced as negative compared to a world of eternal being. This deliverance is not only a human affair, but applies to the whole cosmos, which is a process of spiritualisation. Every phenomenon, including man, is a link in a cosmic chain:

the fact that one human is born at a higher spiritual level than another is a consequence of his place in the chain – and therefore of karmic law.

The state of deliverance, *nirvāna*, is often seen as something that can only be reached after death, but this view forgets to take reincarnation into account. Not I, only the cosmic string to which I belong can reach *nirvāna*. But when in mystical union ego-intentionality is completely eliminated, one undergoes a purely mystical experience, and this is a flash of *nirvāna*. The interpretation of the state of *parinirvāna* is a theological matter, open to speculation.

But in practice, yoga (not only in its technical sense, but as an attitude to life) is the way to deliverance: “That in the present era one can only achieve the highest mystical experience by the thorough exercise of yoga techniques.” (J. Gonda)<sup>57</sup>

## 7. Ethics

The social result of mystical life is *maitrī* (love) and *karūna* (compassion), the consequence of empathic emotion. As man is by nature good, because of his buddha-nature, when he throws off his bonds to the phenomenal world, he becomes kind-hearted, loving and compassionate. That is also the reason for the great tolerance of Buddhism. In fact in the Buddhist world there was never a religious war, because truth (dogma’s) is of no importance, only transcendent emotionality (mysticism) determines religious life.

This results in a universal empathy including animals, plants and landscapes, and even one’s enemies. Compassion with everything is described by Felix Mauthner: “Compassion? Yes. When we mean by suffering what it originally meant: passively undergoing, co-experience without pain. Every creature undergoes this only world. Everybody co-experiences it, ‘com-passionates’ it.”<sup>58</sup>

One particular weak point in Indian traditional ethics is the caste system and its social rigidity, only slightly compensated for by higher ethical obligations for the upper classes. This system was rejected by Buddhism, which holds “that ethics is not a consequence, but a premise for deliberation, respectively holiness. Moral behaviour does not remain at the end and is not the natural result of a life of belief and meditation, but it is the condition for the ‘true exertion’, ‘the true vigilance’ and ‘the true concentration’. It is a means on the way to the goal, not the goal itself.”<sup>59</sup>

Buddhist ethical prescriptions are based on selflessness. Because I am not bound to this self, I can use my free energy to release others from suffering rather than serve myself. The greater part of the vices is related to this self. He who is able to reverse this self-intentionality becomes patient, tolerant, modest, devoted, humble. The ideal to strive for is the arhat-ideal. Arhat can best be

<sup>57</sup> *Die Religionen Indiens*, vol. II, p. 338.

<sup>58</sup> *Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Zweiter Band, p. 132. Albert Schweitzer says: “European thinkers take care that no animals roam their ethics” (*Kultur und Ethik*, p. 225).

<sup>59</sup> Peter Gerlitz, “Die Ethik des Buddha: Philosophische Grundlagen und sittliche Normen in frühen Buddhismus,” in Carl Heinz Reischow (hrsg.), *Ethik der Religionen*, pp. 232vv.

translated as ‘the holy’, in the sense of one who realized the whole-ness, i.e. the complete man.

In order to achieve this, there are five fundamental prescriptions (prohibitions): respect for life, no thieving, no adultery, no lying, no drugs. Next there are also ten good deeds.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, all these commandments underwent a strong interiorization – precisely like the Jewish Mosaic law in the Sermon of the Mount – everything comes from the heart of man. Similarly, in Buddhism monastic rules become increasingly complex: there are 227 rules.

Social rules in Theravāda are restricted to the relation between husband and wife (mutual respect), parents and children (gratitude), teacher and pupil (knowledge), friend and friend (partnership), master and servant, king and subjects (justice), monk and layman. From the relation between master and servant, king and people, the fundamental principles of a political ethics are derived. Ethics are based on a refined human interaction, e.g. labour.<sup>61</sup> Labour is in the first place human relation, and not purely directed to productivity. It is a relation based on justice and this determines harmony in the world.

It was not Buddha’s intention to reform the world by legalistic interventions, but his doctrine brought about some drastic reforms: abolition of caste society and consequently the installation of equality of all people. This step closer to social emancipation is a step not yet taken in Hinduism. Of course, slavery was forbidden.

The whole life had to be borne on love. Love expresses itself in compassion, shared delight, and equanimity.

8. *Mysticism*: Buddhism is mysticism. It is the most pure mystical philosophy, because the subject-object relation is reduced to an-ātman – śūnyatā (non-ego – void).
9. The *language* is a symbolic one, with silence as its ideal.

An extensive philosophy of language arose in India on the basis of belief in the Vedic writings, in the Mimamsa School and the School of Grammar, among others. The ‘free-thinking’ Buddhists teach that words are pure conventions. So, philosophy cannot be reduced to words, but to personal experience: a philosopher must be his own doctrine.

Buddha taught that one cannot trust words. He says: “Language, o Mahamāti is not the ultimate truth, and what can be attained by words is not the highest truth. And why? Because the highest truth can only be experienced by the wise men. With words you can get access to truth, but words are themselves not the truth”.<sup>62</sup> Buddhist Tripitaka is a collection of religious writings, but it is not a

<sup>60</sup> Cf. T.W. Rhys Davids, *The Questions of King Milinda*, Part I, pp. 143vv.

<sup>61</sup> In the *Dīgha Nikaya* (The Long Discourses) we read: “By arranging their work according to their strength, by supplying them with food and wages, by looking after them when they are ill, by sharing special delicacies with them, and by letting them of work at the right time.” (Maurice Walshe, *The Long Discourses of the Buddha – A Translation of the Dīgha Nikaya*, 1996, pp. 468.)

<sup>62</sup> Lankāvātara Sūtra, ch. xxxiii. D.T. Suzuki (tr.), *The Lankāvātara Sūtra*, 1973 repr., p. 77.

Bible or a Koran: it has no special authority. Actually there is no reliance in words: “It is clear that Scripture, when tested by experience, has no authority at all”,<sup>63</sup> because “Ultimate reality is unutterable”.<sup>64</sup>

The culmination point of this Buddhist distrust for words is reached in the fact that the sixth patriarch of Ch’an tore the sutras.

## SUMMARY of descriptive patterns

	Taoism S ⊂ O	Greek philosophy S ↔ O	Buddhism S = O
Energy	Ch’i	En-ergeia Archè	Rajas
Information	Aisthèsis Observation	In-sight (logical patterns) Metaphysical thinking	Illumination Meditation
Epistemology	O: Tzū-jen, Tao S: Phenomenon	O: Logics S: Identity principle	O: Direct Experience S: an-ātman = Buddha-nature (skandha’s)
Coordinates	Naturalism	Rationalism	Mysticism
Time	Cyclic	Linear	Staccato: Dharma → samsāra Timeless → nirvāna
Space	Full of ch’i	Empty Abstract – mathematical	Numinous field
Causality	Reticular Actio in distans	Linear Collision	Dharma field Pratītya-samutpāda
Motion	Transformation	Locomotion	Emotion
Ontology	Becoming	Being	Non-being (Void)
Ethics	Vitalism	Legalism	Maitrī (love) + Karunā (compassion)
Language	Metaphoric	Logic Mathematical	Symbolic Silence

<sup>63</sup> Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic*, vol. I, p. 67.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 71.

# A Methodological Framework for Cross-Tradition Understanding and Constructive Engagement

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The purpose of this paper is to present and explain a meta-philosophical methodological framework of how to look at seemingly competing approaches for the sake of cross-tradition understanding and constructive engagement in our carrying out philosophical inquiries in a global context.<sup>1</sup> I intend to use this presentation and explanation as one way to explore the issue of how cross-tradition<sup>2</sup> understanding and constructive engagement is possible.

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<sup>1</sup> Though some of the conceptual/explanatory resources (primarily those to be introduced in the first two sections) of this framework appear in my previous article [Bo Mou (2001), "An Analysis of the Structure of Philosophical Methodology – In View of Comparative Methodology," in *Two Roads to Wisdom – Chinese and Analytic Philosophical Traditions*, edited by Bo Mou (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 2001), pp. 337–364], what is given in the central portion of this paper is a substantial development, especially the part on the adequacy conditions for methodological guiding principles in view of the constructive-engagement approach in cross-tradition understanding. Earlier versions of (some of) the basic ideas of this paper (either in the form of this paper *per se* or as part of a more extensive paper on some other topic) were presented at the following conference/panel meetings: (1) the 9th East-West Philosophers' Conference (Hawaii, USA, 1 June 2005), (2) the international conference on "Searle's Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy: Constructive Engagement" (as part of the presentation paper) [co-sponsored by the International Society for Comparative Studies of Chinese and Western Philosophy (ISCWP), Division of Humanities of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and the APA's Committee on International Cooperation] (Hong Kong, 14 June 2005), (3) the ISCWP's panel session at the American Philosophical Association Eastern Division 2005 Meeting (New York City, USA, 28 December 2005), (4) the 10th Symposium of Confucianism/Buddhism Communication and Philosophy of Culture (sponsored by Department of Philosophy, Huafan University, Taipei, ROC, 17 March 2007), and (5) San Jose State University Philosophy Alumni 2007 Conference (San Jose, USA, 5 May 2007). I am grateful to the audiences at the above meetings and Weimin Sun, who is commentator on my paper at the above third meeting, for their helpful comments and criticism.

<sup>2</sup> I use 'cross-tradition' here instead of 'cross-cultural' for the sake of due coverage in the current philosophical context. For one thing, 'traditions' here can mean either philosophical traditions or cultural traditions. For another thing, 'traditions' can mean either major philosophical traditions associated with their distinct cultural backgrounds (such as Western and Chinese philosophical traditions) or distinct sub-traditions within one major philosophical tradition (such as the analytic tradition and the continental tradition within Western philosophical tradition or the Confucian tradition and the Daoist tradition within Chinese philosophical tradition).



Before my presentation and due explanation of the suggested framework, let me first make some necessary clarification of a number of key terms that appear in the statement of the purpose of this writing. The term ‘constructive engagement’ here means a general philosophical approach that inquires into how, via reflective criticism and self-criticism, distinct modes of thinking, methodological approaches, visions, insights, substantial points of view, or conceptual/explanatory resources from different philosophical traditions, and/or from different styles/orientations of doing philosophy in a global context, can learn from each other and make joint contribution to the common philosophical enterprise and a series of commonly concerned issues or topics of philosophical significance. The foregoing constructive-engagement purpose and approach is considered as one defining character of the enterprise of comparative philosophy as the term ‘comparative philosophy’ is used in a philosophically constructive way. The suggested framework is methodological in a dual sense. First, it is directly and explicitly concerned with cross-tradition understanding and constructive engagement of seemingly competing *methodological* approaches from different traditions. Second, the framework *per se* is methodological in nature: it is concerned with *how* to look at seemingly competing *methodological* approaches from different traditions. In the above second sense the suggested framework is *about philosophical methodology*; in this sense, the suggested framework is also meta-philosophical in nature. When I made such meta-philosophical remarks on philosophical methodology, I do not mean that I am able to be (or pretend to be) absolutely neutral without or beyond “any *ad hoc* philosophical point of view and origin”; in the sense of ‘meta-philosophical’ as I use the term, my meta-philosophical remarks on philosophical methodology to be delivered via the framework present a certain philosophical point of view.

In the following discussion, my strategy is this. First, in the first section, I introduce and explain some relevant conceptual and explanatory resources employed in the framework, especially the distinction between the methodological perspective and the methodological guiding principle, and make some initial methodological points. Second, in the section on two paradigm methodological perspectives, I examine two paradigm methodological perspectives, Socrates’s being-aspect-concerned perspective and Confucius’s becoming-aspect-concerned perspective, both for the purpose of highlighting their significant methodological visions and for the sake of illustration of relevant points. Third, in the section on adequacy conditions for methodological guiding principles, I suggest six meta-philosophical adequacy conditions for adequate methodological guiding principles, which constitute one core portion of the suggested methodological framework. Fourth, in the final section, I bring out three paradigm methodological-guiding-principle models, i.e., the Zhuang Zi’s, *Yin-Yang*, and Hegelian models, for the sake of illustrating the preceding six adequacy conditions and emphasizing their respective roles in the enterprise of comparative engagement as specified above.

## Methodological Perspective Versus Methodological Guiding-Principle

As indicated above, the suggested methodological framework is the one concerning how to look at seemingly competing methodological approaches from distinct traditions in regard to an object of philosophical study. Given that the term ‘methodological approach’ means a way responding to how to approach an object of study, the term is a generic term to mean a number of methodological ways. In the context of philosophical inquiries, general speaking, the notion of methodological approach can, and needs to, be refined into three distinct but related notions of methodological ways for the sake of adequately characterizing three distinct but somehow related methodological ways in philosophical inquiries, i.e., methodological perspective (or perspective method), methodological instrument (or instrumental method), and methodological guiding principle (or guiding-principle method). For the sake of the purpose of this writing, in this section, I focus on conceptual and explanatory resources concerning methodological perspective and methodological guiding principle, which are needed for the suggested methodological framework, and highlight a number of relevant points.<sup>3</sup>

Roughly speaking, a methodological perspective is a way to approach an object of study that is intended to point to a certain aspect of the object and explain the aspect in terms of the characteristics of that aspect together with the minimal metaphysical commitment that there *is* that aspect of the object or that the aspect is genuinely (instead of being merely supposed to be) possessed by the object. There is a distinction between eligible and ineligible methodological perspectives concerning an object of study. If the aforementioned minimal metaphysical commitment is true, the methodological perspective is considered *eligible* in regard

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<sup>3</sup>For a comprehensive discussion of the nature and status of the three distinct methodological ways, see Mou (2001), pp. 337–364. For the sake of the reader capturing their distinction in a vivid way, let me use the following ‘method’-house metaphor to illustrate the relevant points. Suppose that a person intends to approach her destination, say, a house (the object of study), which has several entrances – say, its front door, side door and roof window (a variety of aspects, dimensions or layers of the object of study). She then takes a certain path (a certain methodological perspective) to enter the house, believing that the path leads to the entrance of this side (say, the front door) or the entrance of that side (say, a side door) of the house. If a path really leads to a certain entrance of the house, the path is called ‘eligible’ one; otherwise it is called ‘ineligible’ (thus the distinction between eligible and ineligible methodological perspectives). When she takes a certain path to enter the house, she holds a certain instrument in her hand (a methodological instrument) to clear her path, say, a hatchet if the path is overgrown with brambles or a snow shovel if the path is heavily covered with snow. She also goes with a certain idea in her mind (a methodological guiding principle) that explains why she takes that path, instead of another, and guide her to have some understanding, adequate or inadequate, of the relation of that path to other paths (other methodological perspectives), if any, to the house. Surely such a guiding idea can be adequate or inadequate (adequate or inadequate methodological guiding principle): for example, if she recognizes and renders other eligible paths also eligible and thus compatible with her current path, the her guiding idea is adequate; in contrast, if she fails to recognize that and thus renders her current path exclusively eligible (the only path leading to the house), then her guiding idea is inadequate, though her current path *per se* is indeed eligible.

to that object. Otherwise, the methodological perspective is considered *ineligible* in regard to that object. Indeed, given an object of study, whether a methodological perspective is eligible or ineligible is to be determined on the basis of whether or not the aspect, dimension or layer to which the perspective in question is intended to point is really possessed by the object.

It is noted that a methodological perspective as specified above is a methodological-perspective simplex, in contrast to a methodological-perspective complex, which somehow integrates two or more perspective simplexes into one. Below, unless otherwise specified, by ‘methodological perspective’ I mean a methodological-perspective simplex.

One basic, minimal metaphysical presupposition of the suggested metaphilosophical methodological framework is this: given an object of study and given that the identity of the genuine aspect(s) of the object is thus determined (whether it is a naturally produced object in physical reality or a socially constructed object in social reality or an object of a systematic theoretic construction), there *is* the *common, objective* object of study linguistically or semantically addressed in the mutual understanding and constructive engagement. This minimal metaphysical presupposition actually consists of three sub-presuppositions: (1) given an object of study, the object has its *objective* character in a certain sense so that the “anything goes” version of conceptual relativism cannot go; (2) given an object of study, the object possesses its genuine multiple aspects, or all these aspects are genuinely possessed by the same, common object so that various agent-speakers who point to these different aspects actually talk about the same object; (3) an agent-speaker who talks about the same common object can linguistically or semantically (say, via a certain communication link) reach the common object as a whole, whether or not she is currently able to epistemologically reach all the aspects of the object. People have, or would have when being allowed to think for a while, their pre-theoretic understandings that (would) confirm the three claims or even consider them as platitudes. As any system has to stop somewhere, the framework to be presented here proceeds with its resorting to our reasonable pre-theoretic understandings in these three connections.<sup>4</sup>

A methodological guiding principle is a way concerning a certain methodological perspective (or a group of perspectives) in regard to an object of study, which is, or should be, presupposed by the agent who takes that perspective (or one or more among the group of the perspectives) for the sake of guiding and regulating how the perspective should be evaluated (its status and its due relation with other perspectives) and used (how to choose among the group of perspectives), and how the purpose and focus that the perspective serves should be set. There is the distinction between adequate and

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<sup>4</sup>But, indeed, it is both philosophically interesting and significant to raise and explore the three corresponding reflectively-worthy issues for the sake of establishing a due metaphysical/semantic foundation for the suggested methodological framework: (1) how it is possible for us to have the common *objective* object of study without running into the radical relativism; (2) how it is possible for us to have the common object of study that genuinely possess its multiple aspects; (3) how it is possible for the agent-speaker to linguistically reach the object as a whole, whether or not she is currently able to epistemologically reach all the aspects of the object. I explore those issues somewhere else.

inadequate methodological guiding principles concerning methodological perspective(s) in regard to an object of study; as indicated at the outset, in the last section, I will suggest six sorts of adequacy conditions for adequate methodological guiding principles.

For the purpose of cross-tradition understanding and constructive engagement, it is especially philosophically interesting, relevant or even crucial to have an adequate methodological guiding principle, which the agent is expected to presuppose in evaluating the status and nature of the eligible methodological perspectives, applying her methodological perspective, and looking at the relation between her current working perspective and the other perspectives.

Generally speaking, on the one hand, the merit, status, and function of a methodological perspective *per se* can be evaluated independently of certain methodological guiding principles which the agent might presuppose in her actual application of the perspective. The reflective practice *per se* of taking a certain methodological perspective as a working perspective implies neither that one loses sight of other genuine aspects of the object nor that one ignores or rejects other eligible perspectives in one's background thinking.

On the other hand, it does matter whether one's taking a certain methodological perspective is regulated by an adequate or inadequate guiding principle, especially for the sake of constructive engagement of seemingly competing approaches. When one's application of an eligible methodological perspective as part of one's reflective practice is guided by some adequate guiding principle and contributes to adequate understanding of the object of study, one's application of that perspective would be philosophically constructive.

In the following sections, with the foregoing conceptual and explanatory resources and distinctions, I first explain two paradigm methodological perspectives from the Western and Chinese philosophical traditions to illustrate the above general understanding of the nature and status of a methodological perspective; I then suggest six adequacy conditions for adequate methodological guiding principles and bring out three paradigm methodological-guiding-principle models to illustrate the adequacy conditions.

## Two Paradigm Methodological Perspectives

In this section, I present two seemingly competing methodological perspectives, respectively from the Western and Chinese philosophical traditions, as two paradigm methodological-perspective models to serve three purposes: (1) to illustrate the foregoing conceptual and explanatory resources and the above general characterization of the methodological-perspective dimension of a methodological approach; (2) to provide effective methodological-perspective samples for the sake of illustration of the point of the next section concerning how to look at the relation between seemingly competing methodological perspectives through adequate methodological guiding principles; (3) to bring out two significant methodological perspectives as effective methodological-perspective paradigms in comparative engagement. One of them is a Socrates style being-aspect-concerned methodological

perspective as suggested and illustrated through Socrates's characterization of those important things in the human life like virtue, justice and piety in some earlier Plato dialogues. The other is a Confucius style becoming-aspect-concerned methodological perspective as suggested and illustrated through Confucius's characterization of those important things in one's moral life like *ren* (humanity), *li* (ritual or convention) and *xiao* (filial piety) as revealed in the *Analects*.<sup>5</sup>

### *Socrates's Being-Aspect-Concerned Perspective in Early Plato Dialogue<sup>6</sup>*

Socrates's distinctive methodological approach which he consciously and systematically pursued in early Plato dialogues is called *elenchos* in Greek, more usually written *elenchus*, literally meaning 'refutation.' The *elenchus* approach can be seen most clearly in such short dialogues as *Laches* (to define bravery) and the *Euthyphro* (to define piety); but it is also used in Book I of the *Republic*, the first part of *Meno*, *Protagoras*, and *Gorgias*. The presentation in the *Euthyphro* of such a methodological approach is usually considered the most neat, concise, and representative, especially in connection with its methodological-perspective dimension and methodological-instrument dimensions. The manifest level or layer of the *elenchus* approach clearly reveals itself through the dialogue between Socrates and Euthyphro on the latter's four definitions of piety presented in the *Euthyphro* (especially see 5a–15d).

To aid in understanding some characteristic features of Socrates's method, the structure of how Socrates applied his method in *Euthyphro* is highlighted as follows:

- 5a Euthyphro claims that he has knowledge of piety, and Socrates says he is eager to become his pupil.
- 5c–d Socrates puts forward the question 'What is piety?' and sets up three conditions or requirements to be met:
  1. Some feature that is the same in every pious action.
  2. This feature will not be shared by any impious action.
  3. It will be that feature (or the lack of it) that makes an action pious (or impious).
- 5d Euthyphro gives his first definition ("The pious is what I am now doing").
- 6d–e Socrates explains why Euthyphro's first answer is not an answer to the question [failing to meet the first condition above] and further clarifies the question ("What is the essential form of piety which makes all pious actions pious").
- 7a Euthyphro gives his second answer to the question ("What is pleasing to the gods is pious").

<sup>5</sup>In Mou (2001), I already give a brief examination of the two methodological perspectives. In the following, I give a more detailed account of them.

<sup>6</sup>What is called 'the Socrates style being-aspect-concerned methodological perspective' here is the methodological-perspective dimension of Socrates's methodological approach in dialogue (i.e., his *elenchus* method as a whole).

- 7a–8a Socrates explain why Euthyphro’s second answer can be reduced to absurdity (self-contradiction) [thus actually failing to meet the second condition above].
- 8b–9e Socrates guides Euthyphro to his third definition (“What the gods all love is pious”).
- 10a–11a Socrates analyzes the problem with Euthyphro’s third answer/definition, which fails to meet the third condition above (“The pious is loved by the gods for the reason that it is pious, but it is not pious because it is loved by the gods”).
- 11e–14d Euthyphro gives his fourth answer (“The pious is the part of the just that is concerned with the care of the gods”) with Socrates’s guidance and help in clarifying some key concepts.
- 14d–15b Socrates analyzes Euthyphro’s fourth definition, and it seems that his fourth answer turns out to be his second answer.
- 15d Socrates, “If you had no clear knowledge of piety and impiety you would never have ventured to prosecute your old father for murder....”

The *elenchus* methodological approach is suggested for its application to anything that deserves reflective examination. Socrates’s primary concern, however, is with the issues of how to live, and the typical objects of his reflective examination were those like piety (in the *Euthyphro*), justice (in the *Republic*), and virtue or human excellence in general (in the *Meno*). What kind of things did Socrates intend to pursue in regard to those objects, besides those more fundamental purposes among his guiding principles to be discussed below? The form of the typical Socratic question partially reveals this: “What is the F-ness?” The F-ness (the universal Form, in the platonic terms) is supposed to be a single (universal) thing that is somehow shared by many things we describe as F, as indicated in the *Euthyphro* (5c–d); and he supposes that F-ness can be accessed by rational mind through inter-subjective rationality and be articulated in definite terms, as shown in the *Meno*. There, under Socrates’s guidance, an illiterate slave boy infers a complex mathematical insight through the boy’s own rationality. Though there are various aspects or layers of any object, what Socrates was concerned with is the aspect of the object that is stable and invariant (stably and invariantly existing in all F-things), unchanged, definite, and thus inter-subjectively accessible by any rational mind. For convenience, a blanket term, ‘the being-aspect,’ can be used to cover those characteristics of the object, or to stand for the aspect of the object that is characterized in terms of the aforementioned characteristics.<sup>7</sup> It is the being-aspect of the object to which

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<sup>7</sup>It is noted that, though having been taken as a trademark term in ontological study in the history of Western philosophy, the term ‘being,’ when in contrast to the term ‘becoming,’ is intended to denote the stable, definite, unchanging aspect or layer of existing things. A classic example of using the term ‘being’ in this sense is Parmenides’ case, though the assumption plays a role in most of Greek rationalism. Actually, the two characteristic uses of ‘being’ are somehow closely connected with each other in some philosophers’ minds: because the stable, definite, unchanging aspect of an object is considered to be its defining aspect which reveals its essence, the metaphysical study of being as existence is considered essentially the study of being as the stable, definite, and unchanging.

the perspective dimension of Socrates's methodological approach is intended to point. In other words, Socrates's methodological perspective is directed towards gaining access (knowledge of) the stable, unchangeable, and definite aspect of all things. (Accordingly, the kind of knowledge that Socrates seeks through his method is also considered as stable, definite, and publicly accessible without appealing to any party's unequal or privileged intelligibility but inter-subjective rationality; it could be achieved via rational argument; it could be clearly and coherently expressed in terms of definition. In other words, the kind of knowledge Socrates pursues through his *elenchus* methodological approach takes certainty and exactness as its characteristic hallmarks among others.) This kind of methodological perspective might as well be called 'the being-concerned perspective'.<sup>8</sup>

### *Confucius's Becoming-Aspect-Concerned Perspective in the Analects<sup>9</sup>*

Another representative methodological perspective under examination, in contrast to Socrates's being-concerned one, is Confucius's becoming-concerned perspective in his methodological approach to characterizing those things like *xiao* (孝 filial piety) and *ren* (仁, tentatively glossed as 'humanity') as revealed in the *Analects*. Interesting enough, like Socrates, Confucius also had dialogue with his interlocutors on what (filial) piety is. Let us look at how Confucius characterized filial piety as a virtue, pondering what kind of methodological perspective he adopted in comparison with Socrates's and whether or not those distinct things in Confucius's approach could jointly contribute to our understanding of (filial) piety with Socrates's methodological perspective.<sup>10</sup>

2.5 Meng Yi-zi [once studied ceremonies with Confucius but was not his disciple] asked about filial piety. Confucius said, "Never fail to comply."

While Fan Chi [a minor disciple of Confucius] was driving, Confucius told him about his talk with Meng Yi-zi: "Meng Sun [Meng Yi-zi] asked me about filial piety; I reply, 'Never fail to comply.'"

Fan Chi asked, "What does that mean?"

Confucius said, "When one's parents are alive, comply with the rules of propriety (*li*) in serving them; when they die, comply with the rules of propriety in burying them, and comply with the rules of propriety in sacrificing to them."

<sup>8</sup>Because Socrates's methodological perspective has strongly influenced the development of a mainstream Western philosophy in the analytic tradition, it could be characterized as one origin of the 'analytic perspective'.

<sup>9</sup>What is called 'the Confucius style being-aspect-concerned methodological perspective' here is the methodological-perspective dimension of Confucius's methodological approach in dialogue. For the source materials that present good illustrations of the Confucius style becoming-aspect-concerned methodological perspective, especially see Confucius's characterizations of *xiao* (filial piety) in the *Analects* 2.5, 2.6, 2.7 and 2.8, to be cited below, and of *ren* (humanity) in the *Analects* 4.3, 6.28, 12.1, 12.22 and 13.19.

<sup>10</sup>See the *Analects*, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8 (translated by this author).

- 2.6.1 Meng Wu-bo [Meng Yi-zi's son] asked about filial piety. Confucius said, "Don't give your parents any cause for anxiety other than your illness."
- 2.7 Zi-you [Confucius's advanced disciple] asked about filial piety. Confucius said, "Filial piety nowadays means no more than that one can support one's parents. But we support even dogs and horses. If one does not have one's feeling of reverence, where is the difference?"
- 2.8 Zi-xia [Confucius's advanced disciple who is known for his extensive knowledge and scholarship] asked about filial piety. Confucius said, "What is difficult to manage is the expression on one's face [when serving the elders]. It is hardly entitled to be taken as filial piety to merely take on the burden when there is work to be done for the elder or, when wine and food are available, let the elders enjoy them first."

Confucius exhibited no tendency to question about important words in his moral vocabulary by giving a Socrates style universal definitions or meaning formulae. He instead gave different answers to different interlocutors depending on who asked the questions, the degree of his or her preliminary understanding of filial piety, in what context the question was raised, etc. His answers were designed to give the disciple-questioner some useful guidance. Although it is unclear exactly why the cited sections were arranged in the order as they were, it turns out that Confucius's four answers to the same question went further and further. In 2.5, Confucius's answer is a kind of by-default answer in his times: having filial piety is never failing to comply with those ready-made rites concerning how to treat your parents. In 2.6, Confucius addressed (at least partially) some mental layer of filial piety: not merely ceremoniously follow these rites and rules concerning how to treat one's parents, but also don't unnecessarily cause them anxiety. In 2.7 and 2.8, Confucius highlights further gradations of complexity including expressing it in posture and facial expression. The detailed dimension of filial piety marks it as more a gradation of virtuous performance than a simple bivalent duty. It is neither a mere ceremony nor even substantial support of one's parents: it is one's warm feeling of reverence for one's parents deep in one's heart which can, and usually does, express itself on one's face; such feelings of reverence for one's parents is not merely not to cause them anxiety but further lift them up spiritually; it would be hard to maintain such feeling of reverence especially when one's parents are in difficult situation for a long time. (There is one Chinese old saying: "There hardly remains a truly filially pious son or daughter beside the bed of his or her parent as long-term patients.") It does not necessarily mean that the son or daughter would give up physical or financial support of his or her terminally ill parent but that it would be hard to show the feeling of reverence without impatience.

What Confucius was concerned with in the *Analecets* seems to be the dynamic, ever-changing, concrete characteristics of things under examination; all those characteristics are intrinsically connected with various situations in which things reveal themselves. A blanket term, 'the becoming-aspect,' is used here to refer to these characteristics of the object that essentially involve dynamic change or becoming. The methodological perspective that is intended to point to the becoming-aspect might be as well called 'the becoming-concerned perspective'. In this way,



in contrast to the typical Socratic question, “What is the F-ness (the universal that is supposed to be true of all and only F-things)?” the typical question that Confucius intended to answer seems to be “Where is the *dao* of F-things?” or “How does the *dao* reveal itself in a specific concrete situation?”

With the foregoing explanation of Socrates’s and Confucius’s seemingly competing methodological perspectives and their distinct purposes and focuses, one natural question is this: how to look at their relation? One can rephrase this seemingly simple question in more general and reflective terms. If the object under examination possesses both aspects, would Socrates’s and Confucius’s methodological perspectives themselves be compatible or even complementary to each other? Can Socrates’s and Confucius’s methodological perspectives make a joint contribution to our understanding and treatment of an object of study or a reflective issue of significance? To answer those questions, one needs the guidance of adequate methodological guiding principles. The suggested methodological framework is intended to spell out some general adequacy conditions for such methodological guiding principles, which will be explored in the next section.

## On Adequacy Conditions for Methodological Guiding Principles

To adequately and effectively guide one’s way to look at the due relation between seemingly competing methodological perspectives like the foregoing two sample methodological perspectives, one needs adequate, instead of inadequate, methodological guiding principles for such regulation and guidance. One primary goal of the suggested methodological framework is to spell out adequacy conditions for such adequate methodological guiding principles.

In the following, I intend to suggest six sorts of adequacy conditions for adequate methodological guiding principles.<sup>11</sup> The first four of them, and one of the last two depending on situations, are expected for an adequate methodological guiding principle.

- (1) The perspective-eligibility-recognizing condition. A methodological guiding principle that is presupposed by the agent who uses some eligible methodological perspective as her current working perspective is considered to be adequate when this guiding principle renders other eligible methodological perspectives (if any) also eligible and somehow compatible with the application of the current working perspective. In contrast, it is considered inadequate in this connection if otherwise.

It is noted that, in comparison with the subsequent adequacy conditions, this adequacy condition is the minimal condition in the sense that it is to be presupposed by the remaining sorts of adequacy conditions and that this adequacy condition should be minimally met by any adequate methodological guiding principle.

For example, consider the two sample methodological perspectives spelled out in the last section, the Socrates style being-aspect-concerned perspective and

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<sup>11</sup>A shorter sketchy discussion of the six sorts of adequacy conditions appears in Bo Mou (2008), “Searle, Zhuang Zi, and Transcendental Perspectivism,” in *Searle’s philosophy and Chinese philosophy: Constructive Engagement* (Netherlands: Brill, 2008).

the Confucius style becoming-aspect-concerned perspective. The two kinds of methodological perspectives point respectively to two most basic modes of existence, being and becoming, of things in the world that are typically possessed simultaneously by most of things in nature. Now the object of study under Socrates's and Confucius's examination is (filial) piety. If piety as the object of study genuinely possesses both its being and becoming aspects, Socrates's being-aspect-concerned methodological perspective and Confucius's becoming-aspect-concerned methodological perspective are both eligible in regard to our reflective examination of piety. In this way, a methodological guiding principle that renders both methodological perspectives eligible on the issue of piety would retain the perspective-eligibility-recognizing adequacy.

- (2) The agent-purpose-sensitivity condition. A methodological guiding principle is considered to be adequate if it has its choice of a certain working perspective, among eligible methodological perspectives, sensitive to the agent's purpose and thus renders the most applicable or the most appropriate (the best relative to that purpose) the perspective that (best) serves that purpose. In contrast, it is considered inadequate in this connection if otherwise.

Again consider the two sample methodological perspectives spelled out in the last section, the Socrates style being-aspect-concerned perspective and the Confucius style becoming-aspect-concerned perspective. Given that the two methodological perspectives are both eligible on the issue of piety, a methodological guiding principle that sets out to decide which methodological perspective among the two is to be taken by an agent herself as her current working perspective, or how to evaluate the validity of some agent else's working perspective (either one) should be sensitive to the agent's purpose or her own focus on which aspect of piety to be captured in a certain context. If so, the methodological guiding principle would retain the agent-purpose-sensitivity adequacy. Otherwise, that is, when a methodological guiding principle demands or allows the agent indiscriminately to choose one *ad hoc* methodological perspective without regard to the agent's purpose and focus in a certain context, the methodological guiding principle would fail to retain this adequacy.

- (3) The equality-status-granting condition. A methodological guiding principle is considered to be adequate if it renders all the eligible methodological perspectives (perspective simplexes)<sup>12</sup> equal: being equally necessary for the sake of a complete account of an object of study and being equally local from the global point of view that transcends any local methodological perspectives; thus none of them *absolutely* superior (or inferior) to the others in the above senses. In contrast, it is considered inadequate in this connection if otherwise.

Again consider the two sample methodological perspectives as spelled out in the last section, the Socrates style being-aspect-concerned perspective and the Confucius style becoming-aspect-concerned perspective, and assume that

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<sup>12</sup>Clearly, what is talked about here is not a methodological-perspective complex that can be a combination of multiple methodological-perspective simplexes.

both are eligible on the issue of piety. When one resorts to a certain methodological guiding principle to guide one's evaluation of the status of the Socrates style being-aspect-concerned perspective (or the Confucius style becoming-aspect-concerned perspective) and renders it indiscriminately and absolutely superior to the Confucius style becoming-aspect-concerned perspective (or the Socrates style being-aspect-concerned perspective), the methodological guiding principle thus fails to retain the equality-status-granting adequacy concerning the aforementioned two methodological perspectives on the issue of piety. In contrast, if a methodological guiding principle renders one of the two methodological perspectives better than other or most suitable only in view of a certain context and in regard to a certain aspect of piety to which the perspective in question points but without viewing it absolutely superior to the other, this methodological guiding principle would thus meet the equality-status-granting adequacy condition concerning the aforementioned two methodological perspectives on the issue of piety.

- (4) The new-eligible-perspective-possibility-recognizing condition. A methodological guiding principle is considered to be adequate if it takes an open-minded attitude towards the possibility of new eligible perspectives that are to point to some genuine aspect of the object of study but have yet to be realized by the agent because of the 'unknown-identity' status of that aspect. A methodological guiding principle is considered inadequate in this connection if otherwise.

For example, again consider the two sample methodological perspectives spelled out in the last section, the Socrates style being-aspect-concerned perspective and the Confucius style becoming-aspect-concerned perspective and assume that both are eligible methodological perspectives on the issue of piety. If, besides the two methodological perspectives, a methodological guiding principle takes its open-minded attitude towards the possibility of new (yet-to-be-recognized) aspects of piety and thus the possibility of new eligible methodological perspectives that are to point to and explain them, then the methodological guiding principle would retain its new-eligible-perspective-possibility-recognizing adequacy. In contrast, any methodological guiding principle that renders exclusive and exhaustive the current working perspective (or the current stock of methodological perspectives that are so far epistemologically available), the guiding principle is thus inadequate because it fails to meet the condition of the new-eligible-perspective-possibility-recognizing adequacy.

- (5) The complementarity-seeking condition. Given that multiple, seemingly competing eligible methodological perspectives concerning an object of study turn out to be complementary (in the sense that each of them points to one aspect of the object and is indispensable for a complete understanding of the object), a methodological guiding principle is considered to be adequate if it captures the complementary character of the involved aspects of the object and thus seeks the complementary connection and harmonious balance between those perspectives for the sake of enhancing the complementary unity of those eligible perspectives. In contrast, it is considered inadequate in this connection if otherwise.

Again, consider the two sample methodological perspectives spelled out in the last section, the Socrates style being-aspect-concerned perspective and the Confucius style becoming-aspect-concerned perspective. Suppose that piety as the object of study genuinely possesses both its being and becoming aspects and that both aspects are interdependent, interpenetrating, interactive and complementary in regard to the constitution of piety. Then the Socrates style being-aspect-concerned perspective and the Confucius style becoming-aspect-concerned perspective are complementary instead of being incompatible or opposed to each other on the issue of piety. In this way, a methodological guiding principle that renders the two methodological perspectives complementary, seeks their complementary connection, and promotes their joint contribution to a complete understanding of piety thus meets the complementarity-seeking condition. If otherwise, a methodological guiding principle would be inadequate in this connection on the issue.

- (6) The sublation-seeking condition. Given that multiple seemingly competing eligible methodological perspectives are genuinely competing to the extent that they point respectively to the genuinely competing or contradictory aspects or dimensions of the current status-quo state of an object of study (or of some future stage of its due development) or the genuinely competing aspects of distinct objects of study,<sup>13</sup> such a methodological guiding principle would be considered adequate: when there is a genuine need, this guiding principle deals with those eligible but genuinely competing perspectives by capturing the contradictory character of the object(s) and seeking a due solution through a Hegelian synthetic balance in the newly formed object of study via sublation that keeps what are reasonable from both while disregarding what are not in the original object(s) of study. In contrast, it is considered inadequate in this connection if otherwise.

For example, it is to be decided whether to take the profit-seeking-only perspective or the welfare-seeking-only perspective to build up one social-economic community. Sometimes the profit-seeking-only layer and the welfare-seeking-only layer of the status-quo state of the social-economic community become genuinely contradictory. Then, when a methodological guiding principle seeks a synthetic balance via sublation to bring about a new approach that keeps what are reasonable in the two perspectives while disregarding what are not, the methodological guiding principle would be considered to be adequate because it meets the sublation-seeking condition in this due situation (so that the status-quo state of the social-economic community can be adequately reformed under its guidance). Another example concerning competing aspects of distinct objects of study is this. Given that two ideological systems as two objects of study are incompatible in regard to some of their aspects that are thus related to two genuinely competing perspectives, and when there is a genuine need of having them somehow compatible, an

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<sup>13</sup>The latter situation (i.e., ‘the genuinely competing aspects of distinct objects of study’) is intended to cover such a case: given an object of study (at a lower level), there are two or more ideological systems as distinct objects of study (at a higher level), which either result from some theoretic constructions or are products of pre-theoretic ideological developments in different traditions in treating the foregoing object of study (at a lower level).

adequate methodological guiding principle seeks a synthetic balance via sublation in a newly formed ideological system (as a newly formed object of study) that somehow has the originally competing perspective become compatible.

Note that the minimal ‘perspective-eligibility-recognizing condition’ is presupposed by the remaining kinds of adequacy conditions. Also note that which one, between the last two kinds of conditions, needs to be maintained would depend on the nature of the object of study, the character of the involved perspectives and the purpose that a certain methodological guiding principle serves.

### Three Paradigm Methodological-Guiding-Principle Models

In this section, I present three paradigm methodological-guiding-principle models, the Zhuang Zi’s, *Yin-Yang*, and Hegelian models, for two purposes. First, I intend to explain how some of the foregoing six adequacy conditions for adequate methodological guiding principles are embodied by one of them in a paradigm way. Second, I intend to show that there is the distinction between appropriate and inappropriate applications of the three paradigm guiding-principle models; that is, when they are applied to right situations with due purposes, their applications are rendered appropriate; otherwise they are inappropriate. It is noted that, when focusing on the three paradigm models here, I neither pretend that there are only three adequate paradigm models<sup>14</sup> nor presuppose a ‘triadic’ Hegelian combination. I use these three paradigms both as substantial models concerning adequate methodological guiding principles and as samples to illustrate the relevant point. In so doing, I make no absolute celebration of the three paradigm models; for, as indicated above, each of them has its own limit and can become inappropriate when not being applied to due situations.

The core idea of the Zhuang Zi style model is suggested in the *Zhuang-Zi*, especially in its Chapter 2, “*Qi-Wu-Lun*,” and Chapter 3, “*Yang-Sheng-Zhu*.”<sup>15</sup> The Zhuang Zi style

<sup>14</sup>I present these three paradigms here instead of also including some others from African tradition, Latin American tradition, etc. for two considerations. First, I do not pretend to have due working knowledge about African philosophy, Latin American tradition, etc. Second, I do not intend to exhaust all eligible paradigms from all the traditions but employ these three as effective samples to serve my finite purposes in this article (showing their substantial methodological visions and their illustration roles).

<sup>15</sup>My presentation of Zhuang Zi’s relevant insights is my interpretative elaboration of them in view of some of my general methodological considerations concerning studies of Chinese and comparative philosophy for the sake of constructive engagement. To save the space, I will not repeat the major points and their explanations of these methodological considerations here but give their references as follows: (1) Bo Mou (2001), *op. cit.*; (2) Bo Mou (2002), “Three Orientations and Four ‘Sins’ in Comparative Studies,” in *the APA Newsletter* (in the portion on comparative philosophy, edited by Chenyang Li) Vol.02, No.2, Fall 2002, pp.42–45; (3) the first section of Bo Mou (2004), “A Reexamination of the Structure and Content of Confucius’s Version of the Golden Rule,” in *Philosophy East and West* 54:2 (2004), pp.218–248; and (4) the second section of Bo Mou (2006), “How Constructive Engagement of Davidson’s Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy is Possible: A Theme Introduction,” in *Davidson’s Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy: Constructive Engagement* (Netherlands: Brill, 2006), pp. 1–33.

model can capture and implement ‘the perspective-relevance-recognizing adequacy’, ‘the agent-purpose-sensitivity adequacy’, ‘the equality-status-granting adequacy’ and ‘the new-eligible-perspective-possibility-recognizing adequacy’, which are expected for all adequate methodological guiding principles. Briefly speaking, it regulates how to choose eligible methodological perspectives as the current working perspective and how to evaluate the status of the current working perspective and its relation to the other eligible perspectives: depending on one’s purpose or interest, one is entitled to focus on ‘this’ aspect of the object of study thus taking ‘this’-aspect-concerned perspective as the current working perspective (to capture ‘this’ aspect), or ‘that’ aspect thus taking ‘that’-aspect-concerned perspective as the current working perspective (to capture ‘that’ aspect), or all aspects thus taking a complete perspective as the current working perspective (to have a complete account). One distinguishing point of the Zhuang Zi style model is this: while helping one in choosing the current working perspective among the eligible perspectives, this model encourages or demands that the agent take an aspectuality-transcending point of view as a methodological guiding principle so as to be able to realize the local character of one or many local perspectives and avoid one-sidedness (mistaking one local aspect as the only or exclusive aspect), whether or not one takes the complete perspective as the current working perspective.<sup>16</sup>

The *Yin-Yang* model captures and implements the ‘complementarity-seeking adequacy’ expected for certain methodological guiding principles. This is one paradigm guiding-principle model of treating the constructive-engagement relation between any eligible and complementary methodological perspectives for the sake of a holist and complete understanding. One good and significant illustration of such complementary relation is the relation between the Socrates style being-aspect-concerned methodological perspective and the Confucius style becoming-aspect-concerned methodological perspective, which have been presented in the previous section on two paradigm methodological perspectives via their approaches to the issue of (filial) piety as two paradigm methodological-perspective models at the level of the perspective dimension of the framework. The two kinds of methodological perspectives point respectively to two most basic modes of existence, being and becoming, of things in the world that are typically possessed simultaneously by most of things in nature. Because the two fundamental modes of existence, being and becoming, are interdependent and complementary in a number of senses, the two methodological perspective models are thus interdependent and complementary.<sup>17</sup> This renders the *Yin-Yang* model suitable for looking at the rela-

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<sup>16</sup>In his recent essay “Hegelian, *Yi-Jing*, and Buddhist Transformational Models for Comparative Philosophy” [in *Comparative Approaches to Chinese Philosophy*, edited by Bo Mou (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 60–85], Robert Allinson resorts to the Buddhist ‘*apaya*’ model, which seems to be similar to Zhuang Zi’s model in some aspect. As I see it, the Zhuang Zi style model might be more complete than the Buddhist ‘*apaya*’ model to this extent: the latter asks the agent to be sensitive to concrete situation to choose perspective but without expectation that the agent needs to also take the above mentioned ‘aspectuality-transcending’ point of view as a methodological guiding principle.

<sup>17</sup>For a detailed discussion of this, see Mou (2003), *op. cit.*

tion between the two representative perspectives. When the two methodological perspectives are applied to right situations, they are rendered eligible; otherwise they are ineligible. In this way, there is the distinction between eligible and ineligible applications of the two paradigm methodological-perspective models.

The Hegelian model captures and implements the ‘sublation-seeking adequacy’ expected for certain methodological guiding principles.<sup>18</sup> This model deals with the constructive-engagement relation between the eligible but genuinely competing perspectives in the dual sense of ‘genuine’: first, as far as the current status-quo state of the object of study, the object possesses its genuine competing or contradictory aspects whose solution needs to resort to the Hegelian synthesis via sublation; thus the two eligible perspectives that point respectively to the two aspects are genuinely competing; second, as far as some future stage of its due development is concerned, the object possesses some genuine contradictory aspects whose solution needs to resort to the Hegelian synthesis via sublation.

The three paradigm guiding-principle models, theoretically and practically speaking, are not mutually exclusive but could be applied simultaneously even when facing the same group of perspectives. The Zhuang Zi style model is clearly compatible with the other two: while taking either the *Yin-Yang* model or the Hegelian model to look at the relation between the involved perspectives depending on their nature, one can follow the Zhuang Zi style model to choose one eligible perspective as the current working perspective in view of one’s current purpose and interest. Even the seemingly mutually-exclusive *Yin-Yang* model and the Hegelian model could be applied simultaneously: (1) when one focuses both on the current status-quo state of the object of study, which would render certain perspectives eligible and complementary, and on some future stage of its due development where some genuine internal contradiction would emerge, which would render the involved eligible perspectives the character of Hegelian contraries; (2) when the object of study possesses more than one dimensions some of which has its own complementary aspects while some other of which has its own genuine contradictory aspects.

As emphasized before, the paradigm identity of the three guiding-principle models does not render the three models exhaustive. There would be other guiding-principle models.

The relation between adequate methodological guiding principles (generally speaking) or between adequate applications of the *Yin-Yang*, Hegelian and Zhuang Zi models (specifically speaking) is considered to be *yin-yang* complementary both in the sense that they are needed in regard to different situations and in the sense that they could be used simultaneously for the sake of a holistic treatment. As illustrated above, the three paradigm guiding-principle models are complementarily relevant to our dealing with the relation between methodological perspectives. To this extent, the *Yin-Yang* model is also considered as one important meta-guiding-principle model.

In the foregoing discussion, I have presented and explained a meta-philosophical methodological framework of how to look at seemingly competing approaches

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<sup>18</sup>For the source materials of the Hegelian model, see Hegel, see Georg W. F., *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie (London: Sonnenschein, 1919) and *The Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree (Chicago, IL: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952).

for the sake of cross-tradition understanding and constructive engagement. With some needed conceptual and explanatory resources and distinctions, I have first examined two paradigm methodological perspectives as samples, Socrates's being-aspect-concerned perspective and Confucius's becoming-aspect-concerned perspective. I have then suggested and explained six adequacy conditions for adequate methodological guiding principles, which constitute one core portion of the suggested methodological framework. I have also brought out three paradigm methodological-guiding-principle models, i.e., the Zhuang Zi's, *Yin-Yang*, and Hegelian models, for the sake of illustrating the preceding six adequacy conditions and emphasizing their respective roles in the enterprise of comparative engagement as specified above.

The examination of this framework is intended to be one way to explore the issue of how cross-tradition understanding and constructive engagement is possible. The issue is one central concern in comparative philosophy, as the term 'comparative philosophy' is understood in a philosophically constructive way.<sup>19</sup> It is noted that the issue of how constructive-engagement methodological strategy in comparative philosophy is possible is not merely a matter of theoretical possibility but has been already effectively and productively implemented in recent philosophical practice. One piece of evidence in this connection consists in two recent constructive-engagement projects in comparative philosophy concerning Chinese philosophy and Western philosophy in the analytic tradition, whose methodological guiding principles are intended to meet the foregoing six adequacy conditions.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>The term 'comparative philosophy' is sometimes vague and is used in a less philosophically constructive way. For a detailed discussion of three representative orientations and their relations in comparative studies in philosophy and the constructive-engagement strategy of comparative philosophy, see Bo Mou (2001, 2002, 2006).

<sup>20</sup> One project is on Davidson's philosophy and Chinese philosophy, and the other on Searle's philosophy and Chinese philosophy. The research results of these two constructive-engagement projects are two anthologies edited by this author: (1) *Davidson's Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy: Constructive Engagement* (Netherlands: Brill, 2006) and (2) *Searle's Philosophy and Chinese Philosophy: Constructive Engagement* (Netherlands: Brill, 2008).



# Cosmopraxis and Contextualising Among the Contemporary Aymara

Koen de Munter and Nicole Note

## Introduction

Both the authors concerned here believe that the concept of worldview, although already very broad as a delineation, does not capture all aspects of pluricultural reality. When looking at other traditions where Western assumptions about ‘religion’, ‘philosophy’ or ‘science’ are not the overall dominant frame of reference in which people construct and enact their lives and worlds, it might not be appropriate to use the term ‘people’s worldview’. For as broad as this concept may be, it unwittingly refers to cognitive mapping. As we will see, the Amerindian case, which interests us here in particular, illustrates in a vivid way the fact that the very idea of a map and of cognitive mapping in fact happens to be quite culturally specific, and often symptomatically accompanies theories about worldview (Orye 2008). The idea that such a worldview would be oriented towards a future as in some kind of a ‘futuology’ does not correspond with the sometimes radically different and creative ways other cultural traditions cope with time and intertwining temporalities. In many other traditions – as the case of the Aymara will illustrate – people have elaborated quite different approaches to ‘come through time’. These approaches concern different *practices* that teach or ‘enskill’ (Ingold 2000) people ‘how the time-space comes and goes’,<sup>1</sup> inviting people to take part in an eternally changing dance of reciprocity with this timespace. Along this demarche, the guiding energies of the past, interacting with those of the elusive present, appear to be at the heart of the process. More than a worldview that orients us ‘towards’ the future, we are in presence of a network of practices where people learn – and are taught – to be very attentive, we could say ritually attentive, to what the ongoing timespace brings about, again and again.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Aymara saying: “*pachaj jutir satiri*”.

<sup>2</sup> We will return to this important point later when commenting on the well known – but perhaps not so well understood – fact that in the Aymara cosmovision, the past manifestly lies ‘in front of them’.

## From ‘Worldview’ to ‘Cosmopraxis’: A Geocultural Perspective from Amerindian Contexts

These alternative visions on life-as-change-and-continuity, seen in the complexity of the dynamics of contemporary mundialisation, are of course only part of the story. Due to the colonality of power, the hegemonic view concerning how people throughout the world should ‘view’ and manage the world has been expanding and imposing itself on the geopolitical arena. Apparently, however, the aforementioned other ways of coping with ‘timespace’ and changing temporalities have been moving on firmly, via parallel tracks. Many indigenous people in the Andes, for instance, will say that they are Catholic (if not Evangelical), but at the same time it is a fact – corroborated by what the people themselves say – that many of them simultaneously practice what they call *las costumbres* or *la religión autóctona*, which in the opinion of some of our Aymara advisors “has nothing to do with religion”<sup>3</sup>: “*Aparte es*” as they often proclaim. In the following we will try to get a better picture of how these *costumbres* ‘work’, and how these allow us to understand that a worldview based on a religious or scientific doctrine is something different than a ‘cosmopraxis’ based on a network of practices.

Profound and extensive colonisation often results in the assumption that South American countries are predominantly guided by a Western worldview. Seen from a geocultural perspective,<sup>4</sup> however, for example in the case of the Aymara, one of the largest indigenous groups in the Andes, both cosmopraxis and worldview coexist and intertwine. The balance of power between the two – one more powerful, the other at first sight subalternised – is changing continuously. More generally, we may also wonder whether both are not by definition present in every culture, in changing forms, and usually with one of the two dominating, since both start from the experience of encountering the world in which people live.

To illustrate what we mean by cosmopraxis, we first want to raise awareness of this more general experience of encountering the world that is, so to speak, ‘prior to’ both worldview and cosmopraxis. Of course, this experience is not literally ‘prior to’, since people always grow up within a cultural constellation that colours their vision of ‘reality’. It is only ‘prior to’ in an abstract sense, almost in the sense of ‘common to’. Encountering the world in a very concrete way brings people into contact with themselves, with other people – experienced as familiar or alien – with the fauna and flora, and with the broader ecological contexts. Many generations of people before us have lived this experience. We presume that all people in the world intuitively grasp this experience, and potentially are able to share it with one another. The experience of encountering the world is something we cannot fully grasp or understand in its totality, but one in which people feel they *are* a part.

<sup>3</sup>They refer here to a Western concept of religion, based on clearly expressed doctrine.

<sup>4</sup>On the notion – and the necessity – of ‘geocultural perspective’, see Mauricio Langón’s contribution in *Estudios Interculturales, Hermenéutica y Sujetos Históricos*, edited by Salas and Álvarez (2006).

Various kinds of theories about reality and the possibility of knowing this reality have been elaborated in Western philosophy. These range from a correspondence theory (what I see is the same as the reality ‘out there’) to the Kantian notion of the world ‘an sich’, a world never knowable ‘in itself’, but only via innate categories in our mind (for instance causality). Speaking very generally, for much of recent human history, reality has not been conceived in science and philosophy as self-evident and immediately present or knowable. In order to know the essence of reality, it had to be re-presented via a cognitive effort, and filtered via concepts. More recently, phenomenological and post-modern philosophers such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Derrida and Deleuze have criticised this view. Each in their own way tried to reawaken awareness for forgotten or neglected unmediated and immediate experience, and for its ontological and epistemological implications, as well as its implication for self-understanding.

Cosmopraxis can be considered – partly – analogous to this phenomenological and post-modern approach in that it also focuses on the immediate, the ‘*unmediated*’. However, where the Western approach is limited to a *theoretical*, cognitive effort of bringing into awareness this forgotten dimension, cosmopraxis describes the *actual praxis* of living this unmediated experience. It concerns a multiple encounter lived through different practices such as barter, ritual healing, ritual fighting, political organisation, and so on. It refers to coping with the world in an active way. An interesting example of a cultural context where cosmopraxis prevails can be found among the Aymara of El Alto, Bolivia. Cosmopraxis can be expressed in words or metaphors, in the case of the Aymara in terms such as *ch’allaña*, *tinku*, *taypi* and *kuti*, which we will comment upon below. These words, however, are not necessarily moulded into a reflective and systematic scheme to grasp the world and our living in it,<sup>5</sup> In a sense, it might be better here to apply ‘re-cepts’ or recipes (guidelines and rhythms for action) instead of “concepts”. A metaphorical sequence such as *tinku-taypi-kuti* (De Munter 2007), for example, is meant to communicate the immediateness of the praxis, and how the rhythms of this sequence allow humans to live in their world. The focus of the Aymara is on experiencing, transmitting and interchanging their way of going about the world in a dynamic way of everyday, ritual and celebratory acting (Medina 2002), and less on conceptually grasping it.

We will more extensively discuss what cosmopraxis is about below. Before proceeding, however, we will provide some insights into how an anthropologist can make sense of this concept. He or she must first grasp its relevance, its implicit meaning, its contextual value. In order to avoid an essentialist approach, working from ‘cultural intuitions’ might be an option, as we will explain below. For the

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<sup>5</sup>In their valuable reflections on Aymara concepts and ‘philosophy’, Estermann (2006) and Medina (2002), albeit in very different ways, indeed try to *construct* such a more systematic scheme. Estermann elaborates his thorough approximation of an ‘Andean worldview’ from an empathetic, but nevertheless occentric scientific perspective or framework; Medina, more loosely speaking, is more interested in political issues. Both combine their western (Christian-Jewish) philosophical perspectives with constructive intercultural insights. In this article, however, we will attempt to ethnographically stress a genuine other way of coping with ‘the’ world as it is enacted by the contemporary Aymara.

Aymara of El Alto, *contextualising-in-plurivalence* appears to be such an important cultural intuition. In this paper, we will elaborate on this intuition, which can be considered a conceptual tool to better grasp the complexity of the existing cosmopraxis.

## An Anthropological Approximation to Cosmopraxis: Cultural Intuitions

As a cultural anthropologist, one cannot begin thinking about how other worldviews or ‘cosmovisions’<sup>6</sup> *function* from within a set of conceptualisations that are the outcome of a specific scientific or philosophical tradition, such as the Western tradition in which Christianity, Humanism, Enlightenment, Modernity and Philosophy are closely intertwined. We mentioned in the introduction that such locally rooted conceptual tools or frameworks can never function as a universal basis upon which a universally experienced worldview could be founded or from where it should be explored. Having acknowledged this, the anthropologist will begin confronting his or her ‘own’ actions, categories and representations with those of several other traditions, in an open and respectful conversation that ideally can lead, but always *a posteriori*, to a truly intercultural – or pluritopic – ‘scientific’ framework. Cultural anthropology provides us with useful methodological and conceptual tools to approximate the other ways people engage in their worlds.

The experience of the ethnographical methodology itself tells the anthropologist that if she or he wishes to truly express the voice of the Other (the subaltern, the indigenous, and so on ...) and take seriously the relativity-within-universality that characterises every cultural tradition, research should always start from the very *practices* (activities, utterances, ...) from below, produced by the Other. From here, she or he will try to gain insights about what kind of interrelations (including categorisations or conceptualisations) are at play *within* the world these interrelated and relating practices are constantly shaping and imagining. Only afterwards can the anthropologist undertake the arduous task of comparison, by investigating how and to what extent the investigated practices, dimensions and concepts that refer to other ways of engaging in the world *differ from and relate to* ours. This comparative approach obviously is not about comparing between different ‘cultural essences’ (some ways of interrelating will be similar, others will be different, and all can slowly change), but allows precisely for a vision of the contemporary world(s) as made up of a continuous dynamic of creolisation (Pinxten & De Munter 2006).

In his book *When the day breaks: Essays in anthropology and philosophy*, Rik Pinxten proposes tackling the challenge of intercultural comparison with the help of the concept ‘cultural intuition’ (or ‘root principle’). Cultural intuitions are underlying

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<sup>6</sup>Cosmovision, following the Spanish *cosmovisión*, is a central concept in the literature on Andean and Amerindian ‘worldviews’ (in Spanish ‘worldview’ is usually translated as *cosmovisión*).

principles for behaviour that – latently – give coherence to the diversity and multitude of cultural actions learned and taught within a cultural community. They ‘inspire’, so to speak, the complex cultural dynamics (including interactions with other groups) that take place in the group, and are at the same time constituted and continued by these cultural processes, which means they are prone to (long-term) change. Cultural intuitions should not be considered an essentialist reality ‘out there’; rather they refer to a dynamic of continuity-within-change, and are to be considered a heuristic and hermeneutic tool for the comparative understanding of how people manage their worlds. More specifically, the concept of cultural intuition refers to an immediate or implicit meta-level of understanding and apprehension (this is why the term ‘intuition’ is used). Whereas Pinxten, from the perspective of cognitive anthropology, presents these deeper principles in the first place as a basis for all types of *knowledge and insights* (scientific, practical ...), here we propose viewing them, from a radically praxeological perspective, more generally as a basis for all kinds of cultural *practice* and experience. Pinxten himself relates the concept with a ‘particular sensitivity’ that grows out of the ecologically embedded processes of cultural transmission: “In a very general way each community lives in a particular environment and in a specific cultural tradition. No human being or group starts completely anew, but all of them are embedded in a cultural past. In that past or tradition a particular sensitivity has grown within the community which rears and guides individuals and groups in their choices and tastes. This sensitivity takes form in one or more [cultural intuitions]. A culture cannot be reduced to its cultural intuition: there may be more than one and the relationship between culture emanations and cultural intuitions is not a deductive one. On the other hand, *it leaves open* whether a culture can be seen as a system (...) or a superstructure rather than as a partially integrated conglomerate of styles, habits and what have you. When I use the term ‘root principle’ I do presuppose that human beings in a cultural community have, because of their makeup and because of the perceived or presumed uniformity or order (at least to some degree of detail) of the world they live in and teach the following generations about, *a series of common problems to deal with.*” (Pinxten 1997:92, twice our emphasis) These problems refer to our universal make up as human beings: they concern coping with ‘getting born until we die’; they are about how we relate to our ecological context(s), thanks to our skills and imagination (imagination seen as a particular, overarching skill). These common challenges, however, do not preclude culturally relative ways of imagining and going about the world. Working with cultural intuitions aims exactly at exploring how these ‘worlding’ ways can differ significantly, and how the insight into these differences might allow for a respectful comparison, and thus for a mutual learning dynamics (Pinxten & De Munter 2006).

Two basic examples are appropriate here. In the – heterogeneous – Chinese tradition, the well known yin-yang principle could be seen as a kind of very broad, underlying mechanism that refers to a specific experience (wisdom), considering all worldly processes within the never-ending and fragile dynamics between two complementary forces yin and yang (differently valued in Taoism and Confucianism). For our western tradition, Pinxten suggests the ‘god’s eye view’, as the most

characteristic cultural intuition.<sup>7</sup> It refers to the conviction that we can look at the cosmos as it were ‘from the outside’, “that is from the position God took as creator and beholder of the cosmos in the older views.” The cultural intuition of the ‘divine perspective’ allows us to understand better how in the West, for instance, ‘real’ science – and more generally, ‘real’ knowledge – presupposes distance, detachment, objectivation and so on. This intuition permeates many other cultural attitudes and practices, for example the relationship with Nature, which is there (outside, as it were) to be dominated by man. The way people ‘intuit’ how they ‘should’ act is not necessarily reducible to “morals” or ethics. To ‘intuit’ has to do with the complex dynamics between the intertwined action and experience levels of the community, the group and the individual. Morals, in the western sense of the word, would be only one (important) aspect of this.

### ***‘Contextualising’ Among the Contemporary Aymara***

For more than 12 years, Koen De Munter, one of the authors of the present article, has been examining the cultural dynamics of the contemporary Bolivian Aymara in the large indigenous city of El Alto,<sup>8</sup> located next to La Paz. As a starting point for the fieldwork, there was the broad question of how Andean indigenous groups had managed to hold on creatively to their traditional ways throughout the compelling interculturality that has marked the America’s since the Conquista (De Munter 2004). More specifically, there was the question of how groups like the Aymara in El Alto cope with their ‘progression’ as *jaqi* (people belonging to the Aymara group) in this kind of challenging urban setting where individualisation and economic problems undermine the traditional reciprocal ways. Even when general conditions, such as poor health and educational services, remain harsh, the cultural group to which the majority of El Alto’s inhabitants belong clearly has been able to persist and to reorganise itself in a context of urban concentration. The core question remains then how their cultural ‘progression’ is evolving presently, and to what extent the culturally transmitted rhythms and guidelines of their tradition have changed (been weakened, lost, ...). To gain insights into these processes and to try

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<sup>7</sup>“Cultural intuitions cannot be tested on their truth or falsity; they are presupposed in the cosmologies proper”) 1997:92 Pinxten also suggests ‘atomism’ as a second cultural intuition for the West: things can (and ought to!) be decomposed, substantivised, and so on.

<sup>8</sup>The city of El Alto – formerly considered a second-class annex town of La Paz – acquired total administrative autonomy from La Paz in 1988. It was not until the beginning of the 21st century that Bolivia finally recognised the impressive emergence of this quickly growing urban agent. El Alto, situated on the border of the Altiplano (13,000 feet above sea level) next to the valley of La Paz, grew out of a number of former indigenous comunidades in the 1950s into the present lively ‘metropolis’ (by Bolivian standards) of almost one million of inhabitants by 2008. Its actual population is composed of a majority of ‘rural-urban’ indigenous people and, to a lesser extent, of former miners. By far, most of the indigenous *alteños* are Aymara who came from the countryside to ‘reside’ – as *residentes* – in the city and who, in most cases, maintain more or less intensive relationships of economic-ritual reciprocity with their home communities on the Altiplano.

to describe their cultural intuitions, de Munter carried out ethnographical research under the guidance of two traditional Aymara families, most of whose members live in El Alto. Many of these urban Aymara continue to commute more or less intensively between their residence in the city and the times and spaces of the countryside. These rural times and spaces reproduce themselves in the *patios* of the houses in El Alto via extended and heterogeneous relationships of reciprocity with relatives in the *comunidades de origen* on the nearby Altiplano. The different reciprocity practices (summarised and simplified in the Aymara notion *ayni*) are comprehended in a carefully maintained interrelatedness with and within all-embracing ‘nature’ (*pachamama*). De Munter, in close collaboration with his core informants and via explorations of ethnohistorical, ethnographic and linguistic studies of the Andean traditions, delineated a tandem of cultural intuitions for the Aymara group: contextualising<sup>9</sup> on the one hand, and a sense of plurivalence on the other. Both are closely intertwined. In the following, we will mainly discuss the cultural intuition of contextualising while implicitly taking into account the intuition of plurivalence.

Briefly, the ‘sense of plurivalence’ can be grasped by means of the short Aymara word *ina*: “maybe yes *and* maybe no”. It expresses what is sometimes called the ‘trivalent’ logic of the Aymara language and culture (Temple 2003). ‘Things’ or events will never be experienced or seen as just ‘good’ *or* ‘bad’, but can always present both – or more – aspects simultaneously or alternately. People will manage ‘the things of life’ according to this conviction, both in everyday and in ritual practices. The more general intuition of ‘contextualising’ can be symbolised in the all-relating, ritual *ch’allaña* (literally ‘to libate’, which is just one aspect of the practice of *ch’alla*): all past and present contexts, such as the social, geographical, agricultural, religious or gastronomic ones, are continuously and attentively remembered – memory as social praxis – and ritually brought into relation with each other. The central Aymara notion *nayra* illustrates in still another way the cultural intuition of contextualising. *Nayra* refers to that which lies in front (ahead), but also to ‘the’ past<sup>10</sup> (which is never seen as a separate category), a

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<sup>9</sup>For an ethno-historical reading of the ‘contextualising’ intuition, see John Murra’s beautiful work on the ecological verticality among pre-colonial Andean communities (Murra 1975). Murra investigated how the ingenious agricultural system of the pre-Columbian Aymara functioned through flexible economic practices that reunited the different ecological regions that were within a few days walk of each other: the Pacific Coast, dry valleys, Altiplano, subtropical *yunga*-valleys and the Amazon basin. The ‘communities’, which had their nuclear settlement and basis of operations on the Altiplano, managed to work out a system of peripheral exploitation: at each ecological level, they would have their satellite settlements. These settlements in turn co-constituted small multicultural conglomerations (with a non-territorial sense of identity). The central community on the Altiplano then was pursuing maximum control of a maximum number of ecological levels. This complex system – Murra called it a continental archipelago – required very well-oiled mechanisms of reciprocity and redistribution. Complementarity and interaction became the key principles. For a linguistic approach to the contextualising intuition, see Martha Hardman’s pioneering work on Aymara language. For an ethnographical approach, see the studies by Arnold and Yapita (e.g. *Hacia un orden andino de las cosas* (1992)).

<sup>10</sup>See the interesting article by Nuñez and Sweetser (2006).

specific intuition also expressed in Aymara grammar, where past and present are seen as one continuum (Hardman et al. 1988). At the same time and interestingly *nayra* means “eye”, the eye that constantly weaves together – ‘contextualises’, etymologically – that which can be seen (the ‘past-present’) and that which is being produced as life (the ‘present-future’). We will come back to the notion of *nayra* at the end of this article.

Both cultural intuitions intertwine in the sense that all human and natural events that become interrelated within the all-encompassing *pacha* will never be good *or* bad (masculine *or* feminine, etc.), but can and will always combine both qualities *along the way*. The Aymara *sarawi* – ‘to walk or to travel like jaqi’ – emerges out of the ongoing encounter between so-called opposed elements that constantly call for combination, negotiation and interpretation. We can consider this a cultural intuition of contextualising-in-plurivalence. The (cultural practices) emanating, so to speak, from these intuitions, receive their ‘rhythm’ and their interconnecting strength via a sequence of three interrelated principles that seem to be crucial to the Aymara way of going about the world: *tinku*, *taypi* and *kuti*. *Tinku* and *taypi* should be seen together. *Tinku*<sup>11</sup> refers to the traditional ritual fighting between structurally ‘antagonist’ community moieties. *Taypi* is the “middle” or meeting place where these fights took place: often a village square, and always the result of negotiation between the different parties.<sup>12</sup> If a member of the opponent groups is badly wounded (in fact this used to be seen as an offering or sacrifice for the earth), the fight stops immediately and negotiations about compensations are started. Importantly, the context of *tinku* supposes that the antagonist groups meet each other on different levels: in the aftermath of the fight, a market is organised for the exchange of food and artefacts, and at the same time this is the time and the place where marriageable youngsters belonging to both moieties can meet. The simultaneous occurrence of *tinku-taypi* could then be understood as the cyclic or spiralling enactment of that which might be considered an ambivalent Buberian Begegnung that generates life, from the social encounter to the *pachamama* and vice versa. This *tinku* generates change as a central dynamic of life, and this is exactly what the principle of *kuti* aims at. *Kuti* has been a pivotal notion since pre-colonial times, and acquired a specific urgency after the colonisation by the Spaniards. *Kuti* invokes the idea of change – as a result of human intervention and conviviality – and refers to physical, ritual and ‘political’ rotations or ‘revolutions’ within the *pacha*. Seen in this perspective, contextualisation or contextualising takes place at the rhythm of the triple dynamic of *taypi-tinku-kuti*.

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<sup>11</sup> Because of its ritual and violent character, *tinku* has been misunderstood and resisted since colonial times (see amongst others the studies on present-day *tinku* by Tristan Platt). Only in the region of Norte Potosí has *tinku* been preserved in a more or less ‘authentic’ way. What is important here, however, is that the overall principle is still very much alive in the whole Aymara world, not in the least in El Alto, where the spiralling encounters between different, ‘opposed’ groups obviously have multiplied and are prompting, so it would seem, a multiple *taypi-inku*-dynamic.

<sup>12</sup> Cuadernos de investigación CEPA n°5. 1997. *El tinku en Macha: violencia ritual y violencia represiva*. Oruro: CEPA.



### *Theorising Contextualisation: ‘Weaving Together an Ecology’*

We stated above that cosmopraxis is ‘sustained’ by implicit recipes. In the case of the Aymara, we proposed the ‘recipe’ or intuition of ‘contextualising’. In order to grasp the depth and extent of this recipe, we wish to elucidate it further by referring to cultural psychologist Michael Cole, who elaborates in a very detailed way the concept of contextualisation, albeit from a different perspective. In his well-known tractate on cultural psychology, Cole (1996) explores and advocates the reorientation of psychology – as a discipline – toward a radical and necessary cultural embedment. In the central chapter of this seminal work, suggestively titled “Putting culture in the middle”, Cole proposes opening up the classical cognitive approaches to language practices by adding the approach of cultural contextualisation. The author develops an argument that leads the reader gradually from the different accepted understandings of the concept of ‘context’ itself to the more dynamic one of ‘contextualisation’, in its most inclusive ecological sense.

Simplifying Cole’s argument, we can distinguish three steps. He first discusses the well-known idea of “layers of context”, or, in Cole’s words, “context as that which surrounds”. He cites Gregory Bateson who warns that this kind of description does not presuppose linear, temporal ordering, but rather that we are dealing with a complex temporal and spatial interdependence: “‘That which surrounds’ occurs before, after, and simultaneously with the ‘act/event’. We cannot say sentences before we say words, nor words before we synthesise phonemes in an appropriate way; rather, *there is a complex temporal interdependence among levels of context which motivates the notion that levels of context constitute one another.*” (Cole 1996:134, our emphasis) Secondly, Cole moves on to discuss gradually the conceptualisation of context as “that which weaves together”. This way of conceiving ‘context’ is more *actively* processual, and, interestingly for those of us who study Andean tradition, where the textile arts and crafts have remained a major expression of the cosmovision, it goes back to the etymology of the word, *con-texere* as “to weave together”. “The frequency with which metaphors of weaving, threads, ropes and the like appear in conjunction with contextual approaches to human thinking [and as anthropologists, we should say, to human acting in general] is quite striking.” Cole explains the importance of the move towards the weaving-together metaphor as follows: “When context is thought of in this way, it cannot be reduced to ‘that which surrounds’. It is, rather, a qualitative relation between a minimum of two analytical entities (threads), which are two moments in a single process. The boundaries between ‘task and its context’ are not clear-cut and static but ambiguous and dynamic” (ibidem). Paraphrasing Cole, we can say that what is taken as object – or subject – and what is taken as that-which-surrounds-the-object/subject are constituted by the very fact of cultural (inter)acting. Cole states that this cultural acting in contexts, understood in terms of a weaving metaphor, “requires a *relational* interpretation of mind”.<sup>13</sup> “Objects and contexts rise together as part of

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<sup>13</sup> See also Orye (2007).

a single bio-social-cultural process of development.” (Cole 1996:136).<sup>14</sup> In order to illustrate this, Michael Cole reminds us of the well-known thought experiment Gregory Bateson offered the reader in his *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*: “Suppose I am a blind man, and I use a stick. I go tap, tap, tap. Where do I start? Is my mental system bounded at the handle of the stick? Is it bounded by my skin? Does it start halfway up the stick? Does it start at the tip of the stick?” (Bateson in Cole: *ibidem*). Such questions do not make much sense if we do not consider how contexts continuously change, and how these changing contexts constantly “enskill” the acting subjects. Cole expresses it this way: “In short, because what we call mind [Cole’s core ‘object’ of research] works through artefacts, it cannot be unconditionally bounded by the head or even by the body, but must be seen as distributed in the artefacts which are woven together and which weave together individual human actions in concert with and as a part of the permeable, changing, events of life.” (Cole 1996:137).<sup>15</sup> Seen from within our anthropological perspective, in which we are trying to learn more about the vantage point of Aymara cosmopraxis, we would say that people interact *within* the world (*pacha* or timespace) throughout the different contexts. The guiding principles within this complex game or praxis are constituted by – and simultaneously constitute – what we have been conceiving here as cultural intuitions.

The third step in Cole’s argument is precisely about context as practice, or *contextualisation*. He himself refers to Pierre Bourdieu’s rather sociological concept of habitus, “the matrix of perceptions, appreciations and actions”. Habitus, seen in the framework of the *raison pratique*, “is assumed to take shape as an *implicit aspect of habitual life experiences*. It constitutes the unexamined, background set of assumptions about the world.” (Cole 1996:139, emphasis added)

This is where we will leave Cole’s line of argumentation, not so much because of the last, rather occentric, formulation (“set of assumptions about the world”), but in order to resume the approach of contextualisation intuition for the concrete case of the Aymara. More specifically, as anthropologists we must examine how the Aymara live up to the intuition that has been called precisely (and not surprisingly) “contextualising”. The issue then becomes that of studying closely how the enacting of the cultural intuitions – the cosmopraxis – occurs *within the “ecological whole”*<sup>16</sup> of the timespace of *pacha*.<sup>17</sup>

The setting is the large indigenous city of El Alto. Seen in the broad ecology of everyday human practices, the indigenous inhabitants start from the context of the

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<sup>14</sup> See also Ingold (2000); Maturana and Varela (1994).

<sup>15</sup> See also Tim Ingold’s ‘enskillment’, Humberto Maturana’s ‘consensuality’ and Edward Reed’s “necessity of experienty”.

<sup>16</sup> Again, Michael Cole reminds us of Gregory Bateson’s context theory: “(...) context theorists, such as Bateson, who held firmly to the conviction that it is essential to see an ‘action’ as *part* of the ecological subsystem called context and not as the product or effect of what remains of the context after the piece which we want to explain has been cut out from it.” (Bateson in Cole 1996:142)

<sup>17</sup> *Pachamama* is the better known notion, having a colonial-religious origin.

family (“hay que practicar la familia”),<sup>18</sup> move through – and ‘weave together’ – the different urban-rural contexts, and relate – in a spiralling dynamic – themselves and the contexts they are involved in with all-encompassing Nature or pachamama, and vice versa. The above-mentioned *ch’allas* are a very fine example of how this spiralling contextualising-within-pacha is connected with and expressed through ritual practices. These ritual practices cultivate precisely the indispensable attention people must cherish towards the complex interplay between layers and temporalities, between actors and actions. Participating in this living and lived experience of contextualising is what ‘cosmopraxis’ is about.

### **Cosmopraxis in the Field: Liminal Practices and Conviviality in El Alto**

Within the indigenous city of El Alto, the Aymara interweave their traditional social and cultural practices with the ‘hegemonic’ practices in specific ways. Increasing political and cultural consciousness and a keen sense of insubordination (De Munter 2003) can be seen as expressions of these creative ‘borderline’ – or, as we prefer to call it here, liminal – processes. Seen within the dynamic perspective of the contextualising cultural intuition, the heart of their cosmopraxis, these observations allow for a portrayal beyond the colonial image of a poor and structurally violent city whose inhabitants would be perpetually desperate or frustrated due to ongoing political and social injustice, their material poverty, cultural uprooting and so on. Such a perspective allows us to grasp in a more culturally sensitive and geocultural way the intricate forces that promote the enactment of a multiple urban community, and the evolvement of certain ‘disruptive’ civil practices. It can allow us to understand how hegemonic and indigenous ‘ways of citizenship’ are intertwined (or contextualised, in its etymological sense), starting from the lively ‘everyday’ practices of the population.

In the extended urban context of El Alto, the Aymara somehow rediscovered themselves as Aymara in spite of and beyond the historical – and partially internalised – racist and paternalistic treatment they received. Indeed, given their overwhelming majority position in this important city – in all its heterogeneity – and given the success of the October 2003 popular revolution, they feel increasingly entitled to enact in much more overt ways (Riveros 2006) the right to enskill themselves following their own, traditional practises. Many have come to reject the designs of progress and modernity imposed by hegemonic, criollo policies and worldviews. Some of them, for instance, propose their own principle of *sarawi* as an alternative to the, in their view, radically corrupted criollo way of organising

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<sup>18</sup>“We ought to practice family” is a central device cherished by the Aymara to keep their tradition alive and maintain its conviviality (Overing and Passes 2000; see also Greta Jiménez Sardón 2003, for a beautiful emic vision on the way Aymara families – and women, in the first place – ritually construct their convivial world).

society. The concept of *sarawi* appeared in several discourses by the newly designated Aymara politicians during the weeks following Evo Morales' ascension as the first indigenous president of his country. *Sarawi* derives from the omnipresent Aymara verb *saraña*, and can be understood as the 'journey' that the Aymara ought to undertake through their lifetimes, following 'norms' such as reciprocity (*ayni*) that are central to their concept of conviviality and community building.<sup>19</sup> The idea of *sarawi* is all the more intriguing given the fact that one of the central devices for 'everyday' life among *alteño* Aymara still is, as several informants asserted, "you must walk like (the) people/hay que caminar como gente/*jaqjam sarnaqaña*". In Aymara, *jaqi* refers to the people of one's own cultural group. It is important to study what this mode of 'walking like Aymara people' – and of constructing new kinds of (urban) community – actually consists of, and how it is enacted from day to day and between different spaces and temporalities. Liminality is an important aspect of these contextualising dynamics. By liminality and liminal practices we refer to the process of cultural enskillment people undergo while 'walking' – being compelled to<sup>20</sup> walk – from one cultural (time)space to another, and vice versa. We should understand this liminal process not in the usual anthropological sense of passing through a certain stage, to a following stage (Van Gennep's three ritual phases and Turner's emphasis on the transitional stage), but in a way that allows for a strong intercultural encounter and a constant commuting *between* different (time) spaces, again and again. These liminal practices are also about cherishing and expanding the necessary contextualisation within the contemporary, challenging setting of the city. They should maintain people's reciprocity with and within the *pacha* (the 'larger whole') throughout the spiralling encounter of past, present and future temporalities and spaces.

In order to illustrate these liminal practices in a more concrete fashion, we can recall on the one hand the already mentioned principle of *tinku*, which has been documented so well in the history of Aymara tradition, and whose spirit seems to be still very much alive, even if the ritual struggles they usually referred to are officially prohibited. For example, the Aymara inhabitants of El Alto might be said to have engaged, already for several generations now, in a multiple *tinku* (encounter, confrontation, struggle) with the different contexts of life and signification (education, economy, time management, individuality, citizenship) the Bolivian nation state presents them with. On the other hand, there are the interesting results of a firm line of investigation that has been carried out by a group of young Aymara anthropologists in their own city. Their findings tell us that, in the course of their liminal and transgressive identity processes, most young Aymara eventually seem

<sup>19</sup>For a broader Amerindian approach to conviviality, see also Overing and Passes (2000).

<sup>20</sup>One might even suggest that this kind of intercultural enskillment is the constructive spin-off of the colonial subalternisation of the indigenous groups. Most of these groups were forced, so to speak, into this kind of liminal practice. Compellingly, they had to learn how the dominant religion, economy and so on functioned, and they had to try to combine the dominant features with their own tradition. Most of the time, the opposite did not happen; i.e., dominant groups did not develop such intercultural skills; they did not feel the need to do so due to their hegemonic position, and due to their general feeling of cultural superiority (de Munter 2007).

to return to what this group of young Aymara researchers<sup>21</sup> refer to as the Aymara “cultural matrix”: a flexible force of ‘practicing family and urban community’ from within the tradition (Guaygua et al. 2000). We could refer to this process as the *tides* of the intercultural times, a process that is couched in that other important Aymara saying *pachaj jutir saririwa*: ‘the timespace (*pacha*) comes and goes, goes and comes’. With these tides, the Aymara – not only the youngsters – in El Alto flood across other, more *criollo* and mundialised fields of cultural interaction and signification. In another movement of the tides, and almost simultaneously, they will try to continue in the traditional cosmopraxis ways, continuing to interrelate the other times – and spaces – of the ancestors and the sacred mountains. The course of these complex tides is often turbulent and restless due to the strongly decontextualising forces present in the city.

### ***From ‘Cosmovisión’ to Cosmopraxis: Looking and Walking Within Pacha***

As was mentioned, the notion of worldview in Spanish is usually translated as *cosmovisión*. On the other hand, *cosmovisión* is also one of the central, very general notions that indigenous people in the Andes mention when they refer to their tradition, following the frequent use of the term by external scientists who have been studying the Andean traditions. For many contemporary *indígenas*, the very notion of *cosmovisión* already expresses a difference vis-à-vis the imposed Christian religion and worldview. As mentioned in the beginning, in Amerindian tradition, you cannot simply conceive of a view of the (human) world, and much less so of a view that could be mapped from the outside. On the one hand, there is no such thing as a (mappable) world. There is rather a *moving* ‘multiple world’ constituted by the nurturing interrelationships between animals, plants and humans alike (see for instance Viveiros de Castro’s perspectivism<sup>22</sup>). This dynamic multiple world forms part of the ‘cosmos’ or all-encompassing *pacha*. People interact with *pacha* (and reflection on it is part of this interaction) from within it. On the other hand, and speaking specifically for the Aymara tradition, the notion of ‘vision’ – somehow different from a certain Western emphasis on ‘view’ and ‘visualism’ – is without a

<sup>21</sup> I refer to the interesting series of recent studies by Guaygua, Riveros and Quisbert on youth culture in El Alto. Their ‘endogenous’ research project originally started under the guidance of Rafael Archondo. One of their articles appeared in an interesting anthological edition in English of *T’inkazos, Revista Boliviana de ciencias sociales* (March 2003).

<sup>22</sup> “Perspectivismo” foi um rótulo que tomei emprestado ao vocabulário filosófico moderno para qualificar um aspecto muito característico de várias, senão todas, as cosmologias ameríndias. Trata-se da noção de que, em primeiro lugar, o mundo é povoado de muitas espécies de seres (além dos humanos propriamente ditos) dotados de consciência e de cultura e, em segundo lugar, de que cada uma dessas espécies vê a si mesma e às demais espécies de modo bastante singular: cada uma se vê como humana, vendo todas as demais como não-humanas, isto é, como espécies de animais ou de espíritos.” (Fragment of an interview with Viveiros de Castro, <http://pphp.uol.com.br/tropico/html/textos/1417,1.shl>).

doubt extremely important to the Aymara tradition (e.g. Hardman et al. 1988).<sup>23</sup> This ‘vision’ must be seen in the sense of the above mentioned *nayra* (eye, ‘past’), which expresses an ongoing, enskilling vision – as a praxis, or cosmopraxis – from within *pacha*. This kind of vision can only exist in combination with a practice of walking (see the general device ‘you ought to walk like *jaqi*’, see the notion of *sarawi*), which brings about continuous interactions with the changing times and spaces. In our opinion, Andean *cosmovisión* is about fostering this living and lived experience. This fostering has to do in the first place with practices and enskilling, and will often aim at emancipation and ‘everyday *pachakuti*’ (De Munter 2003). This is why we propose talking about cosmopraxis.

In 1997, while De Munter was discussing his first exploratory formulations of the cultural intuitions for the Aymara tradition and their possible functioning among the contemporary Aymara, Ricardo Mendoza Mamani, one of his central advisors, was asked whether there was an expression or a concept in the Aymara language that evoked their vision on change and continuity, their vision on people’s progression in the world, or, in other words, their walking through the timespace of the *pacha(mama)*. Without hesitating he mentioned the following subtle saying: *Qhip(a) nayra uñtasa nayraqatar saraña*.<sup>24</sup> Ricardo Mendoza parsed this sentence per Aymara segment as follows in Spanish: “‘Atrás’/‘adelante’/mirando/hacia ‘adelante’/caminemos”. Or, as he rendered it approximately: “*Mirando atrás y adelante caminemos hacia adelante*”. Or, in a prudent translation into English: “While looking ‘behind and in front’ of us, let us walk ‘forward’”. *Nayra* as “in front of” in a Western perspective would seem to refer to the “future”, but according to the Aymara spatial-temporal intuition it refers in the first place to the “past”, which they see in front of them. In fact, Ricardo Mendoza also translated *nayra* as “el futuro”, but he only did so secondarily, for in most expressions, such as *nayrapacha*, *nayra* refers to the ‘past’ times. What is of interest is to see how the different elements in this adage reflect the vision of change and continuity from the viewpoint (*uñta*) of the Aymara tradition. As already mentioned, the concept of *nayra* indicates “that which goes in front” and therefore also the “past-present that

<sup>23</sup>In her classical study on Aymara grammar, Martha Hardman has shown the importance of the ‘principle of personal knowledge’ in Aymara. The Aymara language requires another grammatical form for the verb if the proposition refers to something the person has seen and experienced with his own eyes. In this respect, Hardman mentions the Aymara saying “Uñjasaw uñjtw sañax; jan uñjasax janiw uñjtw sañäkäti.: “Seeing, one can say “I have seen”; without seeing one ought not to say “I have seen”” (Hardman et al. 1988:17, our translation).

<sup>24</sup>This saying is also quoted – albeit sometimes in a slightly different form – in a number of other studies of the Aymara tradition. The Bolivian sociologist Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, for example, in her 2005 text *Invisible Realities*, mentions the following: “The aymara proverb *qhip nayr uñtasis saraqaxañani* expresses this radically different perception of historical time, in which the image of walking Sebastian with a mask looking back, condensates the proverb in a very precise and eloquent way.” (Rivera 2005:9) In a footnote, she adds: “This is a very complex conceptual construction based in the metaphorical play between *nayra* = eye, and *qhipa* = back, that inverts the meaning of what is “back” and “in front”. This aymara proverb can be roughly translated as “Looking back and forward (to the future-past) we can walk into the present-future”, although the more subtle meanings are lost in the translation.” (Rivera 2005, footnote 2)

is guiding us” through the present-future. We have seen that, following the same connecting timespace logic, *nayra* can also mean “eye”. The frequently used verb *saraña* for its part means “to go” or “to walk”. It renders the central dynamics of this active vision of people’s moving throughout *pacha*. Indeed, it is not so much the paradoxical conjunction of ‘behind/forward’ that is important in this phrase. What is of interest, rather, are the journeys (*sarawi*) one sets out on between all that “comes forward”, the walks one undertakes towards a “future” that lies – and can be seen – “behind us and in front of us”. This idea of walking in spiralling circles has nothing to do with a certain ideology of progress or with the idea of a future realisable by specialists. Along those journeys, and here we return to the sayings of the Aymara advisor, setbacks and achievements alternate continuously. The time-space comes and goes, goes and comes ... People try to construct human community out of the everyday practice of the family and out of the daily, ritually moulded attention to the shifting contexts. Each person is allowed creative input into the construction of the multiple world. Practicing this world has to do with an ongoing enskillment via specific ‘tools for conviviality’ (Illich 1973).

Finally, and importantly, the other central verb in the expression is *uñaña*, which means “to look at, to see”. In the case of the Aymara, the necessary combination of both verbs – walking and seeing – together with the strong interrelating sense that emanates from *nayra*, corroborates the transition we have suggested from world-view/*cosmovisión* to cosmopraxis. This way, *uñaña* – as well other closely related verbs<sup>25</sup> – does not refer to an abstract knowing or viewing; it refers, rather, almost literally to *going about* the different contexts that make up the multiple world *practiced* by the Aymara people.

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<sup>25</sup>In Félix Layme’s dictionary, *uñta* is translated as “look, action and way of looking”. The verb *uñaña* is translated as “to look, to see, to observe”, while the related verbs *uñjaña* and *uñt’aña* are translated respectively as “to have seen, to know”, and “to know, (...) to discern” (Layme 1992, our translation).

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# A Worldly View of Worldview Metaphysics

Helen Lauer

## Introduction

This essay critically analyses how the notion of contrasting worldviews is often used to explain and to suggest ways of improving upon the way people relate in light of the way they think about each other, about themselves, and the world at large. Such usages of the worldview metaphor occur routinely in contemporary philosophical, political and social scientific texts, as well as in everyday untutored discourse. It is notoriously difficult to trace even in rough outline the thought contents and the causal sequences that result in our exhibiting loyalty, or getting safely across a street, or justifying an ill-advised military invasion.<sup>1</sup> The mental realm remains obscure. When we externalise beliefs and other mental states by using metaphors that invoke a shared framework or storehouse of beliefs, then the subjectively personal constituents of our intentions (the particular convictions, priorities, urges, perceptual beliefs, aspirations, motives that lead us to act as we do) no longer seem so mysterious as when they are couched in terms of the hidden workings of an inner realm. The picture of ‘contrasting worldviews’ vaguely connotes a variety of view points operating in concert, or simultaneously, or consecutively.<sup>2</sup> But unless this metaphor provides insight into how people really tick, talking about worldviews gives a false impression about the feasibility of understanding what is involved when people intentionally do things that other people regard as unthinkable. There are actions which bring a halt to people’s willingness to empathise and understand a radically alien point of view. Talking about worldview

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<sup>1</sup> Arguably, none of these mental processes are algorithmic; even the mental process by which we seek to justify an algorithmic result, e.g. creating a proof of Fermat’s last theorem, has been shown to be non-algorithmic. See Pólya (1954) and Penrose (1990).

<sup>2</sup> Vagueness in itself is not a theoretically interesting drawback for most uses of this term. As in the case of many social concepts, it’s not even a drawback. As Alisdair MacIntyre (1973) has stressed, social science is cheerfully and necessarily fraught with inherently vague concepts whose application within different cultural contexts and historical traditions depends upon the connotation understood by the people involved. See also footnote 17.

structure, content and adjustability *as such* is misleading because our analytic focus is thereby shifted away from the specific conditions, historical episodes, and material circumstances which undermine people's mutual trust and feature somehow in the way people perceive their options. But the deficit inherent in this shift of focus cannot just be declared; it has to be shown. In order to focus on the kind of situation where mutual understanding has reached a complete impasse, the behaviour in focus throughout this essay will be the sort that gets called sectarian violence and ethnic conflict. This kind of fighting is regarded as different from the murderous activities which have been formally authorised, conscripted and supervised by a sovereign state.

In the next section, a distinction is drawn between two senses of 'worldview' that are normally conflated in the literature of political and social philosophy, international relations, anthropology, and analytic psychology. Subsequent sections discuss versions of a widely received hypothesis that the primary cause of sectarian strife of all types is lodged deep in the conflicting worldviews of the individuals embroiled in violence.<sup>3</sup> As will be shown, it sometimes appears vacuous, and at other times simply mistaken, to diagnose the root cause of group antagonism as the logical consequence of certain fundamental beliefs (comprising a 'group-' or 'social-' or 'ethnic identity') – beliefs which lie at the core of the worldview shared by members of a particular group (Connor 1972; Honneth 1998, 2002; Horowitz 1998). This is followed by a review of problems with treating a worldview as an emerging property of a community, rather than as an attribute intrinsic to any particular individual. In conclusion we examine the plausibility of social engineering programmes to enhance national harmony by encouraging people to build better worldviews (Connor 1972). For instance it has been argued that a mandate of good governance is to instil in a whole population the spirit of inclusiveness through enforcement of a single national language policy (Gyekye 1997).

## Two Senses of 'Worldview'

The introduction to this essay presupposed two senses of worldview that I will distinguish hereafter by the subscripts 'ef' and 'ic'. 'Worldview<sub>ef</sub>' connotes the sense in which certain belief states or belief contents are presumed to constitute a primordial and uneliminable foundation for interpreting perceptual experiences and forming intentions.<sup>4</sup> In contrast 'worldview<sub>ic</sub>' connotes an intentionally pro-

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<sup>3</sup>Theorists with widely divergent claims and prospects for the capacity to overcome chronic conflict worldwide nonetheless share the conviction that violent conflict between social groups is a function of the belief sets of the participants; e.g. Walker (1972); Horowitz (1998); Honneth (2001); Huntington (1993).

<sup>4</sup>Varieties of meaning or cognitive holism, and internal assumptions of such theses, have received considerable opposition. See Davidson's criticism of distinguishing an overall structure for all one's thoughts from their particular contents, in his seminal 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme' ([1974] 1984). see Ernest LePore (ed.)(1986). And for a more vehement, sustained objection to

duced ‘ideal construction’ which undergoes purposeful revision in the light of ongoing experience. The use of these subscripts is intended only to keep the analysis more precise throughout this chapter than it would be otherwise; I do not mean to imply that these senses cannot be co-extensive.<sup>5</sup> The two senses are often invoked in tandem, as in the editorial board’s introduction inviting potential contributors to this project, wherein two assumptions about worldviews were spelled out explicitly (Note 2006):

Central to this book with regard to worldviews and culture are two presuppositions. These premises seem mutually exclusive, yet they both need to be balanced within human thought in order to fulfil their important functions. The first statement is that it is indispensable for people to perceive the basic beliefs of their worldview as ‘true’ and ‘right’, in order for this worldview to have an orienting function. The second assumption stresses the fact that, to facilitate a genuine—that is, power-free—intercultural polylogue, these same people should be able to relativise the basic categories of their own worldview.

Arguably the two statements featured in this passage are “mutually exclusive” insofar as they invoke the two senses of ‘worldview’ just delineated. The first statement in the passage refers to a worldview<sub>ef</sub> composed of the “most basic” of our beliefs and “categories,” presumably acquired “preconscious[ly]” or “semi-conscious[ly]”<sup>6</sup> and presupposed by the rest of our thoughts. Ostensibly, these basic beliefs and categories are required in a transcendental<sup>7</sup> sense in order for us to form judgments and to negotiate survival. It is presumed that basic “orienting and explaining” functions, lodged deep and early in the acquisition of divergent worldviews<sub>ef</sub>, are ultimately responsible for all the different governance structures, architectures, cuisines, kinship arrangements, educational and legal systems, mythologies, types of divinity, styles of worship and rituals of courtship, that comprise the different social realities sustained objectively by distinct cultural traditions (Sayre-McCord 1991).<sup>8</sup>

The second statement in the italicized passage above quoted from Note’s (2006) informal advice to contributors, presupposes the notion of a worldview<sub>ic</sub> as a consciously constructed work in progress, the focus of purposeful collective activity and reflection. In this second sense, a worldview<sub>ic</sub> “is a framework that ties

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various semantic and conceptual holism theses including Davidson’s, see Fodor and LePore (1992, 1993).

<sup>5</sup>Paul Snowdon’s (2003) analysis of Ryle’s (now tacitly) received distinction between ‘knowing how’ and ‘knowing that’ inspired this caveat. Perhaps we will discover that descriptions of ‘pure’ and ‘practical’ reasoning are two ways of denoting the same cognitive processes, as it was discovered that the ‘the Morning Star’ is identical to ‘the Evening Star’.

<sup>6</sup>I draw here and after from other sections of Nicole Note’s informal communiqué introducing this book, circulated to contributors June 2006.

<sup>7</sup>I allude here to the form of transcendental argument characterized by Jerry Fodor and Ernest LePore (1992, p. 261) as follows: “Any argument of the form ‘F-ing is impossible unless P; F-ing actually occurs; therefore P’.”

<sup>8</sup>Speculative controversy surrounds the source of this variety: are these differences genetically encoded or learned with language? (Du Plessis 2001) Are there logical differences between worldviews<sub>ef</sub> or do they follow from laws of physics? If so, which logical laws; which laws of physics? (Aerts et al. 2000; Penrose 1990; Stapp 1993).

everything together, that allows us to understand society, the world, and our place in it ... help[ing] us to understand, and therefore to cope with, complexity and change ... and help[ing] us to make critical decisions which will shape our future” (Heylighen 2000, p. 1). It is often supposed not only that worldviews<sub>ic</sub> *can* be revised, but that they *should* be revised – to enhance human welfare or to fulfil other similarly beneficent goals. At first glance, the suggestion that we can and should be encouraged to reconstruct our worldviews<sub>ic</sub> begs the question of why we are having so much trouble getting along together in the first place, if indeed both the realisation of room for improvement and the direction for achieving it are ostensibly ready to hand. Perhaps we face here a version of the ancient Greek problem of *akrasia*: as socialised agents we are presumed to harbour all the capacities required to perfect the harmony in our lives overall through mutual and self understanding; and yet we do not. Does the rich imagery of ‘contrasting worldviews<sub>ef</sub>’ contribute to our understanding of why there appears to be a propensity within some cultures to foster provincialism and xenophobia, while in other societies people are encouraged to feel equanimity and confidence in their diversity?<sup>9</sup> Are worldviews<sub>ef</sub> properties of individual agents; or rather do they exist as features of a social field emerging as and when agents interact? Or do worldviews<sub>ef</sub> belong to enduring, loosely cohesive social units transforming over generations?

Some influential theorists (e.g. Connor 1972; Huntington 1993) regard the co-existence of multiple worldviews<sub>ef</sub> as the chief cause of belligerent hostility among people with different cultural affiliations. For instance Walker Connor (1972) advises homogenizing the worldviews<sub>ic</sub> of individuals governed by one state apparatus, to improve national (and thereby global) stability. Other theorists and philosophers regard the propensity to engage in conflict as *sui generis* to personhood, positing the propensity for social struggle as intrinsic to having any social identity whatsoever (Honneth 2001). These diverse contemporary views of social dissonance concur in their propensity to sweep aside contingent circumstances as incidental to the primary causes of protracted violence, attributing social conflict instead to fixed universal features of human cognition. But Connor’s appeal to everyman’s worldview<sub>ef</sub> as the source of social strife deteriorates into paradox; and both Connor’s and Honneth’s theses fail to accommodate all the data – as will be shown in the section titled “Basic Beliefs at the Core of Worldviews<sub>of</sub>”.

## Worldview<sub>ef</sub> Ontology and Structure

As a general maxim for guiding our analysis of the relation between intentions, individual actions and social institutions, the classic thesis of *methodological individualism* (Watkins 1957) still provides a good rule of thumb. It counsels the theoretician to avoid descriptions of the social world that cannot be translated into

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<sup>9</sup> Kwasi Wiredu (1998) argues convincingly that in West Africa, indigenous institutions of democratic governance foster and reinforce the political will to cooperate and accommodate, which is structurally pre-empted by the multi-party electoral systems in the traditions of western republics.

statements about individuals.<sup>10</sup> So on this advice, a worldview<sub>ef</sub> belongs to a specific individual; it is comprised of all the beliefs, related attitudes, rules of inference and grammar, the values, needs, first order experiences that the person has had or could have – an individual’s worldview<sub>ef</sub> just *is* reality ‘as such’ for that person. But even as a starting point this proposal quickly runs aground. For there are routine features of social life that cannot be traced directly to the expressible content of beliefs or desires belonging to any specific individual. People often exhibit behaviour contrary to their best judgment; people do things intentionally for reasons which they expressly disapprove, or for no particular reason of their own – just because ‘it’s the done thing’ or because they consider no viable option, habitually conforming instead to peer pressure or tradition (Lauer 1996, p. 448). It is typical to encounter people espousing their ‘own’ view and then doing something quite the contrary. In some social contexts this itself is a norm, a display of diplomatic etiquette, or a way of showing ambivalent and hence perfunctory respect; so it would be misleading to treat every such case as foul hypocrisy or as evidence of a deep conundrum about human agency. Since it is too complex to analyse in this chapter, we may have to agree that institutional arrangements sometimes exert “capillary and ubiquitous” coercive power over their individual participants (Foucault 1982; Fraser 1989; Lyotard [1979]1984). The point to note here is simply that in order to account for very commonplace social phenomena such as people following a social norm consciously yet blindly,<sup>11</sup> people must be able to do things intentionally due to the influence of mental states of which they are unaware (Rosenthal 2002, 2004, 2005). In fact it is very often the case that someone is in a mental state whose occurrence is empirically responsible for something he’s done intentionally, although the propositional contents identifying that mental state remain unrecognisable to him as his ‘own’ thought (Clark 1980; Rosenthal 1983). There is no mystery in this. Many times – perhaps most of the time – when we act intentionally, we are not aware of the thoughts that comprise the real reason for what we are doing.<sup>12</sup> Using the jargon under scrutiny, this implies that there may be questions concerning my ‘own’ worldview<sub>ef</sub> about which I can give no authoritative answer; I may not even understand the relevance of the question. On the other hand, we should be careful how ready and often we are prepared to accuse agents of disowning or being oblivious to their own thoughts in the ordinary course of daily affairs; otherwise there would be no principled way to determine for a specific belief content to whom it does or does not belong. If any thought is suppressible at any time by anyone, every person could be the unconscious bearer of any belief or attitude whatsoever.

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<sup>10</sup>In its simplest elements, this principle has a robust history that traces back at least to Thomas Hobbes, e.g. in his mechanistic, wholly individualistic account of imaginary impressions, memory, sensation, and “mental discourse” comprising a motive or volition to act. Consider *Leviathan* Chapter I, selections in David Rosenthal (ed.) (1971), pp. 43–55.

<sup>11</sup>That is, they are aware of following the norm for no reason, or for no reason other than ‘it’s the thing to do’.

<sup>12</sup>In this discussion the primary or ‘real’ reason for an intentional action is taken to be equivalent to the thoughts comprising the cause of that action, following Donald Davidson (1963). This definition is controversial, but the issues cannot be pursued here.

Potentially, this suggestion is not as farfetched as it might seem. In apportioning blame for a universally recognised moral disaster, Carl Jung (1957) assigned ownership of exceedingly unattractive urges and proclivities to the mainstream of humanity.<sup>13</sup> More contemporary and less arcane theories concur that the thought contents or the mental states which foment genocide do so *independently* of all the contingent circumstances that differentiate the mainstream of humanity – culturally, historically, vocationally, religiously, geographically (Connor 1972, pp. 341, 344).

### *Differentiating Worldviews into Types*

If Jung's 'collective unconscious' hypothesis (or any one of its more prosaic successors) is plausible, then we should reconsider whether it is useful to assign a worldview<sub>ef</sub> to each individual in order to explain why someone goes in for remarkably lurid norm following. Given the popular notion we have been sustaining, a worldview<sub>ef</sub> is supposed to hold together as a loosely organised but eminently feasible, self-contained package – otherwise the bearer of the worldview<sub>ef</sub> risks losing the status of being 'rational'.<sup>14</sup> Consider Ronald wielding a machete in the midst of the Rwandan massacre. Suppose we label Ronald's *type* of worldview<sub>ef</sub> with a subscript 'R'. If the content of one belief intrinsic to worldview<sub>R</sub> is sufficiently 'basic' to be attributable (consciously or unconsciously) to anyone else regarded as rational, then whole chunks of worldview<sub>R</sub> might also be attributable to anyone, since in principle the entire cognitive frame and baggage (contingently) belonging to Ronald hangs together as a loosely coherent, objectively feasible – albeit frighteningly macabre – picture of reality.<sup>15</sup> But then to explain Ronald's participation in the killing spree it can hardly be illuminating to isolate and pick upon the worldview<sub>R</sub> *itself* – an entity or structure separable from all the contingent facts that distinguish Ronald or his village or Rwanda's history specifically – as the primary cause for his taking part in the murderous rampage of 1994. For as is patently clear, it's not everyone who can imagine slicing up their neighbours that actually has done so, or would. (Indeed, in other circumstances Ronald and his cohorts sharing worldview<sub>R</sub> might never have carried on in such a way either.) Yet two prominent theorists, one a political philosopher and the other a political scientist, both offer precisely this type

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<sup>13</sup> In an essay about the reasons for the Holocaust written near the end of his life, Jung suggested each of us has e.g. a 'hidden Hitler' within, and that there is a collective unconscious need for it to be acted out and then killed off.

<sup>14</sup> Interpreting someone's language and behavior by hypothesizing about their worldview<sub>ef</sub> requires applying a 'principle of charity' according to many following Donald Davidson ('Radical Interpretation' 1984, pp. 125–139). For a critical analysis of the "charity solution" to the problem of creating an empirically adequate theory of meaning, see Fodor and LePore (1992).

<sup>15</sup> In section on Sharing and Reforming Worldviews<sub>ef/c</sub> we will consider the assumption that contrasting worldviews<sub>ef</sub> exist as logically coherent, semantically cohesive wholes. I am indebted to Kate Crehan (1998, 2002) for exposing the fallacies in assuming that 'culture' stands for an enduring, coherent, self contained entity or property, and that the term 'community' denotes a homogeneous unit.

of account in order to explain social strife in general (Honneth 2002) and ethnic violence in particular (Connor 1972). Their two explanatory models, invoking ‘basic beliefs’ at the *a priori* core of everyman’s worldview<sub>ef</sub>, are due for inspection in the next section, “Basic Beliefs at the Core of Worldviews<sub>ef</sub>.”

Keeping with the horror in Rwanda for a moment more, it may seem safe to diametrically oppose Ronald’s worldview<sub>R</sub> with our own because his worldview<sub>R</sub> encourages ethnic hatred in the vilest way imaginable. But while apparent contrasts between the two worldviews<sub>ef</sub> may be glaring, they are unilluminating. That is, we won’t make any *explanatory* headway by apportioning the role of primary reason for the rampage to Ronald’s *type* of worldview<sub>R</sub>, if ultimately the only way to settle upon which type of worldview belongs to Ronald is to attribute to him those batches of thought selected as likely to have caused the things he does and is likely to do – in particular, his participation in murder on the scale witnessed through April 1994 outside Rwanda’s capital Kigali.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, it won’t help to explain how provincialism and xenophobia lead to selective killing by associating Ronald with one ethnic group (or community or religious sect) and not another, thereby explaining that he acts in a certain way because he shares the worldview<sub>ef</sub> of the first group and not the second.<sup>17</sup> To show in brief why introducing worldviews into a functionalist account of behaviour empties such a model of its explanatory value: suppose you are identified as being a member of community X because you clearly share the X worldview. As a social scientist I have systematically observed that you do Y and not Z on Mondays, and thus I can document your belonging to the X community, as I can cite background studies which establish that to do Y and not Z on Mondays is a *defining trait* of the X-centric worldview. Indeed the very thing distinguishing the X society is this penchant its members have for doing Y on a specific day of the week and regarding Z as taboo. Further studies confirm that X-centrics revile anyone seen doing Z, since it is regarded as taboo. But then to explain *why* it is that X-centric people go in for Y (always refrain from doing Z, and hate anyone who does Z especially on Mondays), nothing is illuminated by referring to the fact that these attitudes and beliefs are a key feature of the X-centric worldview.<sup>18</sup> Despite the unattractiveness of such circularity, it is commonplace for high profile explanatory accounts of sectarian, ethnic and religious conflict to refer to the incommensurability of the

<sup>16</sup>Mark Fritz, *Associated Press*, April 11, 1994, reporting from Karubamba, Rwanda < [www.ap.org/pages/about/pulitzer/fritz.html](http://www.ap.org/pages/about/pulitzer/fritz.html) >.

<sup>17</sup>Vagueness is not the source of the vacuity described in the next sentence, which emerges when we recruit worldviews to explain why people act for inscrutable reasons, *contra* Kwame Gyekye’s criticism in conversation November 23, 2006, University of Ghana, Legon. Even if we could specify precisely a set of parameters to determine when a worldview should count as shared, and by whom, the problem of vacuous circularity will remain if we try to distinguish societies or cultural traditions by appeal to the sets of beliefs (or ‘worldviews’) that their respective members share in common – which worldviews are then invoked to explain the *reason* for the norms of one society contrasting with the norms of the other.

<sup>18</sup>I owe the substance of this point to Bernard Williams (1972, p. 35) when he complained about a standard functionalist defence of ethical relativism.

combatants' worldviews<sub>ef</sub> (Guibernau & Hutchinson 2004; Gyekye 1997; Harrison & Huntington (eds.) 2000; Horowitz 1998; Huntington 1993; Zimmerman (2001); Zuelow (ed.) 2002).

### *Regarding Types of Worldview as Incommensurable*

There seem to be no grounds for attributing distinct (indeed, contrasting) worldviews<sub>ef</sub> to dissonant groups in conflict except as just another less obvious way of recording that they *are* dissonant and in conflict – less obvious, for instance, than taking a picture of the two groups in direct physical combat. In any case we must assume that even people who are in direct physical combat because of their different allegiances ordinarily do share one worldview<sub>ef</sub> to some extent, even if they are committed to mutual destruction. Because to expose the divergence of viewpoints in conflict, there must be some common landscape or backdrop against which opposing views and projects are set in order for us to see their glaring contrasts.<sup>19</sup> I am not suggesting here that interpretation of the opponents' worldviews<sub>ef</sub> requires assuming that most of what they believe must be *true*. Your speculations about what goes on behind al'Qaedan closed doors may diverge radically from mine while each of us remains convinced the other's perspective is completely and incorrigibly false, whereas in fact both of us may be massively mistaken not only about al'Qaeda but about current world affairs generally; and yet we can understand each other.<sup>20</sup>

Adversaries' minimal awareness of their shared circumstances and of each other's existence is presupposed by their trying to do each other physical damage. This much seems sufficient in itself to preclude the possibility of total incommensurability between their worldviews<sub>ef</sub>. For instance consider the antagonism among political perspectives in South Africa before 1994. It might seem appropriate to assign mutually exclusive mental universes to the presiding president at that time F. W. de Klerk, and the succeeding president Nelson Mandela who was then being shunted in and out of solitary confinement cells – on the grounds that their beliefs and values were so totally polarized throughout their lifetimes. But attributing to these two South Africans strictly isolated, mutually exclusive worldviews would be mistaken. It's not as if during his 27 years of maximum security imprisonment Mandela never shared with his oppressors any factual beliefs at all about the apartheid system. Mandela knew far more intimately about the life-threatening effects of apartheid

<sup>19</sup> As per Donald Davidson's classic 'Radical Interpretation' ([1974] 1984, pp. 136–137).

<sup>20</sup> This remark requires some defense against the insistence of e.g. Donald Davidson (*ibid.* [1974] 1984, p. 136), that "[i]f we cannot find a way to interpret ... a creature as revealing a set of beliefs largely consistent *and true* by our own standards, we have no reason to count that creature as rational, as having beliefs, or as saying anything." [my italics]. The rejection of worldview talk as providing explanatory force might presuppose that the degree of charity advocated by Davidson is overdoing it. But in this chapter I fall short of exploring the knowledge component of the worldview metaphor sufficiently to cast definitive judgment on truth-based semantics applied outside scientific discourse.



law than those who enforced it. The worldviews<sub>ef & ic</sub> of the ANC militant and of the last apartheid chief executive did intersect – indeed they collided – in the most penetrating and horrifically graphic ways. A crucial moment in world history was Mandela’s insisting that he would die before he would acquiesce to the injustice of the very same system over which P.W. Botha and later F.W. de Klerk held executive authority. Mandela was not condemning some other parallel government system in an incommensurable worldview, in which even the names ‘President Botha’ and ‘President de Klerk’ could have no conceivable significance or meaning remotely like the one understood in the world of his oppressors. In stark contrast, when it came to the crunch, Pieter Willem Botha finally resigned from office; and after him Fredrick Willem de Klerk did nothing to defend the system which since 1989 had vested in him so much prestige and power. On the contrary de Klerk has even been credited with dismantling those same institutions without a blink when it appeared most prudent to him and his kind to do so. Unless we recognise that it was *the same set of material conditions and legal statutes* about which the convictions, intentions, and character traits of these three personalities crossed each other so diametrically, we will not capture the extent of contrast between them as moral agents and as historical figures. Of course it is possible that we misjudge the former President de Klerk in his last days of office if we condemn him as a self-serving opportunist with the weakest of principles; perhaps he saw the light, realised his old ways were indefensible, and gave up his seat with noble humility rather than gross cowardice. Whichever interpretation of President de Klerk’s behaviour gets accepted as the correct one would seem to depend more upon *the interpreters’* worldview(s)<sub>ic</sub> than it would depend upon de Klerk’s own – at the time or in hindsight. So if it is a divergence between worldviews that is accountable for some insuperable indeterminacy concerning which among competing accounts is the one that satisfactorily explains an historical incident, perhaps it is the divergence of worldviews<sub>ic</sub> attributable to *those explaining what happened*, rather than the worldviews<sub>ef</sub> of the principal agents involved at the time of the original episode.<sup>21</sup>

It is obvious that overall replication among individuals’ thoughts is not a prevailing feature of shared worldviews<sub>ef</sub> anywhere.<sup>22</sup> So the mere absence of mirror imaging between your priorities and mine cannot by itself account for the kind of reasoning that leads us to resort to violent conflict. Since talking about agreement between our beliefs obviously can’t mean a perfect match, *similarity* of our beliefs must be all that is intended by saying that we share a worldview. This raises again the problem of how to tell when our beliefs become *dissimilar* enough to say that there obtains not one worldview between us but two. Relying on mutually intelligible descriptions

<sup>21</sup> This point ought to be enough to rid the addiction to ‘worldview’ notions for any realist. The meta-historical perspective of R.G. Collingwood ([1946] 1974) would instead advise keeping the ‘worldview’ and throwing out the realist.

<sup>22</sup> Replication of beliefs might be possible among the brainwashed; and so perhaps replication of worldviews<sub>ic</sub> is feasible even if replication of worldviews<sub>ef</sub> is not. But there seems no reason to suppose that people’s ideal constructions of the world actually determine what people do. It’s one thing to hear everyone in a cult espousing a dogma; it’s quite another to witness everyone of them living in exact accord with it.

of experience cannot determine similarity of worldviews<sub>ef</sub> any more than it secures their identity.<sup>23</sup> For if belonging to the same worldview<sub>ef</sub> is required for us to understand each other, and if sustaining the same worldview<sub>ic</sub> means by definition that we share (not identical, of course, but) similar beliefs, then I could never learn anything totally new from you. And in principle one person or group does learn very new things from another, even when they exist at very different times and places, just as geographical location no longer defines the Fante community or Yoruba society. This becomes more apparent to everyone as ‘globalisation’ accelerates, but it was always understood by Yorubas in London and Fante immigrants in Brooklyn.

### *Individuating Worldviews*

It is a truism that people’s attitudes and beliefs change – usually not overnight but over long periods of time. Yet knowledge of how and why we change our minds is not always available to us. Clearly one person’s beliefs do influence another’s, otherwise the impacts of formal education and libel would be less profound than they routinely are. But since other people’s thoughts may affect us without our being aware of when they do or how, it seems that the influence of other people’s worldviews<sub>ef</sub> upon our own is yet another unlikely candidate for illuminating introspection (Rosenthal 1983). Even if speculation about the structure of one’s own worldview<sub>ef</sub> were reliable, the insights gained from one’s own case may not be generalisable. Belief contents which are basic for one person may not be basic for someone else. I can learn from my primary school teacher that ethnic cleansing is the very most horrible thing that can happen in a community. But however effective primary school training might be, there seems no reason to suppose that this conviction is likely to function the same way in my psychological make up as it does for my teacher who learned it by witnessing her father’s hands being cut off when she was four.

Further, it is uncontroversial that semantic entailments are not a realistic guide for attributing beliefs to people (Harman 1973). Two people might follow different semantic norms so that an entailment relation in the worldview<sub>ef</sub> of one of them translates as a contingent relation in the worldview<sub>ef</sub> of the other.<sup>24</sup> But even if everyone relied uniformly on the connotations available for a widely translatable word, it remains a truism that people are fallible and life’s contingencies are too complicated to suppose that semantic content guides our understanding of the world or of each other.<sup>25</sup> Applying sexy non-classical rules of logic won’t help here, since it is

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<sup>23</sup> In their critique of Paul Churchland’s state-space semantics, Fodor and LePore demonstrate that problems incurred with determining identity of concepts will also obstruct criteria for their similarity (1994, pp. 203–204).

<sup>24</sup> Marital relations are an excellent example of the fluidity of semantic content in this respect. Attributing one or more wives to a bachelor is expected in Ghana, whereas to do so in the UK would be a logical howler.

<sup>25</sup> We have just observed that people are not always (perhaps seldom) aware of the particular beliefs that coincide with the motives for each of their voluntary actions. So it hardly seems we

people's inconsistency in following any logical rules whatsoever which yields our uncertainty about what someone is likely to mean by what he says or does.

So it's not clear how to even start individuating worldviews<sub>ef</sub>. It surely can't be correct to insist that every person maintains the same worldview<sub>ef</sub> at 40 as they did at 14 regardless of what they have been through, simply on the grounds that they are still the 'same' persons (Parfit 1984), or because their conceptual framework is already embedded at the time of language acquisition in early childhood. A person at one stage of cognitive development might draw lessons from a certain type of first hand experience (of gang rape at gunpoint, say) quite differently later in life or under different circumstances; and yet the semantic entailments between the propositional belief contents associated with such an experience typically hold for durations longer than half a lifetime. In any case it is not the *semantic content* of a belief A that accounts for a person's embracing (consciously or otherwise) another belief B whose content is semantically entailed by A. Whether a person who believes A comes to believe B sometimes depends upon who else believes B, or it may depend upon how she came to believe A, *ad infinitum*.<sup>26</sup> Introducing distinct worldviews<sub>ef</sub> whose contours are supposed to be even approximately discernible by logical constraints is as likely to obstruct as it is to assist in discovering the causal antecedents of occurrent and latent beliefs. So here again, just as it is problematic to know what is involved in distinguishing where your worldview<sub>ef</sub> leaves off and mine begins, it's not clear whether there could be a principled way that applies universally to decide when one person's worldview<sub>ef</sub> has *changed* sufficiently to explain, for instance, why suicide bombing is no longer an option for that person even though it was once her life goal. Yet another drawback to focussing on the divergence between worldviews<sub>ef</sub> *as such* in order to explain truculent or anomalous behaviour, is that it suggests people's primary reasons for acting depend ultimately upon how they *perceive* their world and not how their world is in fact. It is true that people in a conflict zone (or after a trauma) often act out of exaggerated anxiety over imagined threats. Nonetheless it is typically the case that a person who runs away from a moving army tank that is firing shells does so in order to avoid getting hit by explosive shells, not because she fears the sensation of getting hit by explosive shells.

### *Attributing Locations to Worldviews*

Commonplace considerations such as these introduce straightaway two deflationary considerations about the explanatory potential of worldviews<sub>ef</sub>. First, we may be unlikely to land on any non-truistic general principles describing the transformation of worldviews<sub>ef</sub> which cut across cultural, economic and historical divides. Contrary

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can presume upon a person's own ability to assess which of her beliefs are unassailable and which are forfeitable under external pressure.

<sup>26</sup>The same of course applies to people's (sometimes glaring) failure to extinguish a belief in the face of abundant contradictory evidence (Appiah 1991).

to popular trends in political theory (e.g. Connor 1972; Honneth 1998; Huntington's 1993 'clash of civilisations' thesis), if we want to understand the fissiparous forces that compel people to resort to horrific extremes, we need to study historically specific facts about their conditions and political contexts. For it may be just contingent facts – not *a priori* principles governing deep cognitive structure – that can reveal, for instance, how individuals involved in ethnic cleansing have sometimes been recapitulating without realising it, the very political legacies and heinous colonial power relations that they were intending to defeat or transform (Mamdani 2003).<sup>27</sup> For the purpose of explaining why neighbourhood gang feuds sometimes escalate to genocide, there is no obvious reason to treat as interchangeable the contingent facts peculiar to Rwanda, and Nigeria, Palestine, Western Sudan, and South Central Los Angeles. Secondly, it seems unreasonable to suppose that the agents involved as principals in a killing spree are any more capable of discovering the genuine causes of their horrific ordeal,<sup>28</sup> than would be a distant third party investigating the matter coolly with historical hindsight and geo-political perspective. My main objection to worldview vocabulary is that it diffuses the possibility of making such discoveries and mitigates their potential impact. Attributing causally determinate worldviews<sub>ef</sub> to the individuals at a locus of guerrilla warfare gives a misleading sense of clarity, concreteness and detectable locality to the sources and processes of individual agents' decision making in light of what they believe to be true and important.

It seems that to be publicly accessible to all those who share it, a worldview<sub>ef</sub> must be dimensionless, timeless, and without any location. The limits of a worldview<sub>ic</sub> are not discernible. Indeed worldviews<sub>ic</sub> are frighteningly porous.<sup>29</sup> Nowadays many of the beliefs and attitudes that are at least partly responsible for violent breakdown of a region's status quo, are thoughts belonging to agents remotely distant and legally cushioned from culpability for the protracted violence (Stockwell 1978). For instance in July 2006 the life of a young Lebanese woman in a quiet residential neighbourhood of Baalbeck in the Bekaa Valley was jeopardized, her home and school and her future destroyed, not because of the way she perceives herself or her world, but because of the way her identity and her world are perceived by an evangelical preacher in Texas who successfully lobbied the US House of Representatives to escalate the weapons of mass destruction being sent to support America's proxy war using Israel's defence forces in the Middle East. That preacher's mobilizing three and a half thousand Christian Zionists to rally in Washington, DC had such a devastating impact in Lebanon not because of the accuracy in his worldview<sub>ic</sub> concerning the Lebanese tar-

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<sup>27</sup> Mahmood Mamdani's 'Making sense of political violence in Postcolonial Africa' (in Toyin Falola (ed.) 2003) provides an insightful analysis of the Rwandan genocide in the 1990s that traces the legacy of manipulation via ethnic labeling by political opportunists since Belgian occupation in the 1920s. See also Edward Said's (2001) critique of the clash of civilisations thesis.

<sup>28</sup> David M. Rosenthal (1983) discusses in depth the limitations of introspection for knowledge about causal properties of one's own thoughts.

<sup>29</sup> A. Claire Cutler (1999) shows how neo-liberal ideology masks the impact exerted by trans-national corporate profiteers upon local conditions and political relations.

geted, nor because of the purity in his worldview<sub>ef</sub> which features his personal ambition to fulfil Biblical prophecy. He succeeded because of the current warmongering climate in America and the acute vulnerability of US Congressmen in the few weeks prior to their mid term elections. Thus it is misleading to attribute the causes of intractable divisiveness to the worldviews<sub>ef</sub> of those caught up in violent conflict, as if worldviews hung in distant isolation from one another like separate planets suspended in a void.

## Basic Beliefs at the Core of Worldviews<sub>ef</sub>

Perhaps the essentials of worldview<sub>ef</sub> structure will emerge by restricting attention to just those beliefs that form its foundation. Among subscribers to worldview vocabulary, different orders of basic belief are presumed to play a constant role in a person's worldview<sub>ef</sub>. So for example, Note (2006) claims:

A worldview reflects what people experience as the world outside, prior to any conceptual notions. These pre-conscious 'experiences' are translated into comprehensible orderings; the basic categories which explain subconsciously how the world ontologically is or is experienced. An example of these core beliefs in Western culture is the idea of substantiality of each being. From these core beliefs interpretations are deduced on a semi-conscious level. They can be called second order basic assumptions. Examples of these conceptualisations in western culture are the deep belief in the autonomy of people.

With regard to first and second orders of thought, it is not immediately obvious how to tell when a basic belief belongs to one and not the other. An example of a first order belief (given by Note 2006) is "the substantiality of each being;" and an example of the second order is "the deep belief in the autonomy of people." First order beliefs are supposed sometimes to be "preconscious" and acquired "pre-linguistically," before their perceptions are "translated into comprehensible orderings." The second order belief is presumed to be "deduced on a semi-conscious level" from the first.

But to begin with, there is no one-step solution to puzzles about the earliest stages of perceptual cognition. W.V.O. Quine has suggested that being conscious of having a sensory experience as being *of* any *thing*, or having a basic belief *about* anything, requires more than sensory inputs; it requires some rudimentary assumptions about the way the world is organised.<sup>30</sup> Learning to see discrete objects may be on a par with learning how to use proper names like 'Mama' and 'Fido' in contrast with 'water', 'heat' and 'far away'.<sup>31</sup> Whether or not Quine's hypotheses about the roots of reference are correct, they suggest that it is at least feasible to regard "the substantiality of each being" as a derived second order presumption acquired in late

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<sup>30</sup>The correcting optical illusions provoked by the Necker Cube and Ames' Distorted Room illustrate the effect of expectations upon perception. Richard L. Gregory (1997). The point is an old one (Schlick 1934).

<sup>31</sup>W.V.O. Quine, 'Speaking of Objects' (1969, p. 7). See also Quine (1953, 1960, 1970).

infancy or early toddlerhood alongside one's "deep belief in the autonomy" of Mama and Fido.

### *Two Ways of Being 'Basic'*

Each and every causally significant mental state need not be uniformly accompanied with its own propositional tag (Clark 1980). But those mental states without any specifiable propositional content do not seem capable of filling the roles that first order basic beliefs are expected to fill.<sup>32</sup> It would seem that basic beliefs, if they do nothing else, presuppose or entail each other. But if a perceptual datum is not yet "comprehensible" then how can we know its logical consequences? A sudden intense sensory experience triggers with predictable certainty subsequent chemical states preparatory to the well-documented mammalian's fight-or-flight reaction. But arguably it would be a category mistake to regard the biological function of a mental state's occurrence as its *logical* entailment.<sup>33</sup> So it appears that a belief can be *basic* to one's worldview<sub>ef</sub> in more than one sense: being basic can mean that belief A is 'implicit', either (i) because belief state A occurs without one's being conscious of it, or (ii) because the content of A is logically presupposed by other thoughts that occur, consciously or not.<sup>34</sup> But it is not clear what follows from the fact that belief A is 'basic'. For instance being basic can't tell us whether A is true. (I may eventually stand corrected about my gut feeling that dark complexioned people with turbans boarding planes pose a clear and immediate threat.) Nor can we learn in what sense it is a *necessity* that I believe A, from the fact that I do believe A 'implicitly'. Note (2006) claims "... *it is indispensable for people to perceive the basic beliefs of their worldview as 'true' and 'right', in order for this worldview to have an orienting function.*" This indispensability is open to interpretation. It is merely tautological to say that I *need* to believe A, if all this implies is that in order to have the very particular orientation that I do have, I must believe the very things that I do believe and none other. Alternatively and non-trivially, I may *need* to believe A in the sense that if I were to just go along with the other beliefs I hold, omitting A, I would not be able to orient myself in the world successfully in accord with prevailing social norms; whereas when I do believe A, I get along

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<sup>32</sup>Rudolf Carnap and Otto Neurath have analysed this problem in their discussions of a unified science, reprinted in Ayer (ed.) (1965).

<sup>33</sup>This point echoes a controversy central to the old debate about whether agents' reasons can be causes, which in turn depends upon classic disputes over the nature of 'necessity' (see Lauer 1992). It may be required to resolve all these issues in order to establish whether in fact having a worldview<sub>ef</sub> is a necessary condition for acting intentionally, but for the discussion here, it is sufficient to recognize that mental states can be predicted to yield specifiable consequences on *both* logical and empirical grounds.

<sup>34</sup>I owe whatever merit there is in these reflections on basicness to David M. Rosenthal's suggestion that calling a thought 'basic' implies it is "implicit in the way that psychologists talk of thoughts that aren't conscious;" or that its "content is logically presupposed by other thoughts, rather than by actually occurring in any way whatever." In email correspondence, November 29, 2006.

fine.<sup>35</sup> But again this is no indication of the *necessity* of believing A in any sense that entails A must be true. For in the interest of getting along fine, I may be compelled to believe silly things – because I feel compelled to conform to silly norms, e.g. refusing to fly on Ethiopian Airways because they allow turbaned men with dark complexions to board. This suggests that a robust distinction should be maintained between rules of thumb appropriate for building a scientific worldview<sub>ic</sub> whose constituent postulates ought to be taken as true in the main (e.g. Carnap's (1956) principle of tolerance), vs. rules of thumb for interpreting a worldview<sub>ef</sub> (e.g. Davidson's (1969) principle of charity, or Grandy's (1973) principle of humanity) which arguably carry no obligations to regard constituent beliefs as true in the main. There should be a gap between the criteria for confirmation required (by a referee for a scientific journal, say) to tell when beliefs in the main are warrantably interpreted as true about the empirical world, vs. the sensitivity required (by a psychotherapist, or an anthropologist) to interpret beliefs in order to capture authentically a particular individual's subjective or cultural point of view.

### Rendering Antagonism as Basic

Next we will examine two theories that posit specific, though quite distinct, propositional *contents* of basic beliefs – basic in the sense that these belief contents are purported to constitute a necessary part of every person's 'identity'. Further, these theories propose that core beliefs constitute a logical or otherwise ineluctable basis for people's resorting to conflict as a means of self preservation. The influential international relations theorist Walker Connor (1972; Zimmerman 2001; Zuelow (ed.) 2002) claims that it is the logic of a person's affiliation with a group which requires that he embroil himself in sectarian conflict.<sup>36</sup> Connor is impressed by the ineffable tenacity of our most basic core beliefs that capture each individual's "view of self" or sense of "ethnic or social" identity. He says the core of an individual's worldview cannot be defined by legal statute nor by political allegiance nor religious ordinance. Ethnic identity is not an essentially "cultural assimilation;" it is rather "profoundly psychological" (1972, pp. 341–342), so that an individual can "shed" all the customs and mannerisms that count as "tangible" or "overt cultural manifestations" but that doesn't rid the person of who he or she really is. According to Connor, it is:

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<sup>35</sup> It should be obvious that I am grafting Carnap's definition of a cognitively meaningful sentence here, when he is explaining how to apply his principle of tolerance to determine ontological commitment. See Ayer (ed.) (1965). To paraphrase: 'A term t is cognitively significant in L if it plays an uneliminable role in a statement S which is cognitively meaningful. S is cognitively meaningful just in case from S conjoined with a theory T, observable events can be predicted or explained which cannot be predicted or explained by T without S.' And yet my borrowing is impertinent as the following example shows.

<sup>36</sup> Walker Connor (1972, p. 353): "The prime cause of political disunity is the absence of a single psychological focus shared by all segments of the population." The only end to destabilizing ethnic violence, then, is to eliminate the variety of worldviews<sub>ef</sub> whose cores generate on *a priori* grounds multiple group affiliations.

“... superficial ... to predicate ethnic strife upon language, religion, customs, economic inequity, or some other tangible element ... what is fundamentally involved in such a conflict is that divergence of basic identity which manifests itself in the ‘us-them’ syndrome.” (Connor 1972, pp. 341, 344)

Thus for Connor, the ultimate answer to the question of whether a person is one of us or one of them seldom hinges upon adherence to “overt aspects of culture” (Connor 1972, p. 341); i.e. polarization is unavoidably and incorrigibly “personal.” Thus Connor urges that we realise the “primary cause” of ethnic conflict is not a matter of economics or politics but of this basic conceptual or logical polarity which is *sui generis* and “fundamental” to personhood. Although our most basic beliefs are ‘intangible’, they have logical qualities nonetheless, and it is this *a priori* feature of identity at the core of a worldview<sub>ef</sub> that carries the seeds of sectarian violence. Connor presupposes that having any beliefs at all about who you are requires a sense of belonging. And he says a basic belief or sense of belonging would be impossible without a sense of not-belonging. Therefore, since he thinks “the idea of ‘us’ requires ‘them’;” Connor reasons that polarization is fundamental to a person’s “basic identity” (Connor 1972, p. 341). That is, the ‘us vs. them’ dichotomy is uneliminable.

This analysis leads to paradox. Consider all the groups whose members’ allegiances depend upon this polarizing feature of group identity. Let these groups be called *exclusionary*. To belong to an exclusionary group means to regard every member of any other group as being one of ‘them’ and not ‘us’. Now consider building a coalition or confederation of all such exclusionary groups; let’s call this Exclusionation, or E for short. You can belong to confederation E provided that you don’t feel that you belong to it. That is because recognising yourself as belonging to any other group besides the one which is essential to your basic identity must mean that you don’t really belong to an exclusionary group in the first place, and so you wouldn’t properly qualify for membership in confederation E either. But according to Connor, subscribing to the ‘us vs. them’ polarity is essential to having any basic identity at all. So everybody must belong to some exclusionary group. And so, hypothetically each and every one of us would have to belong to such a confederation E if it existed, for the sole reason that we would be compelled logically to refuse to recognise that we belonged to it.<sup>37</sup>

### Rendering the Need for Approval as Basic

Another widely appreciated social philosopher, Alex Honneth (1998) posits a different *a priori* feature of the core beliefs constituting the ‘identity’ at the core of each person’s worldview<sub>ef</sub> isolating psychoanalytically specific first order experiences as the foundation for all moral struggles against injustices of every kind. Honneth claims that our sense of self respect and integrity generate initially from our receiving social approval from significant others, and that to maintain self

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<sup>37</sup>Applying the template of Russell’s paradox in this remote context was inspired by Romane Clark’s elegant criticism of the thesis that belief contents must have a propositional structure (1980).



respect throughout life we must constantly seek facsimiles of that primal acceptance upon which our infantile survival once depended or appeared to depend. He cites as evidence the direct injury that we all feel from degrading treatment or from public humiliation, from belittling verbal abuse or from outright physical assault. Since we may know first hand that self esteem can be damaged by receiving poor treatment, Honneth wagers the contrapositive equivalent must also be self evident. That is, since the absence of respect from others can trigger a sense of injury to our self esteem and personal integrity, then it must also be the case that sustained self-esteem and personal integrity depend upon our sensing that other people recognise us as worthy of their respect. Thus he gives a transcendental argument<sup>38</sup> to show that the primal need for recognition is essential to all public morality and fights for social justice.

But Honneth seems to overlook the possibility that individuals can harbour self-esteem and personal integrity even though from birth their subordinate status does not entitle them to expect the obliging deference and recognition of their significant others. Women generally occupy such a denigrated position in many societies. And both men and women in South Africa who forged a new definition of citizenship through the second half of the 20th century, did so despite the annihilating, profoundly abusive conditions that were legally institutionalised long before their birth. Significant in this regard is a chronicle of the struggle for justice titled *The Autobiography of an Unknown South African*. The ANC activist Naboth Mokgatle (1971) vividly describes his regimen for cultivating Black Consciousness which inspired the success of the anti-apartheid struggle. He writes that he intentionally provoked abuse, contriving to routinely expose himself to the worst excesses of physical brutality and psychological humiliation by breaking pass laws conspicuously so that he would be caught by authorities and dealt with in the degrading way apportioned to his identity under apartheid law. He says this self-discipline was intentionally gauged to teach him to lose his fear of police and prison (Mokgatle 1971, pp. 216–224). Contrary to Honneth's theory, Mokgatle's self respect and esteem that fuelled his fight for justice was strengthened precisely as he focussed his awareness on the abuse, insults and injuries perpetrated by significant authorities who actively deprived him of respectful recognition and intentionally disqualified his moral worth. Nor was this a one-off peculiarity unique to the psychology of one South African. The ANC ideology deliberately schooled activists in the anti apartheid struggle to divorce themselves from interaction with liberal whites eager to offer them recognition and reverence as moral heroes, precisely because such respectful approval was regarded as a weakening influence that threatened to undermine the uncompromising autonomy of Black Consciousness required to genuinely overturn (rather than to subtly perpetuate by colluding with) the white supremacist status quo.<sup>39</sup> The counterexample extends as well to Connor's previously reviewed thesis: It can be argued that the political unity

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<sup>38</sup> See footnote 7.

<sup>39</sup> This was spelled out to me in conversation by one of the founders of the Black Consciousness Movement, the ANC activist and colleague of the late Steven Biko, Dr. Mamphela Ramphele, New York City, August 1984. Lang (1998) pp.31-44, 49-52, 61-64, offers an in depth critique of

achieved for one glorious historical moment in 1994 for all South Africans was *not* made possible by eliminating or sublimating the population's multiple psychological perspectives, nor by erasing from people's thoughts their awareness of their diverse ethno-nationalist identities and loyalties, as Walker Connor and others have prescribed (Zuelow (ed.) 2002). Rather the transcendent harmony emerged because the prevailing mood which for that brief period in South Africa embraced with unrestrained admiration the variety of worldviews and identities that reflected the whole population, celebrated as a multi ethnic rainbow.

## Sharing and Reforming Worldviews<sub>ef/c</sub>

So far we have been encountering various difficulties when worldviews<sub>ef</sub> are regarded as belonging to individuals. So it is reasonable to hope that the problems will fall away if instead we regard worldviews<sub>ef/c</sub> (i.e. both as primordial foundations and as ideal constructs<sup>40</sup>) to be the emergent properties of communities enduring over time, instead of belonging to the discrete individuals who make up those communities. But attributing a worldview to a community, a society, a culture, or a 'people', is problematic because it fails to concede the variety of obligations, expectations, contrary and contradictory beliefs attributable to a whole community no matter how small it is.<sup>41</sup> Even when people are elected as representatives and endeavour to speak and act consciously on behalf of their group, knowledge sets will have to diverge. (At this moment you know, and I don't, how many married siblings you have.)

### *Creating Harmony by Shaping Language Use*

Together with a mistaken view of the central role that language plays in sustaining social structure, some commentators on current affairs advise that "good nation-building" should entail enforcing a uniform language as a national policy in order to build "a cohesive cultural identity."<sup>42</sup> Even if it were true that social engineering could contribute to creating greater harmony and increasing mutual interest among different peoples around the world or within a culturally diverse society, it remains controversial whether getting everyone to speak the same language would be likely on balance to neutralize old resentments of disaffected groups. It's not clear whether requiring

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the quantitative model that Samuel P. Huntington presupposes when he characterises the world view dominant in apartheid South Africa as that of a 'Satisfied Society'.

<sup>40</sup>The distinction labeled 'constructivist vs. primordialist' by Anton Du Plessis (2001) was contrived for his classification of models of social identity formation.

<sup>41</sup>I am grateful for Kate Crehan's in depth Gramscian analysis of the anthropological concept of 'culture', from whose critique I gained confidence in sustaining this criticism of applying a single worldview to an entire human collective.

<sup>42</sup>*Ibid.* pp. 92–95, 113.

that a population shares a common language is either necessary or sufficient to encourage individuals' feeling that they belong to a single community with a single focus.<sup>43</sup> Globally, the evidence suggests that sufficiently stringent enforcement measures of official language policies have had the opposite effect.<sup>44</sup> Language by itself cannot cause a change in a person's worldview<sub>ic</sub> or in the "tangible effects" of a person's transformed "psychological focus" and "self view" (Connor 1972). This is not to deny that what can be said or insinuated about someone's identity within a particular language L can indeed influence her self perception. But it is not because of the fact that the particular language L is spoken. It's rather *what* is capable of being said in L about the person which may incite her to violence. Comparably, the fact that someone has been forcefully deprived of her mother tongue M and forced instead to speak L will impact adversely on her identity and her world view. Ngugi wa Thiong'o has been making this point repeatedly for decades.<sup>45</sup> But as he emphasizes, it is the long term effect of coercive imperialist enforcement, together with the humiliating denigration of a people's earliest and most intimate mode of self expression, not the languages L and M as intangible structured entities themselves, which does the damage. Language can provide a reliable indicator of a person's attraction or resistance to change but it does not by itself constitute the forces compelling that desire or resistance. Certainly from the things a person says, we get to know what he is likely to do or what he wants to do and what he will refuse to do. For instance we can tell from just listening to someone, the sort of person he is likely to marry if given the opportunity. But that's not because the language he uses is itself the source or cause of the kinship patterns, the family alliances, affinities, tastes, mannerisms, and political allegiances that determine his identity. Socio-linguists are expert at analysing the intonations and idioms of a native speaker which will betray where and when the speaker was socialised within a larger speech community. This is because the *way* a speaker uses a language divulges in a reliable way the beliefs and values that constitute part of that speaker's upbringing; but of course it is a mistake to confuse this variety of symptoms with their underlying causes.

### ***Reappraising Linguistic Determinism***

Language is often assumed to make an unrealistically large contribution to the thoughts that cause a person's intentional behaviour. For example there are Guan people in the hills of Akwapem of central Ghana who speak Twi, a matrilineal

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* p. 89. See also H. Lauer (1999) "Critical Notice: Tradition and Modernity," *Philosophical Books*, 40.1.

<sup>44</sup> A hallmark of protracted political oppression is language control (e.g. in Quebec, Ireland, Wales, Cornwall, the former Republic of South Africa, and current legislation banning Spanish in the USA). Meanwhile a common language can be of bureaucratic service without touching the cultural profile of any participating group (English in India, for instance).

<sup>45</sup> Most recently in his contribution to the Opening Plenary Session of the African Literature Association 32nd Annual Conference: *Pan-Africanism In The 21st Century: Generations In Creative Dialogue*. Accra, Ghana, May 17–21, 2006.

tongue, but their inheritance network remains staunchly patrilineal. We'll learn about why Guan kinship patterns are peculiar by studying their history with neighbouring Twi-speaking colonizers, not by studying the nuances of Twi phonology that characterise their speech. Quite apart from the clues revealed by dialect and accent, the language itself that a person uses is generally a poor indicator of their identity anywhere you look. Speaking English in Accra or in Delhi does not identify you as an Englishman; and no one speaking French in Haiti or the Ivory Coast would thereby be presenting himself as a Frenchman. And tellingly, speaking Arabic in Northern Sudan does not flag you as an Arab.

Arabic is a particularly interesting case because it illustrates how foreign world-views<sup>effic</sup> whose sources are quite distant from a location of conflict can impact on people engaged in that conflict, particularly upon their understanding of what they are doing and why. And like English, the distribution of Arabic speakers further illustrates that language as a medium for expressing thought holds no monopoly over what the speaker believes and feels. This is vividly evidenced by the fact that Arabic speakers have held diverse and changing opinions about their own language as they participate in it. For instance speaking Arabic formerly attracted prestige as the sacred language spoken by the Prophet Muhammad. But the version of Arabic that was once universally associated with high status is nowadays avoided by many Nubians in Northern Sudan as by many Algerians, Moroccans, Northern Egyptians and Tunisians, who wish to disassociate themselves from the vilification to which Saudis and others in the Middle East are subjected through Axis of Evil rhetoric purveyed by satellite media. Propaganda about the Arab World and the Arab Cause, has virtually co-opted the term 'Arab' to take the place of 'Communist' in global discourse. In mid-November 2006, satellite media repeatedly reported "violence escalating out of control" in South-eastern Chad, as illustrated by a new raid on 20 villages "perpetrated by men who appear to be ethnically Arab."<sup>46</sup> The news feed begs the question: What does it mean to "appear ethnically Arab"? And to whom? In the Sudan, 'Arab' means pastoralist, someone in a nomadic life who herds cattle, sheep and camels. The popular media's description of the crisis in Darfur has not only distorted this connotation, it has contributed to the mayhem. In fact, the Western Sudanese Arabs have lived in peaceful cooperation for over 250 years with the settled cultivators called the Fur whose homeland is known as Dar, sharing water, fuel wood, arable land – despite the scarcity of these resources accelerating dramatically in the last three decades. When pastoralists periodically ran so low on their herd commodity that they could not survive, they farmed on land supplied by the Fur. In Darfur, there are 90 ethnic group identities, not two. Tribal identity in Darfur is a fluid and shifting affair that is particularly easy to manipulate now because the people are obliged to fight for their existence.<sup>47</sup> We hear

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<sup>46</sup> *BBC Worldservice* Nov. 14–16, 2006.

<sup>47</sup> Fifteen or more distinguishable communities in Darfur are individuated chiefly by territorial rights and region, language, livelihood and political affiliation, but not by race, religion or ethnicity, as international reportage of events in the region would have one believe. I am indebted to a Sudanese anthropologist who has requested anonymity, and whose reflections were confirmed in conversations with another Sudanese social anthropologist Prof. Mustafa Babiker visiting

everyday now about Black Africans vs. White Arabs, and about Black Muslims vs. Brown Muslims absorbed in conflict in Darfur since 2001, via CNN, Reuters, RFI, and BBC.<sup>48</sup> In fact the intensity of conflict in Darfur has been increasing steadily since the early 1980s. Its roots reach back to the 1800s, reflecting tension with the distant Khartoum-based administration for a foreign Protectorate. Ethnic categories featured through satellite media now influence the way people of the Darfur identify themselves on the global stage. New labels are used because they are recognised by locally installed reporters, United Nations monitors, international NGOs.<sup>49</sup> Descriptions currently in circulation are naturally adopted in order to ensure recognition and legitimisation of the speaker's immediate plight against overwhelming aggression, now merged with a legacy of protracted political struggle and long standing grievances against the central state.<sup>50</sup> Explanations of behaviour that popularly enlist a new identity as the cause of conflict become habitual and thereby self-fulfilling. In consequence, the current chaos and carnage in Western Sudan does not necessarily reveal anything endemic to the psyche or regional worldview<sub>ef</sub> of the people engaged in, or fleeing from, entrenched guerrilla warfare.

## Conclusion

The considerations we have canvassed throughout this essay suggest that whether a person's primordial worldview<sub>ef</sub> or altered worldview<sub>ic</sub> will result in violent confrontation or peaceful resolution, is likely to be a matter of contingent historical and material circumstances. There seems no evidence to suggest that either destructive hatred or its alleviation is a direct function of group allegiance to a specific social or ethnic identity – or to a worldview, or a knowledge tradition, or a conceptual scheme, as such. The evidence suggests instead that the option to engage in violence typically results from a myriad of events unfolding unpredictably over time – historical events which necessarily are linked to specific times and places.

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University of Ghana, Legon from the University of Khartoum, on the occasion of the 14th Annual PAAA Conference, Institute of African Studies, Legon, August 2nd–5th 2004; and from the published work of his colleague, the social anthropologist Munzoul A. M. Assal, also of the University of Khartoum.

<sup>48</sup>The appalling disarray must be explained to justify the Western Sudanese border, now heavily patrolled by foreign troops to protect multinational corporate interests in the transport of petroleum out of the region.

<sup>49</sup>The most influential in determining discourse about the region are the ubiquitous Washington-based Human Rights Watch and more recently the London-based International Migration Organisation.

<sup>50</sup>Other important organised mouthpieces are the leading regional rebel movements of the SLA and JEM, and the Sudanese government). Powerful vested interests (including the multinational oil conglomerates Exxon, Shell, and Elf as well as the high profile financing cooperative IBRD which sets the policies for the IMF and World Bank) who control the global media require that 25 years of escalating violence in Western Sudan be explained without too much confusing historical detail since it became visible to the international arena in 2003.

Sometimes these specifiable events occur at many places simultaneously; other times they occur sequentially over decades.

We have seen that, generally, a worldview is supposed to be a comprehensive totality or an overall structure comprised of many sorts of mental or subjective components of reality – beliefs, intentions, experiences, principles, values, social norms, self-evident truths, logical and empirical presuppositions. But we've noticed too that talking of divergent, atomized worldviews as universal features of social experience – which influence us in ways that transcend the historicity of particular events – deflects attention from pertinent facts about our increasing worldwide interdependence, facts which provoke some people into justifiably defensive postures of intractable distrust and protracted combat. It would be wrong to conclude that the distracting effects of worldview vocabulary are restricted to social scientific theorizing alone. As reflected in the range of literatures that we have dipped into very briefly throughout this essay, the oversimplification, redundancy, and circularity encountered when relying too significantly upon the notion of worldview, appear just as prevalent in philosophical analyses and in everyday discourse as in social scientific models presuming to penetrate human dissonance to its primordial depths.

It is worth considering whether anything more is added to an account of behaviour by including worldviews as discernible elements in the causal or functional constellation of factors responsible for what people do and say at specific times and places (Lauer 1992). For indeed if the overall totality or the supervenient structure captured by the term 'worldview' does not display any properties that are not just as readily (perhaps even more perspicuously) attributed to its component parts, then it is not clear whether worldview imagery masks rather more than it illuminates the relation between subjective and objective aspects of social reality that it purports to portray.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Frederick Suppe (1979, p. 218) expressed a parallel scepticism about the role of (now passé) *Weltanschauung* in his exhaustive overview of 20th century debates about the structure of scientific theories. Talk of worldviews generally has accelerated since the 1970s when contributors became embroiled for a period with attempts to posit incommensurable *Weltanschauungen* as non-rational determinants of theory change (Suppe 1979, pp. 633–649).

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# Andean Philosophy as a Questioning Alterity: An Intercultural Criticism of Western Andro- and Ethnocentrism

Josef Estermann

*This article aims to provide a more concrete discussion of the intercultural approach based on previously worked out and established parameters in the field. Enough preliminary work has been done on the broad lines of interculturality in general and on those of intercultural philosophy in particular. I will therefore focus on the more tangible aspects of the general views of intercultural philosophy, which I will not make explicit here, nor should I, since this has already been done over the past fifteen years or so. In spite of this long-standing research into the subject, the intercultural approach still has not been adopted by the international academic community as a whole, but only in a number of small niche areas. This can be explained in part from the power relations and overall inertia of the academic world but most of all from the continued predominance of a single model excluding any other viable approaches.*

*I am quite aware of the purpose of this article. It does not by any means intend to balance or harmonise varying paradigms, nor make an exhaustive or balanced assessment of the Western tradition. It is paradigmatic in the sense that it discusses several prevailing features of the dominant Western tradition. Inevitably, it makes heterodox and less obvious characteristics of this tradition explicit. The examples on ethnocentricity and androcentricity are given solely to enlighten the reader, not to qualify all Western tradition as androcentric and ethnocentric. On the other hand, as its title suggests, it would be beyond the scope of this article to include any intercultural criticism of Andean philosophy. It rather invites such criticism from others in other – not necessarily Western – philosophical traditions.*

*I understand that many would have preferred a much more balanced result. In my view, however, this very ambition is only too characteristic of the Western tradition. A disproportionate and exaggerated perspective can sometimes help to reveal fundamental but thus far hidden aspects of one's own tradition. If our objective is to find things in common and only that, we will fail to see the differences. The universalist claim of Western philosophy has often used the argument of commonality to enclose other philosophies in a paternalising embrace – contending that philosophy does not depend on gender, race or culture, being human at heart. As a result, its own cultural, ethnical and gender-related assumptions can barely be discerned.*

*These covert and – in psychoanalytical terms – repressed assumptions can only be revealed if we take a critical intercultural stance. I know that my article is bound to provoke severe criticism and maybe even hot debate, but then that is exactly what intercultural dialogue is about: to stimulate dialogue, debate and encounter between different entities to reach beyond any predefined assumptions. It is this what my article intends to be – a thought-provoking and committed proposal calling for counter views.*

The famous saying of Karl Marx in his 11th “Thesis on Feuerbach” that until today philosophy only had interpreted the world, but that from now on and further it would be about changing it,<sup>1</sup> this adage could very well be modified in the following sense: Until now, the dominant philosophy only has been interpreted as philosophy of the dominators, but the moment is coming that the *kenosis* have to serve the dominated and have to change the world from below.

When the Spanish conquerors reached the continent of *Abya Yala*<sup>2</sup> – which they mistakenly identified with India and what abusively was called “America” – they were carrying in their minds the scholastic philosophy of the Renaissance and the Aristotelian defense of natural slavery. Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, after “having discovered a salvage Indian, without law or political regime, wandering through the jungle and closer to the beasts and the monkeys than to man”, writes in his work *Democrates Alter*: “Compare these gifts of prudence, ingenuity, magnanimity, moderation, humility and religion of the Spanish with those of these little fellows in which one hardly can find human remains, and which not only lack culture but which not even use or know letters nor conserve monuments of their history but only some dark and vague memory of some facts laid down in certain paintings, they lack written laws, and have barbarian institutions and habits”.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Marx, Karl (1845, 1888). The title “Thesen über Feuerbach” was given by Friedrich Engels. Thesis 11 is literally as follows: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it”.

<sup>2</sup>When looking for an appropriate and not Eurocentric name for the Latin-American continent, we clash with linguistic limitations: Simply calling it “Latin America”, which was a whim of Genoan Amerigo Vespucci, in fact means to subordinate it to the Western linguistic domain (Latin and its derivatives), and to exclude in this way the indigenous languages. In spite of the fact that the term “*Abya Yala*” certainly is a *pars pro toto* – which is a *kuna* expression (Panama) – which refers explicitly to the indigenous continent (the “Profound America”) with its non-Western roots. In Kuna culture, *Abya Yala* means “the fertile earth in which we live”.

<sup>3</sup>Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda (1490–1572/3), Spanish priest and historian, chronicler of Carl V, assumed the traditional counter position in the dispute with Bartholomew de Las Casas about the legitimacy of the Conquest and the submission of the “Indians” to slavery. The citation of Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda in Spanish was taken from: Pereña, Luciano (1992). 209, and subsequently translated into English by the author.

## The Problem of the Philosophical ‘Other’

Since the stories of the Hebrew Bible, that were passed on by the Greeks and the Romans and reaching the conquerors and cultural imperialists of all times, the misleading but always convincing syllogism has been the same: “We have civilization and reason; the others are totally different (*totaliter aliter*) from us; ergo: the others do not have culture and reason.” The peoples conquered by the Roman Empire were called – just as does Ginés de Sepúlveda with those disrespectfully called “*Indios*” – “barbarians” (*barbari*), having beards and therefore “closer to the beasts and the monkeys than to man”.<sup>4</sup>

This psychological law – “I am the denial of the other (*alter alterius*) or put in other words: I am the other to the other” – has served during millennia to affirm the own identity and to conquer, destroy and subject the other simply because of the fact of being “the other”. The philosophical problem of ‘being different’<sup>5</sup> is becoming aware of the political, religious, cultural and economic problem of the other, which more than a problem is a tragedy, a holocaust, a permanent genocide.

After that the new School of Salamanca (Francisco de Vitoria) knew to oppose – based on the same philosophical and theological foundations – the ideas of Ginés de Sepúlveda and affirm the “humanity” of the discourteously named “Indians” (or in Spanish *indios*, which refers to males only, women would be *indias* and weren’t even mentioned), the ‘being different’ of the original peoples had to be established and positioned within the human species, and this time not as “bestiality” or “animality”.<sup>6</sup> The fact that one gave “rationality” and “*animus*” (the capacity to have a “soul” and to reason) to the indigenous people, was not so much a gesture of magnanimity so distinctive of the Spanish (according to Sepúlveda),<sup>7</sup> but was a prerequisite in order to baptize and evangelize them. One cannot baptize “beasts”, nor preach the Good News (*eu-angelión*) to them – however those have in reality been Bad News (*dys-angelión*) for many inhabitants of *Abya Yala*. The fact to share (with the “Indians”) the same human nature required of the rationality of the conquerors to search and determine other characteristics in order to distinguish between “us” and “them”; between sameness and alterity.

One of the most used indicators for this purpose until today, are racial and gender characteristics: The other is defined and differentiated from oneself by race and gender. This, together with a value judgment – “the other is by definition inferior

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<sup>4</sup> See footnote 3. This is a citing of Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, referring to the indigenous people of the American continent.

<sup>5</sup> Discussed for the first time in its profound and philosophical dimensions by Emmanuel Levinas (1905–1995).

<sup>6</sup> The racist scheme of “marking the differences” with respect to the other is neither typical nor exclusive of the Spanish conquerors, but it repeats in many other “differences of opinion” between peoples until today. For the Greeks and the Romans, the slaves were not “human”, for the Brahmins, the *dalit* (outcast) are not part of “humanity”; for Origenes, women were only half human; etc.

<sup>7</sup> See the citing that footnote 3 refers to.

to oneself” – leads to racism and sexism present in all supreme and conquering monocultural projects. If Western philosophical and theological books would have color and gender, certainly the great majority would be white and male.

From the words of Ginés de Sepúlveda until today, the argument hasn't changed principally, but only gradually. Step by step, the disrespectfully called “Indians” have acquired human features, that is to say: they have been converted into “non-barbarians”, as is shown by the imposition of the Spanish or Portuguese language, by written language, by education, by decent clothing, by the European way of eating and drinking, by the logical rationality and even by citizenship. But certain “defects”<sup>8</sup> always remain which allow to perceive and appreciate the others as “others”. One of these “defects” – to which corresponds on the other hand an “ideal” or “excellence” – that remains as ultimate refuge of the supposed superiority of Western civilization, is the absence of a philosophy (in a Western sense).

The philosophical problem of the “other” is also the problem of philosophical alterity, that is to say: of the “other philosophy”. In other words: When stating that philosophy is an (exclusive) creature of the Occident that only can expand itself towards other cultures conserving its inherent Occidentalism, the “other philosophy” (a people that has a distinct philosophy) has no reason to be. The underlying have to be “essentially Greek.”<sup>9</sup> When we replace the attribute “Greek” by attributes less crude or monocultural, such as “reasoning”, “written”, “produced by individuals”, “systematic”, “bi-valued” or “rational”, we end up with the same result: The “others” do only possess philosophy as they would meet all requisites Western philosophers and philosophy (the “ones” or the philosophical “selfness”) defined as essential to deserve that title.

Already in the verdict cited by Ginés de Sepúlveda are mentioned a lot of these criteria which the Western philosophical academy nowadays uses against the supposed “indigenous philosophies”: “culture”, “letters” (graficity), “history”, “written laws”.<sup>10</sup> We are dealing with a violent and excluding act of “definition” that

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<sup>8</sup> A “defect” is only defined as such from the viewpoint of an ideal that corresponds in this case to the Western culture in all its manifestations which include philosophy. The conquerors couldn't imagine that “the indigenous alterity” might contain more valuable elements than those that contained their own culture. Felipe Guamán Poma de Ayala was one of the first that dared to question the moral “ideal” of the conquerors and raise the matter of their own “defects”. Nowadays, the same scheme repeats itself, when for instance the US Administration cannot imagine that there could be other cultures and democratic forms more advanced than their own and that there could be certain “defects” in their own way of living. This way of conceiving and appreciating the alterity, is typical for a mono-cultural (or centro-cultural) way of thinking.

<sup>9</sup> The major premise is a *petitio principii* in the sense that it stipulates the origin of Western philosophy as the essential definition of all kind of philosophy. However Heidegger expressed this position in a very clear and excluding way, the great majority of Western modern philosophers even of the contemporary era in other parts of the world maintain the position of fundamental westernness of “philosophy”. See: Estermann, Josef (2003).

<sup>10</sup> Here once more the citing, with the mentioned terms in italic: “Compare these gifts of prudence, ingenuity, magnanimity, moderation, humility and religion of the Spanish with those of these little fellows in which one hardly can find human remains, and which not only lack *culture* but which not even use or know *letters* nor conserve monuments of their *history* but only some dark and

excludes *a priori* the other. When one defines “philosophy” as a product elaborated by individuals (philosophical persons) and expressed in written texts (essays, articles, books), using a binary logic and a discursive rationality, thus one excludes *per definitionem* all philosophical expressions that don’t have an individual author, that aren’t put down in writing, that don’t obey the logical principle of the formal non-contradiction and that apply a non-discursive rationality. Ergo: *non philosophia est*.

The “other” philosophy – that is to say: the non-Western philosophy – is for the Western philosophy a philosophical problem, provided that it conceives itself as the denial of its own denial, as the alterity of the other, and it is defined in a monocultural or culture-centric way (“true philosophy is occidental”). Until the dominant Western philosophy is not conscientious of its own culturality (culture-centrism), raciality (ethnocentrism) and even masculinity (androcentrism), other philosophical paradigms will not be recognized as “philosophies”, but at the best as “thinking”, “cosmovision”, “mythology”, “religiosity” or simply “ethno-philosophy”.<sup>11</sup>

## The Case of “Andean Philosophy”

This is the state of the debate regarding “Andean philosophy”. The Academy (dominant university philosophy) rejects this title sharply and denies the existence of a similar case. It keeps on pushing aside its contents to (inferior) categories of “mythical thinking”, “religiosity”, “cosmovision” or at the best: of “ethno-philosophy”. With this view, it uses practically the same arguments as Ginés de Sepúlveda, however this time not to deny the “humanity” of the original population of this continent, but to deprive them of the “philosophicity” of their way of thinking and representing the world. The underlying syllogism of Western rationality is as crude as convincing: “In the Andes, there are neither written sources nor particular philosophers that express the indigenous wisdom; philosophy necessarily requires written sources and individual authors; ergo: the indigenous Andean wisdom is not philosophy”.<sup>12</sup>

Post-modern philosophy supports (in an unintentional way) this mono-centric and excluding attitude in the sense that it abstains from any value judgment referring to “philosophy”, “thinking”, “wisdom”, “cosmovision” and “myth”. All these labels are equivalent alternatives of cultural expressions and one can’t argue that one would be superior or more advanced than another. That, what at first sight

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vague memory of some facts laid down in certain paintings, they lack *written laws*, and have barbarian institutions and habits”.

<sup>11</sup> The term “ethno-philosophy” was created by the African philosopher Hountondji, in a response to the work of the Belgian missionary Placide Tempels (1959): “In fact, it is an ethnological work, with philosophical pretensions, or more simply, if I may coin the word, a work of ‘ethno philosophy’” (Hountondji, P.J. (1983). 34).

<sup>12</sup> I deal profoundly the question of graficality (textuality) and individual authorship, respectively the orality and collective authorship as prerequisite for philosophy, in: Estermann, Josef (2006). 73–85.

seems a rehabilitation of indigenous thinking,<sup>13</sup> under the relationships of power between really existing cultures (Huntington calls them “civilizations”) simply results in an irresponsible idealization. The economic and military power of the Occident in fact results in a definitive power that draws a very clear dividing line between “philosophy” and the other “wisdoms”, with all its axiomatic and curricular consequences.<sup>14</sup>

The defense of an “Andean philosophy” is not an academic issue, nor simply an imaginative debate or a whim of some “andeanophiles”, but the rehabilitation of a complete and integral humanity, of a typical way to conceive and represent the world, of a 1000 years old wisdom covered by culturalistic and ethnocentric prejudices. Furthermore, it shows to be a decisive step towards the “liberation of philosophy”<sup>15</sup> dominated by its solipsism and dogmatism. “Andean philosophy” – just like other indigenous philosophies (Nahua, Maya, Amazon, Bantu, Munda, etc.) – questions certain “blind” presuppositions of the dominant Western philosophy, before all its ethnocentrism (in the sense of helenocentrism) and its androcentrism (the strong masculine rationality).

Given that the conceptual framework of the dominant philosophy of the West has been and is still determining the theological idea of “God”, “the world” and of the “human being”, a deconstruction of Western ethno- and androcentrism also brings with it a change of theological paradigm, pointing at an alternative model that in this context can be called “Andean theology”.<sup>16</sup> A deconstruction as mentioned could be brought about by a post-modern posture (Derrida), but this remains a deconstruction from the inside of Western philosophy (and theology). It doesn’t question the necessity and reach of a similar monocultural deconstruction in order to reveal the secret and suppressing history of the Western philosophy (popular philosophies, philosophical ideas, marginalized and forgotten ideas, etc.) and to free it from its androcentric diseases called “dualism”, “instrumentalism”, “rationalism” and “egocentrism”(and many more –isms). But I think that a true mutual “liberation” and recognition of the other only can be obtained as fruit of an intercultural deconstruction of philosophy.

When I speak of “Andean philosophy”, I don’t think of a “pure” thinking, not contaminated by Western or other ideas; it doesn’t imply a pre-colonial Inca,

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<sup>13</sup> Post-modern philosophy opens new possibilities of “philosophies” and explications of the world that go beyond the “meta-story” of Western modernity. However, the great majority of the post-modern philosophers stay trapped in the cultural parameters of the West; their criticism towards modernity is pre-eminently intra-cultural. This is the principal point in which it differs from an intercultural attitude.

<sup>14</sup> Till this date, the curricula of philosophical studies do not include the indigenous philosophy and wisdom.

<sup>15</sup> The turnaround of the known “Liberation Philosophy” is a result of it’s self-revelation as dominant and dominating. If the “dominant philosophy is the philosophy of the dominators”(a variant to the famous saying of Carl Marx), the “Liberation Philosophy” necessarily leads to a “liberation of the philosophy” which is only possible from the “philosophical alterity”.

<sup>16</sup> See: Estermann, Josef (coord.) (2006).

Tiawanaku, Pucara or Wara philosophy.<sup>17</sup> I don't doubt the value of reconstructing a pre-colonial philosophy, for historical reasons of in order to recover an intellectual and cultural heritage lost and ignored. It seems legitimate to me and even necessary to do this historical work. But I think that what is called "Andean philosophy" represents an actual and alive thinking in full evolution, a syncretic and complex "wisdom" in a process of development, which contains both elements of the original pre-Hispanic peoples and cultures (which by itself already were intercultural), as well as foreign elements that were incorporated in the orienting matrix of the Andean cultural paradigm.<sup>18</sup>

An intercultural deconstruction of the dominant Western philosophy cannot be realized without an open dialogue with other traditions, in this case with the Andean philosophical tradition. And through this dialogue – if it's not simply an academic exercise – the two partners will be mutually affected and both will have to "deconstruct themselves".<sup>19</sup> We could call this a "hermeneutical diatopical" process<sup>20</sup> or an "interparadigmatic" one, in which the own philosophical identity (the Occidental or the Andean) constitutes and "deconstructs" itself always face to face to the philosophical alterity of the other. I don't think it would be possible to elaborate an "Andean philosophy" from the inside, without the help of a Western language (for instance Spanish) and without a conceptual work of "reflection" (the Western tradition as "mirror" and "background of projection"). Neither do I believe that it would be possible to make a true deconstruction of the dominant Western philosophy without the intercultural dialogue with culturally distinct traditions, as is the case with "Andean philosophy".

Speaking of the two *topoi* (in "diatopical hermeneutics"), I refer to cultural suppositions, not questioned by the Occident and by the Andes that can only come to daylight and to reason by the work of and thanks to the "other". Neither the Western tradition nor the Andean can reach, really get to know and detect the essential limitations, the inherent possibilities and the paradigmatic "prejudices" (in the sense of Gadamer) of their own *topos*. This is not only a psychological axiom that

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<sup>17</sup>There are attempts to recuperate a "pre-columbine philosophy" that certainly have their historic and cognitive value (for instance: Pacheco Farfán, Juvenal (1994); Díaz Guzmán, Víctor (1991)). "Andean philosophy" is not understood as pre-Hispanic or indigenistic, but is understood in the sense that it takes in consideration the syncretic process of the mestizo culture of the last 500 years as a constituent process.

<sup>18</sup>In this context, one has to question oneself for instance with all sincerity (*mutatis mutandi*) if Christianity can simply be qualified as "occidental" (as some authors suggest), given that it at least has another root evenly determining: the Semite rationality of the Orient.

<sup>19</sup>In the theological field, Sri Lankan theologian Aloysius Pieris defends that the (interreligious) dialogue is never a conservative enterprise, but that it always opens new possibilities to modify positions. When one of the partners enters the dialogue with the preconception of keeping his position unchanged, we are not talking of a true dialogue. The same holds true for the intercultural dialogue.

<sup>20</sup>The "diatopical hermeneutics" (Panikkar) search an understanding of the 'being different' by means of an intercultural dialogue between two cultural 'places' (*topoi*), without recurring to a third point of mediation (*tertium mediacionis*). See: Panikkar, Raimon (1997). 46.



governs the interaction between individuals, but it is also valid for the interaction between cultures and philosophical paradigms.

No single culture and no single philosophical *topos* could cover every possibility of humanity. This might be the fundamental *hybris* of the Western philosophical tradition: in its great majority produced by white men of the middle-class, presenting itself as “universal”, “super-cultural” or even as “absolute”. In theology, this ethnocentric arrogance, this “universalization” of a culturally specific point of view, this “super-culturality” of a position strongly rooted in a certain culture, one could call “idolatry”. In philosophy it is a fallacy, but a fallacy unrecognized and therefore perpetuated by the Academy.<sup>21</sup>

When assuming the fundamental complementarity of the human *topoi* of living, experiencing and reflecting on the great richness of life, the cosmos, of the divine, of the human being, of the existing and of the imagined, the intercultural philosophical dialogue between the Western tradition and the Andean paradigm (and lots of other paradigms) is imperative for the self-revelation of the partners in the encounter. But at the same time we have to warn that this dialogue today is not taking place under the condition of a “discourse without domination” (Habermas), but in a political, economic and social framework with strong asymmetries.

The situation of the era of Ginés de Sepúlveda essentially hasn't changed: the Occident – now more the North-American stream than the Spanish – remains convinced of its “cultural superiority”, convinced of the right to bring its civilizing gospel to the whole world and transmit philosophical ideas to the “barbarian” peoples for their redemption. The conditions of the process and the actual strategies of economic and cultural globalization do not favor an inclusive dialogue between the dominant Western philosophy and the Andean philosophy in which both play an equivalent role.

Seclusion could be a tactical maneuver, but in no way a strategic one on the long run. In this sense, I don't believe in the philosophical viability of an extreme “Indianism” or “Andeanism”, in spite of the fact that they certainly have their heuristic value and their value for the recovery of identity. One can compare the problem with the dilemma faced by classic feminism: either isolate oneself from the androcentric world and create “liberated islands”, or enter in a dialogue of unequals with the masculine world. When applying to the theme of interculturality, Andean philosophy is facing the following, decisive dilemma: Either isolate itself from the Western world and create a symbolic world totally incomparable (the attitude of “Indigenism” or “Andeanism”), or enter in a dialogue of unequals with the Western tradition (the attitude that defends “Andean philosophy”). In spite of the dangers of the second alternative, there are several reasons that come from the inside of the same Andean wisdom that encourage entering this dialogue. Andean thinking by itself is inclusive and searches for complementarity. It is not looking for

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<sup>21</sup> It is part of the own problem of Western monoculturalism that it cannot reach at a self-revelation as “idolatry” while it doesn't expose itself to the interpellation by other cultural paradigms. The “deceit” of the super-culturality resolves (and dissolves) itself when the Occident enters in a symmetric dialogue with philosophical paradigms that are culturally distinct.

a decontextualized “*universality*”, but for a philosophical, cultural and civilizational “*pluriversity*”.<sup>22</sup>

Both Western philosophy and Andean philosophy are by nature intercultural, although they might not recognize this. Western philosophy is in no way homogeneous, nor monocultural in its genesis; during the 27 centuries of existence, it has incorporated elements from different cultures as Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Semitic, Arabic, Germanic, Anglo-Saxon, and Hindu. Just alike, Andean philosophy is the result of a philosophic syncretism with elements of the cultures of Wari, Pucara, Aymara, Inka, Tiawanaku, Western cultures etc. But in the case of the Western tradition, the dominant history tends to forget and hide this intrinsic interculturality and to suppress dissident currents and postures (just likes to happen with the ideological “Incaism” in the Andean context).<sup>23</sup>

## Andean Criticism of Western Androcentrism

The rise of indigenous theologies (and to a minor extent of indigenous philosophies) in the last years have made manifest the strong and large inculturation of the official Christian theologies of the different churches in a Western cultural context. Or expressed in a more concrete and punctual way: the strong occidental and Hellenistic color of its language and its conceptualizations, both in the Catholic Church as in the protestant ones. Since the nineties of the last century, when Liberation Theology has supposed to be domesticated, the guardians of Vatican’s orthodoxy are principally drawing a bead on two theologies: the theology of India and the Indian theology.<sup>24</sup> In both cases we are dealing with a strong questioning of the Western conceptual paradigm as the philosophical frame for the theological expression of certain dogmas, like for instance the position of Jesus Christ or the image of God.

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<sup>22</sup>It seems to me that the paradigmatic presuppositions of Andean thinking are averse to being culturally and philosophically wrapped in an ethnical and cultural “purism” or in a search for a not-contaminated world. Indigenism is a recurring current that resists and forms an opposition to a cultural and political project to homogenize cultural, economic and political suggestions in name of a Western messianism called “cultural colonialism” and “neo-liberal globalization”. We’re not dealing with a freely assumed position that corresponds to the very profound Andean sentiments of complementarity and inclusiveness.

<sup>23</sup>Apart from the attempts to re-establish a pre-Hispanic “Inca philosophy” (see footnote 16), there are political and social movements in the Andes that pretend to restore a “pure” pre-columbine order with a strong reference to the Inca Empire of the *Tawantinsuyo*, ignoring the actual history of a living and through the ages developed interculturality, even during the period of the *Tawantinsuyo*. In Peru, recently surged the movement of “Ethno-cacerism” (referring to the former president Cáceres), similar to “Katarism” and “Neo-Katarism” in Bolivia.

<sup>24</sup>With respect to the Indian theology (especially the “Dalit theology”), see: Massey, James (1989, 2000); Shelke, Christopher (1994). With respect to the “Indian theology” of Latin America, see: López Hernández, Eleazar (1991, 1993, 2000); Steffens, Elisabeth (2001).

The last letter of the Vatican's *Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith* (the successor of the Holy Inquisition) about the role of man and woman demonstrate even more the fear of the theology of the Catholic hierarchy for those postures that radically deconstruct the androcentric fundamentals of Western culture, theology and philosophy, such as feminism or indigenous and non-Western philosophical paradigms.<sup>25</sup>

At this moment I see two great challenges for contextual theologies in the whole world, whether from a Catholic or a Protestant nature: on the one hand, the challenge of a radical de-Hellenization of the conceptual and philosophical – often unconscious and symbiotic - framework, and on the other hand, a deconstruction of androcentrism current in the greater part of classic Western theologies. These challenges require an articulated double hermeneutics in itself, an intercultural or “diatopical” hermeneutics, and a hermeneutics of gender, which is more than a feminist hermeneutics.<sup>26</sup>

As I have just made explicit, to me it seems that philosophical alterity, in this case Andean philosophy can contribute enormously to formulate these challenges and to design some routes for deconstruction and reconstruction, as well as for the philosophical work as for theology. In the following I would like to offer some input for a “diatopical” hermeneutics of gender<sup>27</sup> in the sense of an Andean criticism of the current androcentrism of the occidental tradition.

Andean philosophy departs – just as the Vedic tradition of India<sup>28</sup> – from the concept of “non-dualism” of reality which is not the same as a metaphysical monism. Reality – the whole of what exists and is imagined – is not conceived as divided in incomparable or even contradictory aspects and spheres: the divine and the humane, the true and false, the heavenly and the earthly, the religious and the profane, the masculine and the feminine, the living and the inert, the eternal and the temporal.

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<sup>25</sup>In his speech to the Academic community of the University of Regensburg (southern Germany), on September 12, 2006, the actual Pope Benedict XVI (and former head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, Joseph Ratzinger), affirmed that Greek *logos* is a necessary prerequisite of Christian theologizing (see: [www.protestantedigital.com/new/pdf/Papa\\_Islam.pdf](http://www.protestantedigital.com/new/pdf/Papa_Islam.pdf)).

<sup>26</sup>In the same manner as Intercultural Philosophy is not a sectorial philosophy, but a habit or a transversal perspective that has repercussions for all themes and approaches of the philosophical work, I consider a hermeneutics of gender not as a “philosophy of gender” nor as a “feminist philosophy”, but as a “philosophy sensible to a gender approach”. Also the latter is not sectorial, but assumes a transversal perspective. In synthesis: Intercultural Philosophy has to be sensible to a gender approach (deconstruction of androcentrism), and a philosophy sensible to a gender approach has to assume an intercultural perspective (deconstruction of ethno-centrism). One can speak of a second and third “epistemological revolution” (with its respective ruptures).

<sup>27</sup>“Diatopical hermeneutics” practices an intercultural dialogue between two paradigms or philosophical *topoi*, in this case between the *topos* of the dominant Western philosophy and the *topos* of the Andean philosophy. A diatopical hermeneutics of gender brings about this dialogue under the perspective of asymmetries or symmetries between the masculine and the feminine (in the sense of “gender”), existing in both traditions.

<sup>28</sup>See: Panikkar, Raimon (1997).

In contrast, the dominant Western philosophy – since Platonic philosophy until phenomenology and analytical philosophy of the 20th century – is strongly marked by this type of (theological, metaphysical, epistemological, ethical, logical) dualism which is expressed in a more explicit way and with major impact in the principle of exclusive logics (non-contradiction, identity, exclusion of the third (possibility)): Either the one or the other, but there is no third possibility (*tertium non datur*). Either God or man; either spirit or matter; either culture or nature; either male or female.<sup>29</sup>

Andean philosophy thinks in polar dualities and not in dualisms, and the founding principles are the principle of relationality, of complementarity, of correspondence and of reciprocity.<sup>30</sup> Divisions between subject and object, between the religious and the profane, between the divine and the humane, between the living and the inert, these typical Hellenistic (and to a minor extent also Semitic) *diástasis* are not valid within the Andean cosmovision. It seems to me that the urge to separate and purify analytically the different aspects of reality is a typical male characteristic. I (as a man) practice it as well in this very work. And it is not bad in itself, but when this androcentric model of conceiving and managing the world is converted in the only possible approach, in the universally valid paradigm, in the unique true road to salvation, it makes one neurotic and devastating.

The famous roman *adagio* ‘*divide et impera*’ (divide and govern) is maybe the most clear and politically most consequent expression of the androcentric urge to conceive (the same words of “conceive” and “conception” already reveal a conquering masculinity)<sup>31</sup> reality, the world and history, and even the divine, and convert them in “concept”. The masculine analytical spirit (*análisis* literally means “to unmake”, “to cut in pieces”) is anatomical (*tomein*: “to cut”), dissectional, mechanical, instrumental, destructive. In order to analyze life (a plant, an animal, a human being), we have to cut it in pieces – dissect it – and separate the parts that are organically inseparable, with the consequence of destroying the same life. Every synthesis based on the result of a real analysis will prove to be artificial and robotic.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> In spite of the fact that the principle of non-contradiction (if A is true, -A cannot be true at the same time) which is logically equivalent to the principle of identity (A is A; A is not -A) and of the excluded third (either A or -A is true) affirms a formal relation between propositions, in the Western tradition it is at the same time applied on a material and ontologic (theological, cosmological, psychological) level.

<sup>30</sup> For more extensive explications, see: Estermann, Josef (2006). 123–148. The principle of relationality is fundamental because the principles of complementarity, correspondence and reciprocity, are derived from it.

<sup>31</sup> Although the semiotic group of the latin root *concipio* (en. *conceive*, sp. *concebir*; fr. *concevoir*; it. *concepire*; por. *conceber*; ger. *konzipieren*) has been adapted (at least in English and Spanish) to the feminine field of sexuality and of theology (the Immaculate Conception), it has conserved a significantly active, possessive, aggressive, that means: typically masculine meaning and use (in the sense of “grasp”, “incorporate entirely”).

<sup>32</sup> The modern (and post-modern) tendency to replace organic processes and organisms by mechanical processes and robots reveal the male urge to substitute his deficiency to create

Andean philosophy tries to represent the essential complementarity of all that exists in the form of integrality (holism). The complements can only be analytically separated of the whole at the cost of their integrality; this holistic principle, in the last resort, coincides with the principle of life. There is no life in an isolated form, but only in and by a network of complementary relations. One might characterize Andean thinking as “ginosophical”<sup>33</sup>, under the condition that we identify the ability to synthesize, to establish relations and bindings, to mediate and to unite as something typically feminine. I am not referring to “pachamamism”<sup>34</sup> or to a form of Andean matriarchy, but to the same founding structure of Andean thinking, probably unnoted by the same protagonists (Andean people). The transversal and paradigmatic principles of relationality, complementarity, correspondence, reciprocity, integrality and cyclicity seem to adapt better to a feminine than a masculine way of living and way of “being in the world” (Kusch).<sup>35</sup>

Andean philosophy postulates that sexual complementarity not only is a fundamental feature of the human species, but that it extends far beyond humanity, and that it even goes further than animal and plant life, onto the entire cosmos and until the divine. On another occasion, I have called this transcendental feature of the Andean cosmovision “cosmic sexuity”<sup>36</sup> that exceeds both biological sexuality (sex) and social gender. Cosmic sexuity implies that all phenomena obey the principle of complementarity between the feminine and the masculine that certainly has to do with sexuality and the question of gender, but that transcends these aspects in a lot of ways. The “sexuated” complementarity of the sun and the moon, for instance, retakes aspects of the human experience and of the construction of gender (day and night; bright light and dimmed light), but it transcends them at the same

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life by the “conceptual creation” of an artificial world and in this way to dominate it as he likes.

<sup>33</sup> This neologism (*gyné* and *sophía*) tries to avoid centrism (“ginocentrism”) and logicism (“ginologism”) and pretends to emphasize the prevalence of a “feminine” rationality (and wisdom).

<sup>34</sup> The so-called “pachamamism” (of *pachamama*: “Mother Earth”) exalts the feminine element (of fertility and regeneration) at the cost of its masculine complement (of fertilization and cultivation), which results in something that is incompatible with the principle of sexual complementarity that is so important in the Andes.

<sup>35</sup> As is known, Rodolfo Kusch makes a distinction (which is possible only in Spanish) between the modes of *ser* (to be, as a personal characteristic that doesn’t change [“I am tall”]) and of *estar* (to be, as a state that can change in time [“I am in the house”]) and identifies the last one with the cosmovision of the original peoples of *Abya Yala* (“Profound America”). See: Kusch, Rodolfo (1962, 1970).

<sup>36</sup> Estermann, Josef (2006). 223ss. We are facing the terminological problem: In the West, the concept of ‘sexuality’ is limited to living beings, and, in a strict sense, to human being. Therefore, it has a biological (and anthropological) acceptance in the sense of vital reproduction. For Andean philosophy ‘sexuality’ has a much wider significance (as in tantric and taoist traditions of the Orient); it is a cosmic and transcendent feature in a biological ambiance. When speaking of “sexuity”, I pretend to underline this cosmic and pachasophic feature of the polaric condition of the elements of the three *pacha*, and not the reproductive, erotic and genital dimensions in a stricter sense.

time. Life reproduces itself only as a result of this “sexuated” complementarity and it would destroy itself if one of the complements would disappear.

For theology, “Andean ginosophism” poses a series of very profound questions, both on the level of ‘theology’ in a strict sense (concept and image of the divine) as well as on the level of Christology, soteriology, pneumatology and ethics. I won’t discuss the consequences for the ecclesiastic institutionality, the offices and charismas, the pastoral care and the theological education. I will not consider these aspects at length on this occasion, because there are others that can do this with more competence, and in addition it is a vast area still uncultivated.

For the dominant Western philosophy and its androcentrism, the Andean paradigm is a severe questioning and an invitation to repose and deconstruct its own ideological fundamentals. I will only mention some areas that according to me in a more than evident way have to do with androcentric rationality, not to mention the fact that (masculine) men stay to be the protagonists of this philosophy and that one normally forgets the few female philosophers in the history of Western philosophy.<sup>37</sup>

- In the first place, starting from a hermeneutics of gender and from a diatopical hermeneutics (in dialogue with Andean “ginosophism”), one will have to deconstruct the multiple dualisms of Western philosophy that not only have contributed to the plundering of the environment, to the mechanization and instrumentalization of life, to the subjection and extinction of the other (*alius et alia*), to the quantification and rationalization of the unquantifiable and the irrational, to the monetarization of values, but also to a strongly dualistic Christian theology, in spite of the *theologumena* of the incarnation and creation which are clearly non-dualistic.<sup>38</sup>
- In the second place, one will have to submit oneself to an intercultural and gender criticism of the predominant Western rationality that certainly has highly contributed to scientific and technological progress, but at the cost of integrality and organicity of life in its various manifestations. One will have to question seriously the intercultural validity of the principle of the ‘exclusion of the third’ (*principium tertii non datur*), as an axiom that contributed very much to the exclusion of the other and that reflects a combating and imperialistic rationality. One has to denounce Western analytical rationality as monocultural and ethnocentric and one has to complement it with a synthetic and inclusive rationality of non-Western traditions.

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<sup>37</sup> Feminist (Western) philosophy is step by step correcting the idea that women don’t play a role of importance in the development of Western philosophy. Nevertheless, this rereading of the official histories of the West still does not include the diatopical perspective of gender and, therefore, still doesn’t realize a deconstruction of current androcentrism.

<sup>38</sup> In a lot of theologies, there was not imposed the Semitic (Judaic-Christian) paradigm of the “communion” between the divine and the humane (as is expressed in the “creation” and “incarnation”), but the Hellenic (Platonic) paradigm of a radical and absolute *dieresis* (gap) between the super-mundane and the mundane. Up to the theologies of the 20th century, these dualisms determine the political, ecclesiastical, soteriological and ethical debates, questioned with rising zest by contextual theologies of non-Western regions in the last 50 years.

- In the third place, also the acceptance in the West of the androcentric concept of linearity, progressivity and irreversibility of time, needs to be questioned and be complemented with a more “ginosophical” approach of periodicity, cyclicity and wave characteristic<sup>39</sup> of time. The fragmentation of time dominant in Western culture as well as its monetarization (*time is money*) not only have contributed to the dominant division of work between women and men, the separation of public and private spheres, but also to the forgetting of the quality of time and the historic density of some decisive moments (*kairoi*). Meanwhile that the West favors a “corpuscular” (or *quantum*) and atomic posture of time and history that obey masculine attitudes, the Andes emphasizes much more a “wave” and molecular vision of time and history, which much more obey feminine attitudes.
- In the fourth place, one will have to deconstruct ethical presumptions of dominant Western philosophy as strongly andro- and anthropocentric. The very concept of ethical “virtues” refers etymologically and genetically to the male virility (*vir* is the man), with the consequence that the “*muliertues*” (from *mulier* [woman], in order not to use the contradictory term “female virtues”) like solidarity, compassion, sensibility, care and practical corresponsibility haven’t had considerable impact on Western ethics.

From Aristotle to Heidegger, the dominant ethics of the West have been ethics of the male soldier [*vir*] (strength, prudence, bravery, perseverance) and of the anthropological conquering subject (*conquiro ergo sum*), that have as objective to subject the “other” (women, nature, indigenous peoples, homosexuals, etc.) to their ethical criterion of male and autocratic patriarchal responsibility. An ethical justification of the so-called “preventive war” in Iraq is only possible because of androcentric presumptions. Andean philosophy offers a cosmocentric ethics that includes a lot of elements of feminine spirituality, as care for the cosmic order (*arariva*),<sup>40</sup> the joint responsibility (corresponsibility), preservation of life, compassion and reciprocity as base for solidarity.

## Andean Criticism of Western Ethnocentrism

The second moment of self-revelation of the philosophical condition of the West is the fact that the aspect of cultural- and ethnocentrism are still current, even in the last post-modern expressions of the West. The philosophical tradition of the

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<sup>39</sup> There are works that intent to reflect on the complementarity of Western and Andean paradigms by means of the physical principle of complementarity (Heisenberg), identifying the West with the quantic theory of light being composed of particles (photons) and the Andean with the wave theory of light. See: Medina, Javier (2000). Specially 183–206.

<sup>40</sup> For Andean philosophy, the human being is the “caretaker” (*arariwa*) of nature, and not its exploiter or even its enemy. The central pachasophic function of the human being consists in maintaining the cosmic order and safeguarding the equilibrium between all spheres and complements (by means of the ritual).

Occident has demonstrated an admirable capacity of criticism and auto-criticism, by means of distinct paradigmatic “shifts” that have occurred in the course of its evolution.<sup>41</sup> Either the shift of a naïve position to an epistemological critical attitude in the beginning of the modern age (the so-called “Copernican shift”), or the ‘becoming aware of’ the material base (economical, social, political) of certain philosophical ideas by the Marxist tradition, or the questioning of Reason as unquestionable base of reflection by distinct irrational postures of the 19th century (Existentialism, Nietzsche, Freud, Romanticism), or the post-modern deconstruction of the “great stories” (*meta-récits*) of modern philosophy: this effort is impressive because of an each time more critical and sincere attitude by Western philosophy with respect to its own philosophic condition.

However, the West has shown to be practically immune and resistant to two types of systematic criticisms with a paradigmatic reach: The intercultural criticism of mono-culturality<sup>42</sup> or ethnocentrism on the one side, and the gender criticism of the androcentrism of the dominant Occidental philosophical tradition on the other side. Both vectors aim at a radical deconstruction of this tradition, with the consequence that this not only means awareness of its culturally contextual character, but also of its strongly androcentric and patriarchal character.

In both cases, dominant occidental philosophy (the “Academy”) would have to abandon its universal and androgen claim (neutrality with respect to gender): It would convert itself – and in fact it does, but only without being aware of it – in a contextual philosophy (just like all philosophies) with particular cultural and gender presumptions. “Universality” in the sense of a “supra-culturality” and of a “meta-sexuity” (neutrality of gender) would not be a characteristic of a sole philosophical tradition, but the synthetic result of an intercultural dialogue – or better: “polilogue” – in which the occidental tradition would be a strong and powerful partner in the dialogue, but not the only one nor the one with universal validity.<sup>43</sup>

For the defenders of the *a priori* universality and supra-culturality of the philosophy *made in the West*, this step from monologue to polilogue,<sup>44</sup> considered

<sup>41</sup>To mention only the most important “shifts”: the “anthropological shift” of the Renaissance, the “Copernican shift” of Kant, the “voluntarian shift” of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, the “economical shift” of Marx, the “psychoanalytical shift” of Freud and Lacan, the “linguistic shift” of structuralism and the “deconstructivistic shift” of Post-Modernism.

<sup>42</sup>The systematic “suppression” by the (mono-)culturality of Western philosophy is being “rationalized” (to use psychoanalytic terminology) in terms of “universality”, “supra-culturality” and even “absoluteness” of this philosophical tradition, equating “Occidental philosophy” with “PHILOSOPHY” as such and with capitals.

<sup>43</sup>Intercultural philosophy does not deny the universal pretension of philosophy, but interprets “universality” as the “heuristic ideal” of a large process of intercultural dialogue between different contextual traditions, and not as an *a priori* of a certain tradition: a *petitio principii* as a violent act of self-definition. Instead of arriving at a universal “supra-cultural” philosophy, this intercultural dialogue aims at a “multiversal” philosophy (instead of a universal one).

<sup>44</sup>It is certain that the concepts of ‘monologue’, ‘dialogue’ and ‘polilogue’ still have a strong reference to the logo-centric paradigm of the West, it might be better to speak of multi-lateral “interchange”.



by the West as a retreat and tremendous humiliation, has a high cost (there are even feminine defenders that sometimes are more conservative than their masculine colleagues). Today, this supposed “universality” traduces itself in terms of globalizing processes, through the mediation of the neo-liberal economy, of cultural and mediatic (of the mass media) imperialism. The pandemic blindness of the Academy towards ‘philosophical alterity’ – as demonstrates the categorical refusal of the Andean philosophy – does not permit that the Western philosophical tradition reveals itself (in the sense of a *Selbstaufklärung*) as contextual, provincial, patriarchal, monocultural y ethnocentric. There doesn’t exist any intercultural philosophical reason to call, on one hand, Andean thinking “ethno-philosophy”, but, on the other hand, refuse to apply this term to the Hellenic–Roman cosmovision of the West. Personally, I do not denominate neither the one nor the other with this label, but sustain that both are (culturally) contextual philosophies.

The Andean alterity reveals the “ethnocentric” face of Western philosophy<sup>45</sup> in a diatopical hermeneutics, through an open and symmetric intercultural dialogue. In other words: it puts it in its (contextual) place, as “Western” philosophy (and not as philosophy as such). It is difficult and may be unnecessary to separate Andean criticism of Western androcentrism and ethnocentrism, but methodologically one deals with two distinct, however complementary, themes. Here I would like to signal some complementary themes to those presented in the anterior chapter:

- An intercultural criticism of the dominant Western philosophical tradition by Andean philosophy (as philosophical alterity) in the first place would reveal the clandestine heterodox tradition of the very same Western philosophy just as I have pointed out before. Even in this tradition, there are *logoi spermatikoi* of concepts that are of major importance in Andean philosophy: Haeckel’s hylozoism or panpsiquism, Pythagoras’ cosmic symbolism, Nagel’s organicism, van Helmond’s homeopathic principles, Krause’s and Bulgakow’s panenteism, Leibniz’ cosmic relationality, Nicolas of Cues’ *coincidentia oppositorum* or John Scot Eriugena’s *apokatastasis*, are only some examples of the heterodox riches of the West.<sup>46</sup>
- In the second place, Andean philosophy questions the universality of the logocentric rationality of Western philosophy that is ruled by the principles of the binary and formal logics of non-contradiction, of identity and of the exclusion of the third. This excluding rationality contrasts with the inclusive rationality of the Andes (but also with oriental Asian and other non-Western philosophies) that interpret opposites in the sense of complementary polarities and not as mutually exclusive contradictory positions. The universalization of these principles of formal Western logics leads to a logicism and to a suppression of other forms of

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<sup>45</sup>It is not just casual that I use terms that come from the philosophy of Emmanuel Lévinas: the alterity and its recognition as such make it possible to “reveal” my own face, by the “glory” of the other, and not by the neurotic sameness of the self-definition of Western philosophy as “Philosophy” just like that.

<sup>46</sup>What is lacking is to write the “heretic history” of Western philosophy. That what in the Middle Ages effectively was purified as “heretic” (remember the condemnations of 1277 by the bishop of Paris), in the Modern Age simply was left in oblivion and insignificance.

expression such as emotions, intuition, the symbol and the analogy (that – as said earlier – are expressions more feminine than the masculine “sword of reason”).

- In the third place, Andean philosophy questions the “classificatory mania” of the West, that is to say the urge to put all phenomena and realities in conceptual drawers. The very same “concept” is a powerful invention of (platonian) Socrates in order to obtain intellectual dominance of the chaotic diversity of what is presented to us. The “classificatory mania” necessarily reduces the riches of life to a number of concepts and leads to a forced domestication or even annihilation of what cannot be classified with preconceived parameters.<sup>47</sup> This is even the case in a lot of important themes of Andean philosophy that don’t fit in the conceptual mould of the West, and therefore lack the self-defined philosophical quality.
- In the fourth place, Andean philosophy questions the Western dichotomies between the human and the extra-human world, between the life and the inert reality, between the sacred and the profane, and even between the divine and the mundane. Such a dichotomization of reality leads to a dualistic separation and to a system of the double truth and of an ethics of sectorial validity. It is certain that the demythologization (Bultmann’s *Entmythologisierung*) of the world by Western philosophy and theology has contributed greatly to scientific and technological progress, but this at its turn has changed itself into its own elation and almost into a new god. Andean philosophy starts from the conviction that each dichotomy and separation of spaces, ambiances and spheres leads to a grave deterioration of cosmic integrality. The separation of nature (as material and mechanical *res extensa*) of the human world (as spiritual and spontaneous *res cogitans*) implies – as we can observe nowadays – a suicidal plundering of nature. And the radical dichotomy between the divine and the mundane implies a divinization of the mundane in the sense of an idolatry of particular aspects as for example progress, pleasure or money.
- In the fifth place, Andean philosophy criticized the reductionist epistemology of the West that pretends to find the truth only through the human sources of reason and sensation. This reductionism leads to a scientific concept of the truth and excludes alternative sources of knowledge which are faith, intuition, sentiments, the ritual, celebration and artistic representation. Andean philosophy, on the other hand, insists in an integral epistemology that transcends the human race as cognitive subject. Knowledge (*episteme*) is a quality of all entities, human or not human, animated or “inert”, and that one obtains in a lot of different ways such as the ritual, the celebration, trance, symbolic representation and mystic union. These criteria question the one-dimensionality of Western wisdom, as is expressed for instance in techno-morph medicine, in the mono-causal explication

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<sup>47</sup>The most eloquent and radical expression of this pan-logic attitude is Hegel’s conviction that “all real is intelligible and all the intelligible is real”, a logo-centric totality that doesn’t leave space for non-rational modes to approach reality, what reveals itself in the political and military field as violent and conquering.

of events, in the rationality and linguisticity (according to linguistic parameters) of the sub-conscious or in the irreversible progressiveness of time.

- In the sixth place, Andean philosophy questions the institutionality and academicism of Western philosophy which has become an intellectual exercise of texts about texts (a “ruminative” philosophy), of an intertextual hermeneutics that is no longer in touch with the ground of reality. The academic claim of the West, that one cannot express oneself about what happens and what is hidden without referring to the complete history of the ideas, that is to say: inflating the critical apparatus in such a way that it overwhelms the originality, this feature can absolutely not be universalized. Philosophical work is not ruled by criteria of intertextual graphicity (written sources) and referentiality (reference to other authors), as examples of the very same Western tradition demonstrate as well (Socrates for instance). Andean philosophy is above all a living, existential philosophy at first hand, without recurring to texts and authors, in direct contact with the multi-faceted reality lived and thought by women and man of the Andes. This criticism casts doubt on the Western academic standards imposed on institutes of higher learning in the whole world.
- And in the seventh place, Andean philosophy reveals the intercultural and multi-ethnic character of the Western philosophical tradition. What seems to be a monolithic and homogeneous block – “the” Western Philosophy with capitals – in reality is the result of a historical struggle between currents with culturally distinct features (Semitic, Arabic, Egyptian, Celtic, Germanic etc.), a history of forgetting (but not in a Heideggerian sense) and of suppression, a history of the winners with their victorious ideas. Because of its marginal and marginalized condition, Andean philosophy assumes the option of the niches of Reason, of the ideas considered “unthinkable” and of the inclusion of what doesn’t seem to have academic “dignity”.

## As a Way of Conclusion

The “little fellows” of whom Ginés de Sepúlveda spoke and which, according to him, have “barbaric institutions and habits”, will maybe find themselves in the same situation as the Germanics during the Roman Empire who later would convert themselves in the “philosophical people” by excellence. In which consists true “barbarism” today, when taking into account the actual wars that take place in Afghanistan or Iraq, in the name of Western civilization?

It is necessary that Western philosophy takes seriously the question of philosophical alterity and that it lets inspire itself by the other, in the sense of a inter-cultural deconstruction of its own historical and rational riches, which at the same time is a tremendous poverty with respect to the multi-cultural and symphonic riches of the wisdom of the peoples. This paradigmatic shift, this time incited from the outside, not only would change philosophical and theological work in a lot of parts of the world, but would change the very face of the earth that is in agony of death under the unique discourse of instrumental rationality of the West. Andean philosophy is a voice in this symphonic orchestra, nothing more and nothing less.

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# Intercultural Philosophy from a Latin American Perspective

Raúl Fornet-Betancourt

## Introduction

This article explores two basic questions duly exploring its title, viz. “Intercultural philosophy from a Latin American philosophy”.

These questions, dealt with separately in the next two sections, are (1) What has the emergence of the intercultural proposal within the international philosophical discourse meant to the development of philosophy in Latin American and what have been its theoretical consequences? (2) What can Latin American philosophy mean to intercultural philosophy or what could the Latin American experience contribute to the development of the intercultural philosophical discourse as an experiment in truly universal philosophical dialogue?

In our discussion of both questions we will start from a wide concept of intercultural philosophy, i.e. rather than highlight the differences between the various lines of thought currently discernable,<sup>1</sup> we will trace the underlying common theoretical orientation that gives them their own profile as a philosophical movement. It is this broad approach to intercultural philosophy that should be taken as the backdrop against which to consider the arguments we present in discussing the two questions outlined above as the subject of this article. For this reason, we include here a brief explanatory note.

As said, we start our discussion from a concept of intercultural philosophy that underlines the programmatic perspective of promoting, through open dialogue (and

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<sup>1</sup> On the historical development of intercultural philosophy and its process of internal differentiation into various currents – a subject that falls outside the scope of this article – cf.: Michelle Becka, *Anerkennung im Kontext interkultureller Philosophie*, IKO-verlag, Frankfurt/M. 2004, particularly, pp. 45–107; Diana de Vallescar, *Cultura, multiculturalismo e interculturalidad. Hacia una racionalidad intercultural*, SP editorial, Madrid 2000, particularly, pp. 181–333; Heinz Kimmerle, *Interkulturelle Philosophie zur Einführung*, Janus Verlag, Hamburg 2002; Hamid Reza Yousefi/Ram Adhar Mall, *Grundpositionen der interkulturellen Philosophie*, Bautz Verlag, Nordhausen 2005, particularly, pp. 41–75; Franz Wimmer, *Interkulturelle Philosophie. Geschichte und Theorie*, Passage Edition, Vienna 1990; and our study entitled “Supuestos, límites y alcances de la filosofía intercultural”, in *Diálogo Filosófico* 51 (2001) 411–426.

on equal material and theoretical terms!) between different cultural traditions, a radical transformation of the way of thinking, knowing and naming – in short, of articulating – and of generating more knowledge and communicating or transmitting that corpus of knowledge which we usually call ‘philosophy’. We understand that such a programme, aimed at the transformation of philosophy, is greatly dependent on a growing awareness of the epistemological consequences of the as yet inconclusive history of Western colonialism. In other words, it is a programmatic view of intercultural dialogue not presented within an abstract framework void of historical memory but rather stemming from the reminiscences of cultures whose cognitive dignity has been hurt. The aim of this approach is to incorporate into today’s philosophical debate the task of transforming philosophy, but in the radical sense of a transformation whose renewing dynamics also encompass the traditions that have so far been accumulated (and endorsed as classical!) under the pressure of Western thought’s overweight.

In other words, the programmatic perspective shared by the movement of intercultural philosophy aims not only at ensuring the inclusion of so far largely ignored cultural traditions or at their recognition by Western-made philosophy, because it is not its sole purpose to add to the ‘treasure’ of the traditions transmitted over time as a paradigmatic line defining what should or should not be accepted under the heading of philosophy. The perspective of a transformation of intercultural philosophy takes us further than that. Its first and foremost challenge is to achieve that any tradition accepted as philosophy as a result of intertraditional and intercultural dialogue be actually recognised as a ‘treasure’ in its own right. For this to become reality, the discipline we call ‘philosophy’ will have to be renamed and redefined through collaboration amongst all the world’s cultural traditions.

Intercultural philosophy therefore wants to initiate a process of exchange that brings together widely varying philosophical experiences and recognises them as legitimate references for the naming of philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

As envisaged above, intercultural philosophy should therefore also be a dialogue that leaves behind any persistent prejudice against other ways of thinking and knowing that are now excluded from philosophy for supposedly being ‘irrational’, ‘mythological’ or ‘religious’.

In line with this, intercultural philosophy as a movement wants to stop the current process of generating philosophical knowledge from failing to benefit from alternative philosophical experiences. A respectful approach of the knowledge of all cultural traditions is key to bringing about a radical transformation of philosophy for the following two reasons.

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<sup>2</sup>As we will see, this perspective differs greatly from the views of Hegel or Heidegger, who trace back the origin of philosophy to one and only one very specific historical moment, viz. the Greek tradition. Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, in *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, volume 18, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt/M. 1971, p. 117 and ff.; and Martin Heidegger, *Was ist das – die Philosophie?*, Neske Verlag, Pfullingen 1956, particularly, p. 12 and ff.

One reason is that this will allow philosophy to benefit from all human cognitive experience, and not only from part of it; the other is that it will allow philosophers, both men and women, to finally erase a hateful self-image that calls to mind ancient (and modern!) colonial governors *residing* in Algeria, India or Peru but culturally *living* in their respective metropolises. Intercultural philosophy advocates a way of philosophy that is practised in and from a great number of places worldwide and that hence considers unauthentic any way of thinking that is out of context and would rather repeat ideas because they fit in well for being an expression of a particular reality.

Bearing in mind the above explanatory comments on what we have called the overall theoretical orientation common to the movement of intercultural philosophy we can now continue with the two fundamental questions, but only after having pointed out that this article is concluded by the section Conclusion containing some reflections on the meaning of intercultural philosophy at this particular moment in time.

## **What Has the Emergence of Intercultural Philosophy Meant to the Development of Philosophy in Latin American?**

The question of whether intercultural philosophy has been meaningful to philosophy in Latin America can be answered with a resounding ‘yes’. This may sound overdone, but in our opinion it does reflect reality. Under the influence of intercultural philosophy, philosophy in Latin America is discovering the cultural diversity of its context and taking up the challenge of having to make a new start in order to speak plurally of the spiritual plurality of its context.

To understand that this is not a gratuitous statement, we will have to go back in time. I therefore suggest that we very briefly go over the history of philosophy in Latin America so as to show, if only in very general terms, that the above answer is historically justified.

An analysis of mainstream philosophical historiography in Latin America<sup>3</sup> until well into the second half of the twentieth century shows that philosophy in Latin America is commonly – and without major problems or doubts being raised – said to have begun properly with the so-called ‘Discovery’ in 1492, i.e. with the arrival

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<sup>3</sup>For general works, see for example: Alberto Caturelli, *La filosofía en Hispanoamérica*, Editora Nacional, Córdoba (Argentina) 1953; Ramón Insua, *Historia de la filosofía en Hispanoamérica*, Editora Universidad, Guayaquil 1945; Manfredo Kempf, *Historia de la filosofía en Latinoamérica*, Zig-Zag Ediciones, Santiago de Chile 1958; for more specific Works, see for example: Diego F. Pro, *Historia del pensamiento filosófico argentino*, Editora Universidad, Mendoza 1973; Guillermo Francovich, *La filosofía en Bolivia*, Editorial Lasada, Buenos Aires 1945; João Cruz Costa, *A filosofia no Brasil*, Editora UFRS, Porto Alegre 1950; Jaime Vélez, *Historia de la filosofía en Colombia*, Bogotá 1962; Constantino Lascaris, *Historia de las ideas en Centroamérica*, Editora studium, San José 1970; and Augusto Salazar Bondy, *La filosofía en el Perú. Panorama histórico*, Editora Nacional, Lima 1967.

of European culture, and more in particular, with the arrival of ‘the theoretical men that came from the West’.<sup>4</sup> This view holds that there is no difference between philosophy in Europe and in Latin America, with philosophy on the American continent developing much like a transplanted organism growing in new soil. Philosophy simply moved from the Old to the New continent, where its evolution echoes that in the former.<sup>5</sup>

And it must be said – because it reflects the actual philosophical evolution in Latin America – that the philosophy that is known by that name in Latin America and develops as a philosophical corpus recognised as such, is nothing but its European counterpart. We should not forget that, together with the conquest and colonisation – which includes spiritual colonisation<sup>6</sup> – European culture was imposed, with its university system and its methods of research. And philosophy, being a part of that culture, reproduced in Latin America the cultural model brought in from Europe. This ‘explains’ why the philosophical tradition that is (quite unjustly) called Latin American faithfully mirrors European philosophy in its evolution. Manuals on the history of Latin American philosophy are therefore wont to divide the philosophical development of Latin American countries into stages that correspond with the historical timeframes of the European movements, such as Scholasticism, Enlightenment, Positivism and Marxism.

As said, this approach to Latin American philosophy does not reveal any major theoretical differences with European philosophy. It is the outcome of an artificial transplantation to a context imposed and created by the expansion of European culture. That is why this Latin American philosophy started off without any links whatsoever to the traditions of such native cultures as Nahuatl, Maya, Kuna, Guaraní or those of the Andes region. Indeed, it set out and developed at odds with these indigenous traditions of thought, because according to the Eurocentric point of view they had not yet taken the crucial step needed for the advent of philosophical reflection proper, viz. the step from *mitos* to *logos*, so that these indigenous traditions have traditionally been relegated to the realm of mythology or cosmogony.

The history of the development of *that* – so-called – Latin American philosophy is therefore a history of negation of plurality and, more specifically, a history of cognitive devaluation of Latin America’s indigenous traditions.

This history of tragic epistemological violence – it is obviously a violent history in many regards,<sup>7</sup> but we will here highlight the epistemological violence for its

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<sup>4</sup>Agustín Basave Fernández del Valle, “Posibilidad y límites de una filosofía latinoamericana”, in Sociedad Venezolana de Filosofía (ed.), *La filosofía en América. Trabajos presentados en el IX Congreso Interamericano de Filosofía*, volume I, Caracas 1979, p. 193.

<sup>5</sup>The reader will remember Hegel’s famously disdainful dismissal of American culture saying that what had taken place in America so far was a mere echo of the Old World, and the expression of an alien vitality. Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, in *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, volume 12, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt/M. 1971, p. 114.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Enrique Dussel, 1492. *El encubrimiento del otro*, Ediciones Utafaia, Madrid 1992; Fernando Mires, *La colonización de las almas*, San José 1991; Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of México*, Los Angeles 1996; and Luis Rivera Pagán, *Evangelización y violencia. La conquista de América*, Editorial DEI, San Editorial DEI, Juan 1991.

<sup>7</sup>See for instance Eduardo Galeano, *Las venas abiertas de América Latina*, Siglo XXI, Mexico 1971.



relevance to the field of philosophy – began to take a different course from the second half of the nineteenth century largely thanks to two historical events of great significance to the reorientation of cultural life and particularly to the renewal of philosophy in Latin America.

The first of these was the explicit articulation of a widespread indigenist movement claiming social and cultural justice for the indigenous peoples,<sup>8</sup> and the second was the launch of a programme intended to elaborate a Latin American philosophy that truly responded to the specific challenges that Latin American societies were faced with regarding the social, political and educational organisation of the newly gained national independence.<sup>9</sup>

Under the influence of these two occurrences, which we cannot analyse now, philosophy in Latin America initiated a process of contextualisation of its considerations which, despite its limitations, was undoubtedly positive, because it helped to bridge the gap between philosophy and own culture in Latin America.

Another highly relevant event in this respect took place almost a century later, i.e. by the middle of the twentieth century, when Leopoldo Zea (1912–2004) embarked on a project to recover the history of philosophical ideas in Latin America with a view to contributing to the mental emancipation and providing a starting point for the elaboration of a philosophical history of the American peoples.<sup>10</sup> Following further radicalisation, this project brought about a liberation philosophy in reply to the neocolonial reality of Latin American countries.<sup>11</sup>

With this new constellation, the Latin American philosophical tradition did start to differentiate itself substantially from its European legacy. Why? Because by focussing its reflections on the history of Latin America from a liberation point of view, Latin American philosophy set out to look for its own sources, drawing on documents containing the narratives of the memories of the Latin American peoples, and beginning to see itself differently, no longer as the distant echo of European thinking, but as the expression in its own right of a way of thinking on the decentral situation of the peoples of Latin America and their traditions.

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<sup>8</sup> Among many others, see José Tamayo Herrera, *Historia del indigenismo cuzqueño. Siglos XVI–XX*, Lima 1980; and Luis Villoro, *Los grandes momentos del indigenismo en México*, FCE, Mexico 1950.

<sup>9</sup> The onset of this Project is associated with the name of the Argentine intellectual Juan Bautista Alberdi (1810–1884) and his famous course in Montevideo in 1842: *Ideas para presidir a la confección del curso de filosofía contemporánea*. About the context and influence of his proposal, see my essay: “Juan Bautista Alberdi (1810–1884) y la cuestión de la filosofía latinoamericana”, in *Cuadernos Salmantinos de Filosofía* XII (1985) 317–333.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Leopoldo Zea, *Ensayos sobre filosofía en la historia*, FCE, Mexico 1948; id., *La filosofía como compromiso y otros ensayos*, Mexico 1952; id., *América en la conciencia de Europa*, FCE, Mexico 1955; id., *Esquema para una historia de las ideas en Iberoamérica*, FCE, Mexico 1956; id., *Filosofía de la historia americana*, Mexico 1978; and *Discurso de la marginación y la barbarie*, Anthropos Ediciones, Barcelona 1988.

<sup>11</sup> On the complex route leading from ‘Latin American philosophy’ to the ‘philosophy of liberation’, see Arturo Ardao’s introduction to the anthology of texts by Leopoldo Zea published by Biblioteca Ayacucho under the title of: *La filosofía como compromiso de liberación*, Biblioteca Ayacucho, Caracas 1991; also see our essay ‘Latin American philosophy in the 20th century’, in: *Satya Nilayam* 4 (2003) 87–112.

From that moment, which can be situated in the 1970s, we can quite rightfully speak of what we previously called a substantial difference between Latin American and European philosophy, and what we will now more specifically refer to as a contextual difference. For, by becoming aware of its context and redefining itself as contextual thinking, Latin American philosophy assumed its peripheral condition and ‘discovered’ that European philosophy evolved within a different condition, viz. the condition of centre of the world determined by colonialism.

For Latin American philosophy, this ‘discovery’ implied a questioning of the idea of philosophical universality received from the European tradition, a subject that merits separate analysis. What we wish to point out here is the fact that this questioning of European philosophy’s claim to universality may well represent the most critical moment in the contextual differentiation thus far. We emphasise this aspect because, following our brief review, it should be noted that Latin American philosophy nonetheless relativises this contextual difference or does not draw all the conclusions that it should draw from it.

As we see it, there are two major factors that help explain this inconsistency. Firstly, Latin American philosophy, despite its genuine attempt at contextualisation, is not completely liberated from its European legacy and keeps its eyes still too much turned on Europe; it still preserves many of its habitual ways of thinking and research methods of colonised philosophy, which urges it to keep turning to Europe as its preferred interlocutor. Secondly, as a consequence of the first cause, its relation with Latin American culture is still unfulfilled in the sense that it fails to recognise the full extent of its cultural diversity, preferring to relate with *a part* of Latin American culture, which is moreover the part that is considered representative of all Latin American culture.

To comprehend this unfulfilled relationship whereby one part is taken to cover all other cultural expressions of Latin America, we should bear in mind the influence – both past and present – of the category of ‘cultural mixture’ (*mestizaje cultural*) in the understanding and self-understanding of cultural development of Latin America. Many commentators are convinced that cultural mixture is key to explaining Latin American culture. It is considered so important that it has been used to characterise all Latin America, holding that it is a *cultura mestiza*, a mixed culture.

This approach to understanding the development of Latin American culture is, as we have said, the background that explains why Latin American philosophy has traditionally looked for its roots in the mixed culture of the continent, supposing, moreover, that in doing so it does justice to all the cultural complexity of its context.

But this is a fallacy. A mixed Latin American culture undoubtedly exists, but it would not be right to assert that it represents all existing culture in Latin America. Side by side with this America, there is a whole range of native (and Afro-) Americas whose cultures evolve under names of their own, including Kuna, Guaraní, Mapuche and a great many more. This makes Latin American culturally more plural than the term *mixed culture* suggests. Any Latin American

philosophy that relates only to that mixed culture has not yet begun to dialogue with all the variety of cultures of the Latin American peoples. And since this is exactly what happened, we are referring here to a deficient or partial relationship with the cultural plurality of Latin America as one of the factors that slowed down or impeded a radicalised affirmation of the contextual difference by Latin American philosophy in the era of reference, viz. more or less the years between 1970 and 1990.

It is at this evolutionary stage of Latin American philosophy as an explicit form of contextual philosophy that the impact of intercultural thinking was felt. (We prefer to use the term ‘intercultural thinking’ in general to ‘intercultural philosophy’ in a strict sense, because the first influences came from such areas as political theory reflecting on the fight for recognition of minority cultures in societies with a majority culture or the pedagogics of its bilingual and intercultural programmes.) But before going on, we should point out the following.

The theoretical impact of intercultural thinking in Latin American philosophy cannot be said to have been only the result of the reception of the multiculturalism versus communitarism debate or of UNESCO’S directives on intercultural education (these two examples are given only to follow up on the previous reference to political theory and pedagogics), because in its turn the reception of specific expressions of intercultural thinking sprang from a profound shift in sensibility, basically to the condition that enabled a radical approach to interculturality. This shift in sensibility was one of the great achievements of the reorganisation and mobilisation of the indigenous and Afro-American peoples in the context of the debate on the significance of the 500th anniversary of the so-called ‘discovery’ of America (1492–1992). This event led to the indigenous peoples’ irruption, so to speak, into the history of Latin America – as protagonists! – and their claim that the history of conquest finally be ended and give way to a new history recognising their cultures and religions as legitimate ways for humanity in Latin America.

This event in Latin America’s social history is at the root of the shift in sensibility towards the other. As a result of this change, philosophy too started looking for new methods that would fully account for the apparent cultural plurality of the continent’s reality.

It was not the first time that Latin American philosophy proved not to be up to the actual requirements of its time, but it could not help but to be influenced by the antagonistic irruption of the indigenous (and Afro-American) peoples into the continent’s history, feeling pressurised to radicalise its process of contextualisation by opening up to dialogue with the cultures and thought traditions that it had traditionally overlooked because of its focus on mixed culture. This was its moment of ‘conversion’ to cultural plurality, which, on a previous occasion, we analysed and characterised as the moment of intercultural change in Latin American philosophy.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Cf. Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, *Crítica intercultural de la filosofía latinoamericana actual*, Editorial Tratta, Madrid 2004.

So, under the pressure of historical events, in which the presence of protagonist differences was becoming more and more apparent (with the native peoples increasingly expressing themselves from their own cultures), Latin American philosophy began to make up for its inconsistency and radicalise its process of contextualisation, taking for its philosophical subject matter the cultural diversity of Latin America in all its plurality.

On this road towards interculturality, greatly influenced – as we have seen – by the fallout of the 500th anniversary of the ‘discovery’ of America, there is yet another milestone. The Zapatist rebellion in Chiapas in January 1994 sparked off wide debate on the peoples’ right to cultural self-determination. This indigenous revolt had a profound impact on Latin American philosophy, marking the moment when the more susceptible among Latin American philosophers truly set themselves to the task of helping to lay an ethical basis for the recognition of the other’s culture, setting out on the road towards interculturality.<sup>13</sup>

We think that the preceding contextual comments were necessary for a better understanding of the current stage of development of Latin American philosophy following the encounter with intercultural philosophy. At the very moment of this encounter, Latin American philosophy, impelled, as we have seen, by the sudden emergence of cultural plurality in its own environment, was looking out for the right instruments to recognise – and take on its responsibility for – this diversity, and redefine itself in this new context of plurality.

But when and how did the encounter between Latin American philosophy and intercultural philosophy take place? Obviously, due to the nature of this kind of cultural encounters, this question involves a complex underlying process that can hardly be pinpointed in time, as we already suggested when we pointed out that the main determining factor was intercultural thinking in general. Moreover, interculturality has traditionally formed a covert part of Latin American thinking itself, reflecting the continent’s diversity.<sup>14</sup> However, if we take the question on its face value, i.e. strictly referring to when Latin American philosophy and intercultural philosophy first came into contact, we think that the answer can be said to be in 1995, the year the first conference on intercultural philosophy was held in Mexico. This conference constituted the forum where major representatives of Latin

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<sup>13</sup> We use the term ‘more susceptible’ philosophers because it must be said that the intercultural shift in Latin American philosophy, which we are here trying to situate historically, is a shift that unfortunately does not encompass all Latin American philosophy. In part, it remains focussed on the America of mixed culture, whilst another part, under the pressure of historical events, does look beyond this traditional horizon. This tension is illustrated by the respective positions of two of today’s exponents of Latin American philosophy, viz. Leopoldo Zea, representing the mixed-culture focus, and Luis Villoro, representing those open to the intercultural proposal. Cf. Leopoldo Zea, “El problema indígena”, in *Cuadernos Americanos* 52 (1996) 228–237; and his book *Fin de siglo XX, ¿una centuria perdida?*, Mexico 1996; particularly the essay “Chiapas, yunque de México para Latinoamérica”, pp. 101–137; Luis Villoro, “En torno al derecho de autonomía de los pueblos indígenas”, in *Cuadernos Americanos* 52 (1996) 211–227; and his book *Estado plural. Diversidad de culturas*, Editorial Paidós, Mexico 1998.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, *Interculturalidad y filosofía en América Latina*, Mainz Verlag, Aachen 2003.

American philosophy (e.g. Leopoldo Zea, Enrique Dussel) and intercultural philosophy (e.g. Raimon Panikkar, Ram A. Mall, Franz Wimmer) came together, initiating a direct form of exchange<sup>15</sup> that raised great expectations regarding the reorientation of philosophy in Latin America. Only two years later, in 1997, the second conference was held once again in Latin America, adding depth to the experience of direct contact between Latin American philosophy and intercultural philosophy.<sup>16</sup>

However, since it is not our intention here to chronicle this encounter but to point out its significance to the development of philosophy in Latin America, the above summary of events should suffice to outline the historical backdrop of what we have chosen to call Latin America's incorporation into the international discourse on intercultural philosophy. The continent's inclusion into intercultural philosophy as an international movement is the first outcome of the encounter for Latin American philosophy. But what does this exactly mean?

Again, an adequate answer to this question requires more time and space than we can offer here, because this would require analysing the process of transformation that a large part of Latin American philosophy has gone through in the last ten or more years.<sup>17</sup> In other words, rather than discuss this process in depth, we will only touch on the theoretical implications of the encounter with intercultural philosophy for the development of philosophy in Latin America. Of course, I am referring here to the implications that, in our view, are not only the most relevant to its incorporation into the international dialogue on intercultural philosophy but also those that are key to the transformation of Latin American philosophy into a specific form of intercultural philosophy.

First of all, as a result of the encounter with intercultural philosophy, Latin American philosophy entered a new philosophical constellation that had no particular centre because it was dynamic and 'pro-gressed' through dialogue between various knowledge cultures.

Secondly, exposure to interculturality enabled Latin American philosophy to really leave behind its fixation on Europe, that is, to recognise as covertly prejudicious any remaining Eurocentrism, which had been responsible for slowing down the radicalisation of its process of contextualisation by pretending that European philosophy was its interlocutor par excellence and European philosophical methods were the only valid ones.

This meant that, thirdly, through its contacts with intercultural philosophy, Latin American philosophy discovered an epistemological plurality and methodology

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<sup>15</sup> See the full minutes of the conference at the Universidad Pontificia de México (ed.), *Actas del Primer Congreso Mundial de Filosofía Intercultural*, Editora UMP, Mexico 1999.

<sup>16</sup> See the documentation of the conference in Raúl Fornet-Betancourt (ed.), *Unterwegs zur interkulturellen Philosophie*, IKO Verlag, Frankfurt/M. 1998.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, *Transformación intercultural de la filosofía*, Desclée, Bilbao 2001; and *Crítica intercultural de la filosofía latinoamericana actual* (ed.) cit.; but also Dina Picotti, "Voces interculturales en el pensamiento latinoamericano", in *Stromata* 3/4 (2004) 307–312; and José Santos, "Modalidades para un diálogo filosófico intercultural", in *Cuadernos Americanos* 114 (2005) 157–165.

that helped it revalue its own traditions. It rediscovered itself as a part of the world's philosophical plurality, overcoming its traditional self-image as a mere appendix to European philosophy. Its discovery of philosophical plurality therefore gave Latin American philosophy a decisive impulse to differentiate its history and find back its own hidden plurality.

The fourth outcome of the interaction with intercultural philosophy was that Latin American philosophy now had the tools to embark on a process of intercultural transformation from which – as a synthesis of the three previous aspects – it has emerged as a polyphonic philosophy bringing together all cultural voices of Latin America. This transformation is the road towards reconciliation between philosophy and cultural diversity in Latin America and hence also the road that leads to a new and specific form of intercultural philosophy. This takes us to the second question.

## What Could Latin American Philosophy Mean to Intercultural Philosophy?

In line with the discussion in the previous section, the term 'Latin American philosophy' should from now on be understood to refer solely to that philosophy which, thanks to its own efforts of self-criticism in reply to the challenge posed by the great impact of cultural diversity on its context and to events in the field of intercultural philosophy, is redefining itself through dialogue with all cultures in Latin America, evolving as a specific variant of intercultural philosophy.<sup>18</sup>

With this new meaning in mind, we can see that the question we are examining here is in fact how intercultural philosophy in Latin America can contribute to the international movement of intercultural philosophy. Again, the answer will have to be a brief synthesis.

In our view, Latin American intercultural philosophy adds in the four following ways to the current debate on intercultural philosophy in general.

Firstly, and self-evidently, it expresses, without any reductionism, the philosophical plurality to be found in the Latin American context, communicating in the

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<sup>18</sup> See for documentation on this transformation, among many other publications: Consejo del saber Qulla (ed.), *Aportes al diálogo sobre cultura y filosofía andina*, SIWA-Publicaciones, La Paz 2001; Josef Estermann, *Filosofía andina. Estudio intercultural de la sabiduría andina*, Ediciones Abya Yala, Quito 1998; Carlos Lenkersdorf, *Filosofar en clave tojolabal*, FCE Mexico 1992; León Olivé, *Interculturalismo y justicia social*, UNAM México 2004; Carlos M. Pagano, *Un modelo de filosofía intercultural: Rodolfo Kusch (1922–1979)*, Mainz Verlag, Aachen 1999; Dina Picotti, *La presencia africana en nuestra identidad*, Ediciones del sol, Buenos Aires 1998; Ricardo Salas, *Ética intercultural*, Ediciones UCSH, Santiago de Chile 2004; Antonio Sidekum, *Ética e alteridade*, São Leopoldo 2002; Fidel Tubino, *Interculturalidad: un desafío*, Ediciones PUCL, Lima 1992; Diana de Vallescar, *Cultura, multiculturalismo e interculturalidad. Hacia una racionalidad intercultural*, PS ediciones, Madrid 2000; and Neusa Vaz/João M. Back (eds.), *Temas de filosofía intercultural*, Nova Harmonia, São Leopoldo 2004.

international fora the many names with which philosophical thinking in Latin America can be associated, such as Aymara, Guarani, Kuna or Maya. In its role of polyphonic mouthpiece of the continent's philosophical plurality, Latin American intercultural philosophy is contributing to the enrichment of intercultural philosophy and of humanity, returning to the world the page from the universal book that, as José Martí put it, the Europeans stole from it at the time of the conquest of America.<sup>19</sup>

Secondly, it conveys the experience that for intercultural exchange to transcend the mere abstract, it will have to root in the context of thinking in tangible historical processes, which in turn requires that philosophy be practised as a way of socially, politically and culturally committed thinking. This means that intercultural philosophy must also be a committed philosophy. This idea could be a contribution to intercultural philosophy from the reality of Latin America, it being a characteristic of Latin American intercultural philosophy to be grounded in the concrete struggles of marginalised cultures whose struggle is quite obviously not merely for formal recognition but for their right to economic, political and religious self-determination. One precondition for any culture to be realised – and whoever refers to the recognition of cultures, also refers to their right to realisation – is social justice, because if there is no social justice, cultures are deprived of a condition that is indispensable for their true realisation, i.e. the right to configure their respective worlds according to their values.

If we propose the idea of philosophy's political commitment as a potential contribution to be made by today's Latin America intercultural philosophy to the debate on intercultural philosophy in general, we do so because we are under the impression that the intercultural philosophy movement tends to prefer a concept of culture that does not sufficiently account for the relation between the cultures and the real conditions of economic and political power.<sup>20</sup> The Latin American experience of a philosophy that, as a result of its close link with the social–political reality, is committed to the struggle of cultures for the social justice they need to realise their identities, can indeed be a contribution to remedy this deficiency and to elaborate a more historical concept of culture in the intercultural philosophical dialogue.

Thirdly, and resulting from the above, another potential contribution by Latin American intercultural philosophy resides in the proposal to intertwine the paradigms of liberation and interculturality as mutually complementary and hence mutually enriching perspectives. There is no interculturality without liberation of the otherness nor can there be liberation without a dialogue about differences. Only a free culture can communicate its true identity and for a culture to be liberated, there must be open dialogue with the other cultures as the venue where, in a process of mutual support and rectification, new possibilities can be experienced.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. José Martí, "El hombre antiguo de América y sus artes primitivas", in *Obras Completas*, volume 8, Ediciones Sociales, Havana 1975, p. 335.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Raúl Fonet-Betancourt (ed.), *Culturas y poder. Interacción y asimetría entre las culturas en el contexto de la globalización*, Desclée, Bilbao 2003.

And lastly, the Latin American contribution to the international debate on intercultural philosophy may well be that of showing – in line with the commitment of philosophy – that intercultural philosophy today faces an unprecedented challenge at worldwide level, viz. the recolonisation of the world through the expansion of a single civilisation model – neoliberal capitalism – which is incompatible with the project of a plural world in which the cultures and peoples of all humanity seek to live together respecting their differences and practising solidarity. One task to be taken on by intercultural philosophy is therefore to ‘interrupt’ the uniforming momentum of the currently prevailing civilisation and to show that interculturality is not a mere notion but a forceful alternative reality.

## Conclusion

As said in our introduction, we will conclude this article with a number of brief considerations on the significance of intercultural philosophy in the world of today. To do so, we will return to philosophy’s historical commitment, outlined in the previous section, as a perspective shared by all and also serving as the starting point for our final considerations.

That is why we do not seek so much to emphasise the role that intercultural philosophy may play in improving the quality of philosophy as a particular form of human knowledge. Rather – and precisely – we want to give centre stage to what intercultural philosophy can mean to help improve the quality of life in the world in which we live today and thus to give a different quality to the history that we are forging from our historical present. So what we are referring to is the meaning of intercultural philosophy as a theoretical discourse with the power to help bring about a change for the better in the quality of human life and hence a change in the course of human history.

Starting from this perspective, we wish to point out in the first place that the meaning of intercultural philosophy today is closely linked up with its ability to propose answers to challenges that face humanity on its path through a history that is characterised by widening social and cultural gaps between peoples and cultures due to the all pervading ideology of a supposed ‘progress’, i.e. the dynamics of a capitalist civilisation that plunders nature and that, centred on anthropocentric individualism – aggressive towards cosmos and man alike – aggravates the inner conflict of human subjectivity.

The rhetoric of today’s globalisation, with its emphasis on worldwide processes that supposedly further the union of mankind, conceals the fact that the dynamics of its progress – although involving global expansion – do not correspond to growth in universality, i.e. genuine communication between the various cultures of man. It is therefore a meaningful task for intercultural philosophy in today’s world to denounce the fallacy of this Global Speak and show that reconciliation of mankind is not achieved by applying a single model worldwide but by following the road of a universality that sprouts from the free exchange of different cultures.



It is along this line that we should see the role that intercultural philosophy can play in, for instance, pluralising the ethos of human rights or the idea of democracy, promoting a pedagogics aimed at recognition of the other, or supporting universal criticism of fundamentalism, including the Western fundamentalist notions of market logic and money worship. Undoubtedly, its true significance in our times is greatly dependent on its continued commitment to such structural liberation efforts as those we have illustrated in this article.

However, it is equally important for intercultural philosophy to be meaningful in today's world by working towards an anthropological shift in our societies – as one dimension of the cultural and social shift we need to improve the quality of the world and, hence, the history we make. This is the second matter of importance we wish to underline in these conclusive comments.

We think intercultural philosophy can add to its significance in its current historical context by committing itself to correcting the image of the human being that the prevailing Western culture has scattered throughout the world, and by correcting it not only in terms of the consequences it has had for the way we structurally treat nature and other human beings – which we have already referred to – but more precisely regarding its implications for the very way of being, living and acting of each of us. One of its aims should be to help retrieve, through intercultural dialogue, memories of human dignity that will bring back a sense of measure, proportion and balance, and that reflect a way of being which regards as unworthy of mankind to participate, on the grounds of false needs, in the course of a world that excludes the other, because it is built on rules that enable the extravagance of some.

As the third and final point, intercultural philosophy will be historically significant in our days if it exploits the exchange between cultures to transmit mankind's still remaining reserves of meaning and, complementing the view given in the previous section, to propose the spiritual diversity of cultures as an alternative force to the cynicism and frivolity of societies that, having substituted so-called globalism for profoundness, live only by and for 'the show'.

Intercultural philosophy today would do well to follow – if only in part – Hegel's advice that philosophy should be edifying,<sup>21</sup> and to make good use of the many traditions it draws on to encourage modern man to be not only a more knowledgeable but also a more ethical being.

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Ulstein Verlag, Frankfurt /M 1970, p. 17.

# Hermeneutic Philosophy and Human Experience: An Intercultural Perspective of Worldviews and Life World in the Mapuche Culture

Ricardo Salas

## Introduction

We are mainly concerned with developing the categories of worldviews and life world in the framework of the a priori historic cultural encounter.

Philosophically, this specific issue is addressed in the VIII volume of Dilthey's work, in the volume *Weltanschauungslehre*, where he presents his theory about world views,<sup>1</sup> meaning the diverse ways in which life (*leben*) expresses itself, and where the conceptions attempt to interpret life's (*leben*) changing experiences and resolve life's mystery. The conceptions' diversity arises from the variety of psychic experiences and attitudes towards life. There exist, according to Dilthey, three kinds of conceptions that he analyses in the above text: the religious, the poetic and philosophic one.

Also, in Husserl's posthumous book, *la Crisis de las Ciencias Europeas y Fenomenología trascendental* (1954) (*The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*), the main issues of a theory of *Lebenswelt* appear, and where the bases of a radical criticism aimed at the modern scientificity is presented systematically. Such scientificity originates in the Galilean mathematic paradigm starting out from a life world prior to itself. This rationality projects itself in natural sciences and spiritual sciences that have been predominant in modern times.

The question of a historic a priori, as analysed by Husserl, reveals that the European scientific knowledge is elaborated from a specific concept of a formal and empiric-formal rationality which is no longer possible to sustain in human and social sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*), as proven by Dilthey.

However, the establishment of spiritual sciences in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, requires a specific philosophical analysis.

The discovery of historical rationality is, no doubt, the appropriate complement of criticism of formal rationality, although posing a theory of world views in these historical sciences is faced with difficulties, which are part of the crisis of the

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<sup>1</sup>Dilthey, W., *Teoría de la concepción del mundo* (Trad. E. Imaz) México, 1978, tomo VIII.

European sciences, namely the inevitable consequences of scepticism and relativism for which all current world views in the historical and cultural worlds would be incomprehensible. In other words, the specific establishment of spiritual sciences has been able to move forward in the criticism of positivism; however, the claims made, especially in Dilthey's work, contain concepts which need a thorough analysis, risking the assumption of complex consequences for a rationality's theory. The decisive problem is not only how to articulate the Diltheyan rupture between nature and spirit – which is the basis of natural science and spiritual science – but how to avoid the erosion of a rational axis, which is the basis of a fully universal science.

The dialogue between Husserl and Dilthey is somewhat known. This has often been circumscribed to the account in Dilthey's text, of 1911. *La esencia de la Filosofía* (The Essence of Philosophy) (1907), where Husserl presented his criticism of the theory exposed there: The theory of the formation of different world views (*Weltanschauungen*) that can be found in history. In that work, he elaborates his known concept of philosophy as a strict science: The Diltheyan concept of philosophy as a world view was questioned on the basis of its inevitable relativistic consequences for universal reasoning. Although, as Landgrebe claims, the dialogue between both writers took place much earlier. Indeed, Dilthey already read, *Logical research* by Husserl in the early 20th century, and both of them met in March 1905 in Berlin.<sup>2</sup> What is expressed explicitly in writing is the polemic raised in the famous article "Philosophy as a strict science", published in the magazine *Logos* in 1911, and in the explications of the short-lived mail correspondence between both. This sentiment becomes stronger in diverse later texts of both of their disciples where they attempt to clarify the difficulties of understanding the connections between history and rationality between both philosophies.

We wish to make a contribution by clarifying some disputes between Husserl and Dilthey showing a particular mutual misunderstanding, over which the remaining problematic issues still prevail. This manifests itself in the permanent misunderstanding between both writers between 1905 and 1911. Such incommunication has been passed on to the disciples of both writers up until today. Indeed, we claim that the objections between them do not constitute a clear-cut distinction. For example, in his last non-posthumous book, *The historical world*, Dilthey writes that the studies of life and its 'psychic' manifestations house a teleological tendency that he refers to as structural connection, which – in our view – converges with Husserl's phenomenology. Dilthey also argues that his theory "establishes a strictly descriptive foundation of knowledge theory as "knowledge phenomenology".<sup>3</sup> This explicit reference to phenomenology known in a teleological modality constitutes a clear indication that the so-called objections over the establishment of rationality in humanities and social sciences have been over overrated in terms of an inevitable philosophical confrontation between the conceptions of philosophy of Dilthey and Husserl. This, in our judgement, would conceal some sort of incomprehension of

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Miskiewicz, W., "Vers un fondement psychologique transcendantal des sciences", in *L'Esprit. Mind/Geist* 2 (2002), pp. Jesús Díaz, *Husserl y la historia*, p. 48ss.

<sup>3</sup> Dilthey, W., *Obras fundamentales*, VII, p. 13.

phenomenology in the theory of “world views”. Conversely, however, one can point out that the Diltheyan hermeneutic school has seemingly not been able to fully comprehend the demands of correctly founded rational thinking. Consequently, it is not possible to affirm a plurality of conceptions of the world in the philosophical field, without eroding universal knowledge.

When turning to the debate observed in their correspondence, it is possible to pinpoint the shades of colour in each of them. It is also possible to acknowledge the historicity that Dilthey’s conceptions lead on to. On the other hand, one can also observe the defence of the rigorous scientific ideal of philosophy of the latter, as though such an ideal could be defended detached from the historical–cultural it stems from. At any rate, we believe that both philosophers provide us with valuable hints for an intercultural philosophy, inspired hermeneutically and phenomenologically. Dilthey’s contribution proves crucial to understanding the diverse world views operating in one particular culture, while Husserl’s phenomenology is key to the construction of a normative criterion to account for the relativity of a consciousness of history, which suggests stronger theoretical foundations to serve as the basis for the sciences of the spirit in a rational human manner that goes beyond what Dilthey’s vitalist historicity had preliminarily attempted.

However, by highlighting the topic of vitality in Dilthey, it is accurate to acknowledge that in Husserl’s own work, History is strongly connected with the subject of the Lifeworld. In order to analyse this connection between the Lifeworld and the historical a priori, it is necessary to maintain the inter-relationship of three fundamental meanings about world and life, which according to C. Monteagudo are relevant in the Crisis, and provides several hints for clarifying Husserl’s “dialogue” with Dilthey’s philosophical project of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. The three significant subjects that can be sustained from the Crisis are:

1. The life world as the forgotten foundation of the meaning of modern science and tacit presupposition of the Kantian philosophy.
2. The life world as constituent surrounding world.
3. The life world is always given beforehand, but at the same time is an intersubjective historic horizon that keeps constituting itself.

This threefold issue allows us, then, to refer to the final stage in a “phenomenology of the lifeworld”, as termed by A. Bonilla, where lifeworld and history world refer to each other in the work of Husserl. Furthermore, we deem it appropriate to clarify – in a new intercultural way – the interrupted dialogue between the Diltheyan project to re-invent historical sciences, and Husserl’s explicit concern, not only belated, to adopt a justification, in the recuperation of a sense of history, in the framework of a rationality’s teleology.

This incomprehension about the general sense of rationality also points to other relevant philosophical problems. One of the issues that we are interested in here is the comprehension of the social and historic human experience, for in both of them the question of the structural nexus is presented as inherent to the historical human experience which can establish the knowledge that interprets the non-objective senses of the human and social experience. In order to introduce our hypothesis

about the experience, one could argue that this debate between the philosophy of the historical comprehension in the early 20th century deeply marks the theoretical outlines of human and social sciences until today. Indeed, it has been extended to an intercultural criticism of knowledge because they presuppose, one way or another, the question raised by Dilthey on the diverse conceptions of the world that run across human experience in history. Such conceptions imply seeking an a priori in order to not fall into the relativism in religious, poetic and philosophical manners. Similarly, Husserl's thesis of experience presenting a multidimensional character questions an imperialism of the empirical science.

This phenomenological perspective of the experience in the social science and humanities-related areas has been developed by A. Schutz, who fundamentally has explained the diverse ways of facing the comprehension of the meanings of the historical and socio-cultural world. We believe that his effort is productive, for it allows to specify an epistemic question about the experience in its historical–social sense, which extends further than the present empiricism in the predominant foci of the social and humanities-related sciences developed from positivism, and which allows a link with hermeneutics. This topic is also present in one of Dilthey's disciple, Bolnow, who indicates "...that the concept of experience is not that unanimous as it appears to be in the empirical perspective, but it requires a radical clarification". In this sense, the contribution of Schutz and Bolnow is to have provided clues to current research that seeks an advance in the question of experience as a constitutive element in the human experience of apprehending the being.

Although the category of experience has been revisited by the social theories, inherited from their own internal tensions, as a category primarily elaborated by phenomenistic patterns, meaning connected to a specific conception of the sensorial knowledge, this has been expanded by the incorporation of the historical–social patterns. The social phenomenology leads to a reflection that goes beyond a mere sensorial psychological knowledge, establishing the bases of an epistemic comprehension of the experience in the all of the practical dimensions of the social and human life.

In this sense, Schutz's and his disciples' contribution is in agreement with the contemporary epistemic debate in view of the fact that it provides us with relevant allusions to a post-empiric approach of humanistic and social sciences, which is convergent with the hermeneutical point of view. In its most equivalent sense, the conception of *Lebenswelt*, which raises the exact criticism of the "naive" simplifications and positions supplied by the diverse modalities of the rationalist, empiricist, and critical theories, depicts the fundamental part of the question of sense and meaning in the construct of knowledge about humanistic and social sciences. In consolidating the prospect of establishing the historical–social knowledge from language, deadlocks and obstructions of the epistemic framework are overcome to account, in a more radical field, for the socio-historic experience of diverse cultures, which entails an intercultural philosophy.

The contributions of the post-empiric theories are the fundamentals of the new hermeneutic and critical tendencies of social and historical sciences, which are in turn at the basis of the current critical theories – at least in their Habermasian

delineation – about the communicative actions, it reiterates this previous linguistic dimension. The essential in Schutz and Habermas' contribution is that there is an unavoidable *a priori* in all social human action; hence, it also occurs in the scientific social research: the communicative community or the inter-subjectivity. Thought is made possible through language, which is radically socio-cultural and interpersonal. Therefore, the action in nature, object of natural sciences, presupposes a cognizant subject that is in contact with other human subjects. This means that the 'dialogue' in the understanding of meanings is the basis of historical–social science. The analysis of this constitutive '*a priori*' will reveal those universal conditions of the risk of comprehension and scientific explanation (universal pragmatic).<sup>4</sup> Within this field, the contribution of the communicative action proposes to partly clear up the controversy of the establishment of scientific theories of society that have been developed during the 20th century. However, another problem unveils, the one of de-establishment, which can not be removed from its complications to search for a unquestionable starting point of the historical–hermeneutical knowledge,<sup>5</sup> so that an intercultural philosophy approach is revealed.

The above also leads us again to what Husserl and the later discussions have called the historical '*a priori*'.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, this '*a priori*' is a statement that is not only necessary to understand from a phenomenological point of view, since it has the impressions of other philosophers that have elaborated other propositions about the historicity of Reason, such as Ortega y Gasset, and Foucault. Bolnow, who upholds a notorious closeness with Dilthey, clearly postulates that this '*a priori*' is unattainable, and that it is necessary to admit that all scientific knowledge of society and culture has its foundation in a world of pre-conceptions that originate from social, familiar or individual contexts and, as such, they constitute the original plot of the worlds of life in which we live, which presuppose the same historical sciences: is this not the nature itself of the difficulty for the perception of a historical criterion of history?

I shall point out that the rich Husserlian element about the sense of history refers to the same historicity as the worlds of life, in that if the crisis of sciences and the European humanities are analysed, it is evident that it is not just about clarifying a questioning of the scientific rationality that explains historical events, but about the sense of the dynamics of rationality to decode the experience of the man himself. The world of life and the historical '*a priori*' lead to the ethical–anthropological elements of the philosopher and the scientist's responsibility facing the epoch situation. Within this sense, the Crisis faces us to the theoretical and practical sense of rationality. It would be as in a specific socio-cultural world where the natural and spiritual sciences have been settled, and the very sense of philosophising can be re-discovered, which is none other than the assumption of the theological character

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<sup>4</sup>Mardones, J. M., *Filosofía de las ciencias humanas y sociales*, Barcelona, Ed. Anthropos, 1984, p. 318.

<sup>5</sup>Ladrière, J., *La Articulación del sentido*, Salamanca, Ed. Sígueme, 2001, p. 64 y ss.

<sup>6</sup>Bolnow, O., *Introducción a la filosofía del conocimiento*, Buenos Aires, Amorrortu, 1976.

of Reason. Let us here make some brief observations about the historical priori in Husserl's texts.

## The a Priori Condition of Historicity

The work published as *Die Crisis der europäischen Wissenschaften* (1954), *The Crisis of the European Science*, says Velozo, has been considered as part of a historic reflection, "even if it is with a peculiar character, 'historical-teleological', but it is accurate to highlight that its final purpose is strictly philosophical".<sup>7</sup> Its purpose is not simply to historically situate the western thinking, but, above all, to expose a "teleological consideration of the history of philosophy, it is about clarifying and explaining the ideal telos, the Idea, the sense that rules and encourages the development of all western philosophy".<sup>8</sup>

Following Landgreb's suggestion, one can also state that the question of the world of life, already elucidated, is almost completely covered with the question of historicity: "the return to the world of life is originated... this analysis is rooted in the question for this historical ego determined in its historical origin, which is also determined, that is to say, it becomes a question for the historical horizon of the statement 'I am'".<sup>9</sup> Likewise, Landgrebe will make the relating possibilities between the world of life and the history of conscience's experience acknowledged, developing the idea that history, the world and the self constitute the substance of the same homogenised experience, lived by the subject, in which conscience is itself turned into history and sedimentation of the historical world.<sup>10</sup> Let us observe some of the main texts with regards to this issue in the following passages.

Husserl has made the subject of a historical 'a priori' explicit in certain paragraphs, which are the those that synthesise his approach of the issue of heterogeneity in history, in diverse levels of the reconstructed sense in which history requires to be postulated: in the sense of history, experienced by every man, for its sense of the "empirical" recuperation in historical sciences, and the sense it renders to the philosophic march as a teleology of the Reason.<sup>11</sup>

In the famous Appendixes with reference to Geometry, one can observe that Husserl highlights the subject starting out from the confirmation of what it is during the historical a priori that the events can be objectified such as historical matters; it is a strange and paradoxical statement that remains unsolved: "Is it by any chance the 'a priori' that supposes the historical being?" he asks himself. A text that can help clarify the subject matter is how Husserl considers the 'a priori' objective in sciences, and the

<sup>7</sup> Velozo, R., Artículo citado, p. 93

<sup>8</sup> Velozo, R., *ibid.*, p. 102

<sup>9</sup> Landgrebe, L., *El camino de la fenomenología*, pp. 288–289.

<sup>10</sup> Landgrebe, L., *Fenomenología e Historia*, citado por Gómez-Heras, p. 162.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Husserl, E., Entre los párrafos más relevantes 5, 6, 7, 9 L, 15, 26, 29, 57, 67, 73, apéndices XIII A LA Crisis IIIA, II–III al 9, XVII al 33 yss, XXV–XXVIII al 73.

universal a priori of the worlds of life are established, where those can only have their fully justification in these, “we can here find a truly radical fundamental, seriously scientific, that, given the state of affairs, demands unconditionally”.<sup>12</sup> If we consider this, bearing in mind the formulation Husserl has made familiar in the Appendixes, one should consider his postulate of the historical a priori in the Crisis under that fundamental idea. Husserl states: “... the historical events (even the current events, which are ourselves) are objective only if we consider the fundamental of the a priori”.<sup>13</sup> Montero comments this celebrated quotation by pointing out that: “That a priori makes possible a historicity in which its demands can be executed, a historical world capable of possessing eidetic structures recurring in its diverse concrete realizations, and, correlatively, the validity of the sciences and philosophy is made on the assumption of the achievement of an absolute truth that supposes the a priori of historicity”.<sup>14</sup>

On the diverse instances where references to the Crisis appear, we are familiar with the clear distinction between the historical character of the life worlds and the particular means of rational justification that phenomenology demands in order to make it become completely universal according to a founding criterion. But does this not bring an integrated difficulty in the sense that the search for a criterion that brings sense to the events does not presuppose them as Husserl pointed out? Does this way of understanding the sense of history not demand a reconsideration of the same idea as the historical a priori?

In other texts of the Crisis, we find valuable suggestions about this ‘a priori’ dilemma that makes experience as well as the empirical historical sciences possible, as Husserl says, it is not just about the conditions of possibility “of a pre-scientific experience of history, but also the conditions of possibility of the very empirical science, while accepting history as a pre-supposition in its nature of universal horizon of questioning”.<sup>15</sup> What we are interested in highlighting in this presentation is the fact that it is precisely the historical a priori that permits the founding of the historical and socio-cultural worlds we live in, which can be described by social and ethnological sciences, which were particularly interested in them. As Merleau-Ponty has said very clearly:

“Actually, Husserl says the history that judges, raises values, removes those values from the ideal sphere, not from the facts, encloses a latent, not expressed and, therefore, probably incorrect phenomenology. In the initial conceptions of Husserl, the hierarchy is very clear: there is a reflection there on the historical possibilities that is independent and autonomous, with regards to the knowledge of the historical facts”.<sup>16</sup> However, we state once again that it is not a purely epistemic justification, but a formulation based on what has been denominated as historicity.

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<sup>12</sup>Husserl, E., *Crisis*, p. 148 (parágrafo 36).

<sup>13</sup>Apéndice II de la Crisis.

<sup>14</sup>Montero, F., *Mundo y vida en la fenomenología de Husserl*, p. 279.

<sup>15</sup>Husserl citado por Gómez-Heras, *Sobre el concepto de mundo de la vida*, en San Martín, Ed. Madrid, UNED, 1993, p. 163.

<sup>16</sup>Merleau-Ponty, M. *La fenomenología y las ciencias del hombre*, p. 92.



However, this reference to historicity posits a problem not related to the unity of history, but to the philosophical interpretation of the own historicity of history.<sup>17</sup> This hermeneutical thesis is apparently the one that posits the greater difficulties on the subject of the unique sense of history, if we follow Ricoeur's judgment in his famous cited article "insinuates an incipient skepticism for which history is incurably multiple and irrational".<sup>18</sup>

This complexity exposed by Ricoeur might seem somehow exaggerated, but it contributes to somehow clarify the intricate subject of the 'a priori' that is postulated in the Crisis, and it helps in the re-processing of the subject. A correct reformulation of the historical a priori requires answers to the aforementioned difficulties, to be precise, to distinguish what finally is understood as a historical a priori according to the spirit already defined in the Life World in the first part of this presentation. We believe Ricoeur's criticism might be understood in two senses:

1. The paradoxical character of an approach where the acknowledgment of the historical character of Life World that presupposes its own historicity
2. The character of a scepticism that might unlock this new opening in the phenomenological method to the multiple history of cultures and human societies

We know that this specific idea of a historical philosophy has been developed independently in Ricoeur's hermeneutical work, 'inserted' in phenomenology. It is known that the Ricoeurian thinking has developed, in his own words, strongly inserting the hermeneutic subject of historicity in his particular way of understanding phenomenology starting from the Diltheyan and Heideggerian hermeneutics. It concerns a deep-rooted hermeneutic philosophy, of a paradoxical type, that might avoid totalising history from a single central point. It is believed that Ricoeur can, in this perspective, clarify the aforementioned aspect. In consistence with what has been pointed out, an a priori is referred to the kind of historicity that allows us to understand the historical events in their characters as such. In this sense, San Martín would be more convincing by clarifying: "the historical a priori supposes that there are cultural events, that is, a subjectivity with an internal historicity as the chiasm that has produced them; it is enough to confirm that, without doubt, there is a community behind them that produce them as one another in the production and sedimentation of the sense, that is to say, with this dynamic historicity, without which these historical events would not exist indeed."<sup>19</sup>

This new scheme of history, moved forward by the Crisis, consolidates the positive perspective ensured by Husserl with regard to a philosophy of the Cosmivision, removed of its historicity. However, this fact does not denote that the crisis would lead to a sceptical questioning of the radical justification of rationality. As Montero points out: "The assumption that history belongs to the concrete life domains, does not presuppose any decrease on its relevance in phenomenology. Its factuality places it at a 'starting point' that is not only decisive for the subsequent developments

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<sup>17</sup> Ricoeur, P., *À l'École de la phénoménologie*, p. 51

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 53

<sup>19</sup> San Martín, J., *Fenomenología y Antropología*, p. 97.

of the phenomenological reduction, but it is contained in them as the ‘conducting thread’ that makes his enquiries possible about the historicity of the transcendental subjectivity and that gives it its accomplishment”.<sup>20</sup>

## **Towards an Intercultural Philosophy of the History**

Connecting, in an interconnected way, the contributions of the phenomenological thought and the observations derived from the same school and of the hermeneutic school, several statements about the connection between the historic a priori and the Lifeworld come up, particularly the question if the historic-cultural marks of this German thought comes up. For us, scholars who reflect from the view of other latitudes and search for an intercultural philosophy facing especially the indigenous knowledge, Dilthey’s and Husserl’s theoretical observations cannot possibly be analysed in an abstract and non-historical way, for they refer to a specific Lifeworld. They are clearly inserted in the context that was debated within the philosophy in Germany in the early 20th century. This allows for the highlighting of the close connection that these philosophical, scientific theories and ideas have with various socio-historic and cultural situations that have characterized the German and Western European cultural world until today, and that should be considered the main topic of an intercultural philosophy.

If we maintain the speculative rigorousness in these theories about the historical a priori, we would have to understand the European socio-cultural world that has been trapped by the above-mentioned philosophers’ research. In this sense, one can allude to what the phenomenological category of the lebenswelt claims. The European science refers, as noted earlier, directly to the Lifeworld; it is this historical and social world that is presupposed; this is the true vital and historic context in which the European philosophy is inserted. Also the human and social sciences originated from the European science are inserted in this Lifeworld.<sup>21</sup>

In this specific sense, we do not reject the claims made by Husserl of the scientific world debating positivism, naturalism and historicism. We affirm, with and against Husserl, that it is from this Lifeworld presupposed by the rationality of the critical-hermeneutical sciences, where it is required to understand the emergence of thoughts. A Life world. An intercultural criticism requires the placement of a cultural context from which one can move forward with a theory of the knowledge’s reconstruction and from which one can consolidate the contribution to an intercultural criticism of human and social sciences. This includes, in a special way, the history of those people that were defeated by the overwhelming advance of modernity. I believe that the fundamental task to carry out nowadays is to demonstrate this pre-assumption, unavoidable to all historical sciences as the thought itself with its cultural

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<sup>20</sup> Montero, F., *Mundo y vida en la fenomenología de Husserl*, p. 281

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Pizzi Jovino, *El mundo de la Vida. Husserl y Habermas*, Santiago, Ediciones UCSH, 2005, cap. 2.

contexts, not only for those who value this research perspective of a historical *a priori* and Lifeworld but also for the ones who believe that this claim is a contradiction.

The issue of the specific character of the criticism in philosophy and its differences with the reflexive-sapiential ways is a relevant topic amongst intercultural philosophers. Generally, what is criticised is the existing strong tendency amongst philosophers working in western universities to maintain a concept of philosophy that they want to articulate in an exclusive way, within the modern scientific rationality project. This means that on this level, the idea that philosophy is necessarily a systematic and scientific knowledge is defended. Thus, in this aspect, the idea that philosophy aims at establishing the latest pre-assumptions of knowledge, the ones of being and value, while it denies or disregards the wisdom or cultural knowledge that is assimilated “simply” to the cultural, religious or mythical tradition. Traditions, even if they contain reflexive aspects, are not sufficient to develop a specific logic that is characteristic of the teleology of “European” rationality, to continue the Husserlian adjectives exposed in the *Crisis*.

It is possible to acknowledge that the above-mentioned distinction is made with a correlation to a specific conception of the reason and its diverse historical figures. The project of Husserl seems to have been cautious when considering the value of the sense of rationality. As appeared in his conference during the Cultural Circle of Vienna in the year of 1935, and later revisited in his posthumous book (*The Crisis in the European Sciences*), his line of thought cannot be subtracted from the “European” pre-assumption. A pre-assumption that preserves its own character of rationality from the offshoot of a Greek episteme, in a way that he would not admit that sciences, strictly speaking, existed in India and China; it was only thoughts.

To argue that, strictly speaking, the *telos* of philosophy is reserved exclusively for the western philosophical project, raises a series of questions about the concept of reasoning and science. In the intercultural frame we find ourselves today, we would have to, on the one hand, re-value the Husserlian effort to think of stricter conditions, which we would have to call reason, science and knowledge in the diverse cultural contexts. Although, as mentioned earlier on, we believe that it is necessary to question a very general concept of reason or philosophy, one that cannot be sufficient help to reply to the question of the reconstruction of the knowledge starting out from a critical thought and the demands of an intercultural philosophy.

In other words, historicism and the crisis of the modern sciences are also the announcement of the crisis in the European cultural project of modernity and, as such, it requires today, the progress of a reconstruction of knowledge from cultural contexts where other types of knowledge have been obliterated and silenced along centuries of colonization and subordination in concordance with the imperial interests of the European societies. To finish this paper, we would like to turn to some of the claims proposed by these ideas, in order to clarify the different manners of justifying history elaborated from the European models already mentioned and to demonstrate another intercultural way of approaching the history of indigenous people, starting out from a specific example referred to the Mapuche world.

We argue that if we want to move forward in this discussion on the problematic nature of philosophy in a truly universal history, the first prolific indication should

be to analyse the role of the categories since we know that such categories are a central matter in philosophy; by this, one would have to accept that philosophy itself does not escape from this matter of having to explicate its own concept of knowledge. Here we find a significant feature of critical thinking, to acknowledge its own pre-assumptions and historical-cultural context.

In the academic-university formation, generally, it is pre-supposed that philosophy derives homogenously from a Greek origin and there are few of the great thinkers like Dilthey and Husserl who helped to recognize this problematic mark in its own backgrounds that helped to recognize their vocation for searching and that later it was moulded into the same western tradition. We do not wish to point out anything obvious, but merely remind that philosophy appears strongly connected to the problem of a critical practice. Philosophy also appears strongly connected to an act of questioning of a pseudo-evidence or the already given out as unquestionable. In this context, the dynamic of rationality and in that, the local knowledge, humanities (human sciences) and philosophy, therefore, do not only become unsatisfied with the merely cultural traditions, but permanently unsatisfied with its own searching.

One point that can illustrate this search initiated by Dilthey and Husserl, but that brings us much further in the path of an intercultural philosophy is the fact referred to the connection or the classical separation that western university world makes between logos and myths, which is crucial in the configuration of the indigenous Lifeworld.<sup>22</sup>

An important contribution in this sense can be found in Pannikar's work. He argues that the classic Greek counter-position between logos and myths has led to the western concept of the reason through a rationalist distortion. This has prevented the location of the centrepiece of the narrative in the source of culture, instead of helping to recognize its diverse voices, its polyphony.<sup>23</sup> The reply offered by Pannikar questions certainly the supremacy of a specific predominant way in the Western world, where reason has been recognized as logos, although forgetting that reason is also myths. Pannikar states: "Language is not only *logos*, it is also *mythos*, and if *logos* can be somehow translated, *mythoi* are much harder to transplant. Human 'understanding' in the sense of harmony and concord requires the communion with *mythos* and is not solved with the dream of *lingua universalis* of 'Illustration', where the word has a precise meaning'.<sup>24</sup>

From our point of view it is required to emphasize then, matrices where we can recognize the diverse logos that operate in cultures, nevertheless showing those confining aspects to the encounter with others. Well, we know that myth cannot only be understood as experience but it is also a discourse. This is particularly true where it can be denominated as reasonability or reflexivity, which is one of the crucial categories in our intercultural philosophical point of view, since it emerges from the simplest symbolic and narrative levels in a human culture.

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<sup>22</sup> Esto aparece más desarrollado en mi libro *Ética Intercultural*, p. 196ss.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Fornet-Betancourt Raúl, *Transformación Intercultural de la Filosofía*, Bilbao, Desclée de Brouwer, 2001

<sup>24</sup> Panikkar, R. en Arnaíz G., *El discurso intercultural. Prolegómenos a una filosofía intercultural*, Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 2002, p. 50.

## The Mapuche Experience Regarding History and Worldviews

Since the installation of the American conquest till the thriving national-states, at the beginning of the 19th century, the efforts for reconstructing the indigenous cultures and societies' past became relevant as a crucial way of understanding the others. This, in the framework of asymmetrical societies which are characterized by a refusing-the-other logic, which basically continues until today. In this vein, when the colonial chroniclers as well as the thinkers of varied histories of the Ibero-American Republics are considered, a rationalization that explains the deprivation that affected the indigenous communities, is confirmed. One which deprived them not only of their territory, but also of a more fundamental thing, which is their own way of understanding history. Most of the above mentioned histories are those of the victors, where the imperative subordination of one society to another was emphasized as the main principle. This was part of an inevitable socio-cultural clash, which was a worldwide historic movement period, that led to the reasoning, civilization and progress' victory. This adverse ending is still present as a consistent component throughout the Indo-American region and it would be necessary to re-create a new understanding of the history of the defeated in an intercultural framework, one which could accurately de-construct the victors' history based upon the defeater's history.

In the approach by then pointed out by phenomenology and intercultural philosophy, it is revealed that in all indigenous communities there were diverse narrative practices of appreciating the dynamics of its societies, which in turn would demand the questioning of the prejudgment of numerous scientific communities, that used to be "societies deprived of history". Within the particular issue we are interested in, the Mapuche people, there were a series of categories that accounted for the faraway past (Kuyfi), for the remote faraway past (Rüf kufy), for the present time (Fantepu), for the experienced history. They also told us that a Mapuche way of assuming the articulation of the historical sense, and that the historian art (weupife) existed, and he was the one responsible for maintaining and passing on the community's historical report. Such a historical viewpoint, has allowed the individuals to own a folk memory protected by the community, the indigenous societies to gain access to a particular sense of the time-continuum, upon the basis of several oral narratives which accounted for the past events. The oral narratives also allowed them to understand their present, and creatively envision them towards the future.

A pertinent aspect of our premise is that the Mapuche people history cannot be dissociated from their cosmovision, for history and myth are not to be parted. The oral history (Nütram) is not a factual history, as historical positivism has taught, where dynamics in terms of historic events, that would be determined by documents which would be the basis for a scientific validation of what it intends to objectively reconstruct, are intended to be reconstructed. The oral history of Mapuche communities moves strongly away from a factual science of historical events, and is related to the hermeneutical sense of a world conception of a religious

and philosophical kind, where the time continuum sense based upon communal traditions, is scrutinized. Within this wide time dimension of the past or Kuyfi, the Rûf kuyfi em or wera kuify is found. This dimension suggests the faraway remote past, time in which the fundamental aspects of philosophy, religiosity, etc. are located. From a different point of view, it could be said that the aforementioned narratives are also part of a phenomenological presupposition from a concrete a priori, where “history is not from the beginning something else but the live movement, of one with another and one within another (*Miteinander und Ineinander*), of the original building of sense and its sedimentation”, therefore the time comprehension of communal life became intelligible for its own members.

By denying the value of this historic sense and treating narratives as simple legends, the manners of constructing written national histories, would appear as histories build from the other’s worlds: “...writers are formed in the modern world and their interpretation of reality is determined by their sense matrix, which is reasoning and not an indigenous interpretation of the context”. The reasoning of the historical sciences moves away from the history of a community’s sense to support a “colonial reasoning” obsessed with authenticating the victory of indigenous communities. Since then, these indigenous societies would be considered as subordinate people, substantiating in this way an invasion and a military conquest of the two States involved. In this way, the de-construction of the dominant history allows to demonstrate how two ad extra historical understanding manners, an occidental and an indigenous one, operate. In this critical way we have to keep aware of the reduction worked out by sciences: “The historic sciences – with or without intention – looked at this complex Mapuche world, in a disconnected way”, and would be transformed in “official histories”: In general, history has become a product, lastly, under the codes that represent one of the States. It is essentially because of two European modernity dimensions that 19th and 20th century historians searched for the economic, political and cultural reasons in order to deny the indigenous world: the colonialism and ethnocentrism at that time. Based upon the reasons arisen from positivism, arrogance and lack of education of the “civilized” people, these communities were caricatured and decimated, limiting the feasibility of a historical understanding of the remarkable tragedy that those acts of violence meant. Only in the last two decades, part of the historical criticism has been able to properly highlight these aspects.

Then, the true history of the indigenous communities cannot be constructed based on the theoretical parameters of the factual events historians, since the intercultural criticism demonstrates that we face two different cultural worlds. From the historicity’s point of view, as it was above emphasized, the history written on the indigenous way of life world, is intended to recover the deep sense that narratives have. In these narratives, the Mapuche individuals characterize themselves, feel and think rooted down in the Earth. This not only a territorial region but a sacred one, where the Earth and men and women are part of the same essential context. The Mapuche world conception prevents history to be narrated just as the events of rootless men and communities, and this is exactly the history concept of the foreigner (*winka*).

The oral Mapuche history is one that shows that vital link between men and ground, and that is what Mapuche means (man of the ground), both in its immanent sense, as in its transcendent sense (the above Earth). The Mapuche experience of history, supposes a wide concept of life (mogen), where life is a principle that transcends every experience and spatial context: “then, in the Mapuche Kimün, the mapu concept contains different spatial dimensions. There is not only an account for the concrete, but also for the spatial dimensions that allow to locate all the life dimensions in the universe. That is, it has a transcendent dimension from where the Mapuche expression Wenu Mapu or Wwente Wenu Mapu can be understood.

In this second consideration of the folk memory issue (ad intra of the community), the construction of the history of the last centuries becomes much more complex, because in the assembling of the report, it is necessary to account for all the indigenous leaders and communities that contributed to the invader army and the colonial authorities. In this context, it seems that the views related to the religious dimension are not enough, for there are contextual strategic considerations that belong to the political and philosophical area. The Mapuche folk memory needs to be understood in the practice of a plural report.

It seems that in the exact sense of a Mapuche view of history, there is a link with a historical theory of the worldviews. With the proper discursive practices, it would have to be recognized that the core idea of that history is to relate the understanding of its rich and polymorphous vital experience, with a reflection that is inherent, and that is present in the different discourse forms which are present in the present culture. Those are the instruments on which a historian of the particular culture bases himself in order to express the signified and meanings of its human discourses in time, and that could carry out the will of a collective communicative interaction. In this regard, the claiming of the Mapuche intellectual would have to be responded: “Just to give you a case, as a Mapuche I have a cosmovision, but the winka seems not to have it, or may not have such a category, for example no anthropologist refers to the Chilean or Argentinean cosmovision or cosmogony”, but it would have to be added, what happens when among the indigenous a discussion around a damaged report as a result of their own internal clashes, is brought.

In conclusion, in the dynamics of the Mapuche historical knowledge, the supremacy of dominant societies history gained until now could be questioned ad extra, and ad intra, to recognize the plurality of historical forms based on the acknowledgement of possibilities of their own discursive forms, in order to account for its complex history of colonial relationships. As many authors point out, these may be led to its highest flexibility level, as it appears in various papers, especially among the current Mapuche historians who take possession of writing, where “Mapuche history means recovering our past under our own epistemology, and constructing new knowledge from our culture”. It is essential to make a new intercultural theoretical model of history, to permit effectively establishing the mutual connection between an oral, and a written history. This can be found in the category of historical reflection, as the basis of a socio-historical experience, that would

articulate and open up to more radical scenarios of the intercultural–historical criticism.

## Conclusions

An intercultural philosophy stresses an emphasis on the category of reflexivity. This reflexive character of the social subjects in a modern surrounding has been frequently valued in social sciences; and unlike the particular thought of a traditional society,<sup>25</sup> sometimes an intercultural philosophy has also been understood as a modern practice of a reflexive authenticity as A. Ferrara’s model. However, we do not want to ignore either of these contributions, but to place them in terms of a historical–cultural category connected to the analysis of history, we want to turn it into a dynamic process of the emergent thought of humanity. We also want to emphasize the idea that the historical reflexivity refers to a process inherent to human cultures, not necessarily modern, defying dialogue and communication with other cultures. The idea of historical reflection is therefore crucial so as to strengthen a critical instance within the demands of the intercultural dialogue, since it allows us to disclose the ideological forms of rationality as wit power. This idea contributes to the progress of the accurate criticism of the homogenizing abstract reason, from the recognition of other cultural knowledge. This is the ‘practical intercultural reason’ which refers to the knowledge of peoples that have not yet been colonized, to use the Habermasian vocabulary.

The knowledge linked to the communitarian traditions are not only statements passed on from a pacific world, but owed to the debts that the indigenous people have to their ancestor’s legacy of ethics based on struggle and conflict resolution. The indigenous peoples do not conceal this knowledge and cultural experience. Neither do they cover up the knowledge of their origin in the memory of past struggles, the times of resistance and the various sufferings of tangible human beings. The debt to the ancestors – the ones found within the spaces of coexistence – the traditions of resistance, the wait and human pain bring together men from all cultures. In this sense, the historical reflexivity points at emphasising the various cultural forms that define the knowledge of cognitive and practical reconstruction of the different peoples.

Nevertheless, it is accurate to mention that the conflictive coexistence with others differing from my life world does not in any sense suppose to support the radical objection between “the reasons” derived from the discursive registers of my life world and “the reasons” related to the discourses of other life worlds. Maintaining a radical opposition would imply the introduction of an incurable rupture in the field of historical reflexivity and thus, the impediment of an inter-subjective dialogue in the sphere of action. One of the comprehensive pre-assumptions in an intercultural philosophy is that every action of a human being carries

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<sup>25</sup>Giddens, A., *Consecuencias de la modernidad*, Madrid, Alianza, 1993, p. 44ss.



“reasonable” meanings that can be traced from within the meanings and senses that life worlds provide, which are open, in a certain way, to other life worlds.

We have already highlighted that, whenever historians, ethnologists, anthropologists or whoever writes about “the others” discredits actions or specific values of some other culture. They frequently support with their statements, pre-assumptions that are the result of a veil of a-criticism and unawareness of their own culture’s inappropriate actions and values. The above occurs when they are not clearly the expression of a means of legitimising the colonists’ culture. However, this kind of argumentation does not emerge just from the present criticism of the forerunners of the historical-cultural studies. However, this kind of argumentation has been characteristic of the existing reflexivity of all indigenous or dominated cultures before the colonising or dominant ones.

In this matter, we would have to make clear that the discrediting of the “reasons of the others” is not only unacceptable, but also inconsistent with a mutual view from criticism. It is necessary to hold the possibility that the “reasons of the others” and the “reasons” originated from my life world join by coming to some agreement, that would have to be defined by the same process of inter-comprehension of memory, *ad extra* and *ad intra*.

Therefore, we agree with the categories proposed by the Latin American philosophers that highlight the character of “interpellation” present in the participation of others in the frequently asymmetric dialogue. The other’s scream is always a form of interpellation that questions the system and reveals its structural asymmetry. These “others”; however, are not the others “with other reasons”, but others that have their reasons to suggest, appeal against exclusion and in favour of their inclusion in the community of justice.<sup>26</sup> Or as Fornet-Betancourt says: The encounter with the other is then interpellation, interpellation from where our way of thinking should be revised, for in this situation, we experience that there is another horizon of comprehension that we ourselves have not built, and thus it challenges us – as one possibility – to make sense of our own original situation.<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, about this matter, it is important to establish a short connection with the philosophical subject of immeasurability. We believe we should avoid solving the issue by playing between these two already mentioned extremes. This problem is related to two debatable positions about the intercultural dialogue, i.e. on the one hand, the radical relativism that tends to finish the dialogue, since it intends to report the dominant rationality that shuts off the reflexive components of the life world. Therefore, immeasurability would support the permanent resistance to hegemonic and alien cultures. On the other hand, the radical universalism that integrates the whole of rationalities in the name of *logos*, understood as a universal reason that would represent the measure for all rationalities inherent to human cultures. From this point of view, cultures can be measured by one particular parameter raised as the only valid feature for everybody, but that ends up

<sup>26</sup> Dussel, E., *Debate en torno a la ética del discurso de Apel*. México, 1994, p. 88.

<sup>27</sup> Fornet-Betancourt, R., *Transformación Intercultural de la Filosofía*, Bilbao, 2001, p. 41.

reducing the role of the historical, and of the particular. It seems necessary to reconsider the practical rationality, not as a compact discursive unit, but as multifarious and dynamic discursive groups where it is possible to assume the reconstruction of the abstract categories stemming from European philosophy or any other context.

# Towards an Intercultural Construction of Rationality

Dina V. Picotti C.

The challenge of building rationality along intercultural lines has faced humanity since time immemorial. In our era, however, there is a major difference, because for the first time in history we are confronted with all the phenomena encompassed by globalisation. The modern world order is characterised by a systematic spread of philosophical, scientific and technical rationality, homogenising the age-old diversity and complexity of human existence. Although a distinction has rightly been made between economic and cultural globalisation, today's worldview can be said to be dominated by a kind of rationality that causes other proposals – both theoretical and practical - to be largely ignored or overlooked.

At the same time, ours is also an epoch characterised by the explosive increase of plurality and difference. In the theoretical realm, this has found expression in the continuous rephrasing of categories, paradigms, ways of thinking and language in an attempt to accommodate an experience of change and diversity which has been fully expressed by postmodern thinkers. In the practical field, this tendency has become manifest through the rephrasing and mutual confrontation of economic, political, artistic and other models, belying any claim to a single overriding thought or unique order.

All this would seem to give sufficient reason for an in-depth reflection on actual events to help bring about an orientation toward attitudes, phrasings and decisions that can or, at least, aim to provide an adequate answer to the needs and expectations of our times.

## The Contemporary Experience

The effect of globalisation-related phenomena on our era is self-evident. Modern technologies have transformed societies by spreading the possibilities of instrumental rationality. The mass media have seized on the new channels to make the enormous potential of practical and theoretical knowledge accessible to an ever wider circle of people with access to the appropriate means, but they have also brought about a certain disregard for authenticity and even manipulation. Martin Heidegger was one of several contemporary thinkers who have recognised this. Heidegger's

topicality was not accidental, despite the intense debate he originated. His thoughts on the 'Oblivion of Being' had been heralded in various ways in criticism of the self in the West from the nineteenth century. The ambiguity of all these phenomena shows that they have given rise to an unprecedented experience of plurality and diversity, eventually leading to a notion of being and a discourse of the truth that recognise the configurative nature of human language and the complex and unpredictable character of reality, a notion that cannot be converted into any single object but that needs to be answered on its own terms.

Contemporary reality presents itself as a fabric of complex processes and factors – cultural dimensions, language games, ways of life, etc. – that is in a state of constant reconstruction and renovation. The multiple problems and issues that appear and reappear require an approach that accounts for existing differences and discontinuity, the need for dialogue, the impossibility of homogenisation and the need for unifying, univocal categories. This context has bred new sciences and new perspectives of science and reality: the constructive role of chaos, the crisis of a world that is wealthy but whose evolution is unpredictable, minor fluctuations that bring about major change, the disintegration of multiple scales of differing magnitude affecting globalisation, the role of self-organisation, the non-linear factor, the subject's substantive participation, the concept of time, the views of historicity and the recognition of different spaces.

The loss of certainty takes us to a new awareness of ignorance, uncertainty and questioning to resist the reduction of the complex and the abstract; it originates points of view, understandings of being and normative logics characterised by constant learning. There is a generalised need for people to find new guidelines for living and acting, to rethink culture itself. New paradigms question premises and notions that until today served to orient scientific activity, making us reflect on our understanding of being, ways of thinking and use of language. They urge us to review our social action and the associated subjectivity, and they go hand in hand with a decentralisation of the sciences: partial or local consensus is established inside individual theories; general laws are questioned for being considered only applicable to limited areas of reality, while alternative theories may co-exist that do not necessarily validate each other. These alternative theories, the social construction of knowledge, and the non-adherence to a unique objective truth introduce the need for reflection on ethics, responsibility and liberty, because science is not neutral, but able to build, destroy or alter the course of action. Something similar takes place in other areas of culture, such as language, habits, art, religion, politics and economy. The alternatives available are numerous. Regionalism, manners and local techniques explore the imbalance in the organisation and fragmentation of space, with interest shifting towards construction-deconstruction processes, and different human groups emerging as subjects. All this leads us to question the notions of truth, objectivity and reality because of the very process of knowing and acting by which they come about and because of the cognitive agent and the social network that make up the context of this knowledge and action. Although an appropriate understanding of the complexity of today's occurrences requires a reordering in both intellectual and practical terms, our times can generally be regarded as a

period of creativity in which singular elements, local features and dilemmas are restored and perspectives of new possibilities present themselves.

One poignant manifestation of these changes in everyday reality is that a range of cultural and other social identities are claiming recognition and proposing alternatives. Although investigators do recognise and attempt to incorporate them into their theories, if only for the sake of ensuring the governance and sustainability of the system, on a wider scale they are often discriminated or excluded in the name of or by order of the prevailing model, be it theoretical or practical. This means it is necessary to look into the nature of identity, to assess what identity signifies for the construction, perdurability and unfolding of human rationality, and to consider how it can be recognised and included in the present corpus of approaches.

Any identity manifests itself as a way of being that synthesises temporal and historical elements. It is sometimes referred to as a ‘narrative identity’, because like a story, the diversity of being is configured from its multifarious underlying factors, so that it is constantly taking on new shades and expressions. Identities manifest different human aspects, over generations— in the sense of individual age as well as community’s history – and through qualities determined by race, work, ethnicity, culture and lifestyle. Every member of the community makes a unique and irreplaceable contribution and therefore deserves to be recognised and included as an actor. However, many investigators continue to take an inconsistent approach to all these aspects, which in practice are often disregarded altogether. The result tends to be not only contradictory but unsustainable.

## A Different Way of Thinking

The contemporary experience of plurality, complexity and change calls for a corresponding way of thinking. Indeed, we can see that different notions of being and truth have developed that go beyond the subject-object relation of philosophical tradition. These new notions require us to strive towards a more original approach, demanding a profound transformation of our stance. We should be open to history, prepared to receive what happens, allow ourselves to be informed and transformed on the way, explore paths that open up and are rebuilt as we venture along. We should remain expectant in the face of disappointment, recognising what is given and the manner in which it is given, and at the same time what is taken away, through a ‘long way of hermeneutics’<sup>1</sup>. We will thus be instructed by the different interpretations and construct their intelligibility and rationality in an inter-logic manner.

In his *Beiträge zur Philosophie*<sup>2</sup>, Heidegger characterises the present task as one of ‘transitory or initial thinking’, in a confrontation with the metaphysical tradition,

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<sup>1</sup>P. Ricoeur, in his *Le Conflit des Interpretations*, E. du Seuil, Paris 1969, already pointed out the need for learning from the different interpretations rather than opposing them to know and understand reality, an idea which he elaborated in further detail in his other works.

<sup>2</sup>M. Heidegger, *Beiträge zur Philosophie-Vom Ereignis*, V. Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1989.

because the 'other beginning', i.e. being as happening, requires us to make a huge step, taking rationality to the condition of being-here (Sein). This being is the more general concept within the ontology of being (Seyn). It nearly coincides with the word and is predisposed to the *ens* as unique. It corrects the idea of truth, which had been degenerated through the certainty of representation and calculation. The *ens* confirms all things, be they large or small, mediocre or great, praiseworthy or questionable, as part of the unfathomable nature of being. It transforms living into an art form, the art of truthful acting; regards all theory and philosophy as the history of the self, which is as it happens, opening up space for the games played by time. It leaves behind the denigrating view of nature as a field for exploitation, seeing the earth as it is, without any preconceived notion; it disdeifies any entity that 'celebrates its triumphs in the christianisation of culture' and offers no ready-made answers to the question of the nearness or remoteness of the gods. It urges us to content ourselves with being as it is and to affirm it wholeheartedly, including life's twilight; to embrace indecision, suggested as a state of higher activity, and not to shrink from making decisions.

In its most original sense, the notion of historicity refers to the history of being itself rather than that of one of several entities; as such, it no longer simply means presence but the essence of being as it happens, the *Er-eignis* that involves man's being there, his *Dasein*; in this state of being, man understands that his history is more than facts, and that his will and destiny belong to himself.

According to Heidegger, this historicity, different in every epoch, is facing an essential transformation, in the sense that humanity is taking on the task of laying a basis for decision-making in a context of eventualities. To do this properly, we have to overcome a merely self-centred point of view, which can be accomplished only if we prove capable of mustering the courage to embark on the abysmal task of being ourselves, turning away from the current self-alienating stance of representing and explaining objects and regarding this as the truth.

From such original being, we can enlarge the scope of the encounter with other forms of being in different cultures, as experiences of reality and ways of life.

In this respect, the flourishing of cultural studies over the last few decades is auspicious, as is the recognition of the fundamental role that culture plays in the treatment of the diverse concerns to contemporary societies, both theoretical and practical. Since the end of the nineteenth century, the social sciences have laboriously legitimised their approaches and methodologies vis à vis the prevailing paradigms of natural sciences. The early 1970ies, when linguistics took a major turn and philosophy was entering post-modernism, marked the true advent of the so-called 'cultural studies', which give priority to the symbolic character, particularly in the English-speaking parts of the world. They go back to the existing tradition along with the history of philosophy, modern and contemporary, which had already been redefined by the German school of historians – Schleiermacher, Dilthey – and by later thinkers such as M. Heidegger, Gadamer, P. Ricoeur and G. Vattimo. The introduction of an interdisciplinary character to the studies came about under different impulses and orientations, which revealed different perspectives, time aspects and cultural forms in interaction.

The very notion of 'culture' became a subject of debate. Eventually, the prevailing concept of culture was the idea of a life form and being as a symbolic dimension present in all action, a historically structured repertoire, an ensemble of styles, abilities and schemes that, incorporated into the subjects, are used in a more or less conscientious manner to organise their practice, both individual and collective<sup>3</sup>. Investigation activities focussed on a particular dominion of the symbolic dimension, analysing the social contexts and mechanisms of production, the networks where culture is created, distributed, advertised and consumed, relating the cultural production to the organisations. The products are taken as the results of collective labour, which implies co-operation and distribution of work, supported by well-established conventions, which makes them more effective and less expensive. Although it has been objected that in this approach the epistemological interest of the product's significance is shifted to the social self, it proves more useful to explain normal production than revolutionary. It is not so much the cultural production and its network of symbolic suppositions that rule the mechanisms and organisations but cultural objects and the manner in which these are made part of the culture. Culture is treated as an object of explanation and not as an active and dynamic force in social life, while in everyday life the appropriation of cultural materials is carried out. As an active force in societies, culture can be visualised in the process of consumption, according to N. García Canclini, B. Sarlo, J. Martín Barbero, J.J. Brunner and P. Bourdieu<sup>4</sup>. These authors have manifested their ideas with particular force in Latin America, critically articulating the cultural perspectives of authorities in sociological tradition such as Marx, Weber and Durkheim. They have insisted on the correspondence between social and symbolic structures, pointing out that culture constitutes and is constituted by the social, building a theory of practices articulated with a social theory which is a cultural theory, where culture also contributes to the domination process in legitimising both the cultural and the natural differences. R. Williams<sup>5</sup> has united the anthropological concept of culture with the dimension differing from human life, a form of common life that varies with the tendencies in each historical period through dominant elements, existing and emerging, which comply with a basic role in the production, distribution, circulation and relations with the material practices of everyday life. The English school of cultural studies elaborates on these considerations facing the relation between everyday life and cultural practices of the subaltern sectors of society and the dimension of the organic factor that R. Williams, G. Simmel, T. Mann, M. Weber had presented earlier, contrasting the notion of culture to the notion of civilisation, which is taken to be dominated by the formal, the systematic and the mechanic. Marxist criticism uses this notion to refer to the cultural atrophy caused by the hypertrophy of cultural production. The new North American urban sociology treats culture as the central place of definition for the new class of intellectuals.

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<sup>3</sup>J. Auyero and C. Benzekry, 'Cultura', in C. Altamirano compil., *Términos críticos de sociología de la cultura*, Paidós, Buenos Aires 2002.

<sup>4</sup>P. Bourdieu, *Sociología y Cultura*, Grijalbo, México, 1990.

<sup>5</sup>R. Williams, *Cultura, sociología de la comunicación y del arte*, Paidós, Buenos Aires 1982

Here it is seen as a standard model of consumption and style, reinforced by certain intermediate cultural practices varying between the useful and the aesthetic, such as the kitchen, architecture, art tutorship, while urban transformations of the last 20 years are due to the emergence of a symbolic economy in the city associated with interests of cultural consumption.

Countless works refer to the 'political culture' in relation with the habits, knowledge, values and attitudes that inspire actions, structures and political changes, centring the theoretical debate on their definitions, paradigms and methodologies, interrogating the interaction between culture and the institutions<sup>6</sup>. Other works, no smaller in number, have commented on urban cultures, including youth cultures, more in particular their codes and values. These studies do not so much focus on the youngsters themselves as on the transmission of their culture, inviting us to rethink the categories associated with transgressions, alternative options and resistance, and questioning an adult society that seems more youthful in appearance than ever before<sup>7</sup>.

Another phenomenon that has emerged, particularly during the last decades, is the demand for a better discernment of the notion of popular culture. This started off in the Age of Reason from the tension between established bourgeois and popular culture, the former associating the latter with superstition, ignorance and chaos. Contrary to this, the Romantic Movement recognised the popular as a space for cultural creativity: this is what inspired Herder's songs, the Grimm brothers' stories, and Arnim's religiosity. The complexity of aspects could involve undesirable elements, passing from folklore to ambiguity in the modern tradition. This development is historically linked to the evolution of anthropological knowledge. It also led to Volk and his telluric streak of national unity, to which Nazi racism was related, and to the social sense that characterised the first social movements for freedom, where culture comes about more for its practical value and use than for objects of popular aestheticism. Initially, the concepts of popular culture could be found implicitly in the notions of politics, including cultural politics, of the Enlightenment, Romanticism and Anarchism, and were later explained theoretically, either through historical analysis, like the works of M. Bajtin and C. Guinzbourg of the sixteenth century about the pressure of the modern state and the market economy, or by discussing its manners of existence. One example of the latter is A. Gramsci, who assigned to popular culture a strong relevance to the conceptions of the world and of life, and judged that before the hegemony it was fragmentary and degraded, although not mere reflection.

A. Cirese considers that popular culture has one use but not one origin, i.e. it derives its value from its social relevance and validity, not from its authenticity or

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<sup>6</sup>N. Lechner compil., *Cultura política y democratización*, Flacso, Santiago de Chile, 1987. M.L. Morán compil., 'Cultura y política', *Zona abierta*, 1997, quoted by J. Lanzaro, 'Cultura política', in C. Altamirano compil. *Términos críticos de sociología de la cultura*, op. cit.

<sup>7</sup>H. J. Cubides/M.C. Laverde Toscano/C.E. Valderrama H., *Viviendo a toda-Jóvenes, territorios culturales y nuevas sensibilidades*, Ed. Siglo del Hombre/Fundación Universidad Central, Bogotá 1998.



elementality. W. Benjamin<sup>8</sup> thinks in terms of the modification of perception, stating that in spite of modern techniques allowing reproduction, the world is unrepeatable, with new culture emerging among the people and the masses. Being marginal, popular culture can be found on the crossroads of tavern culture and the experience of the multitude. The masses seek dissipation, not withdrawal, and represent the disturbing and threatening quality of urban life. Since the 1950ies, British pioneers in cultural studies, introducing a renovated and polemic version of Marxism, have placed popular culture in the middle of thinking and investigation. R. Hoggart refers to the working class experience, R. Williams to the common culture. While M. de Certeau<sup>9</sup> underlines the contemporaneous quality of popular culture, Bourdieu discusses the reproduction logic by pointing out the dispersed nature of creativity, the strategies employed by those who do not have a place of their own and must act in adverse territory, the impurity and conflictive situation of the urban condensed into marginal existence and style, which can only be told as a social narrative by way of oral dynamics. As J. Martin Barbero<sup>10</sup> notes that since the early 1980ies Latin American investigation has pointed to the multiple manifestations of popular culture in terms of its conflictive aspects and ambiguity. Rather than being contemporaneous, it reflects the deflected modernity in Latin American countries, with the logic of capitalism seemingly exhausting the reality of the present. Investigations not only give us the point of view of the indigenous or peasant cultures but present the dense fabric of mestisation and transformation of the urban in relation to the historical process of the constitution of the masses and their possibilities of achieving greater social visibility. These views have been expressed in the works of such authors as J. L. Romero, R. Ortiz and C. Monsivais, who provide information on the different ways in which the popular exist, e.g. through the masses. Brazil's black music is claiming social recognition, while popularity in Chile, Argentina and Peru finds expressed through the press, radio and TV programmes such as soap operas. In the 1990ies, social cultural studies are rather about community than about people and rather about the traditional than about the popular. They refer not only to pre-Hispanic cultures but also to the indigenous, black and peasant cultures and their configurations. This is due to the instruments of domination implied by globalisation, to the point that a distinction should be made between economic and cultural globalisation, and it is due to the intensifying effect of communication and the interaction of these communities with other cultures in the respective countries and beyond. The communities have partly experienced this as a threat to their cultural survival, as a consequence of their memories of colonial submission, and partly as a possibility to break the circle of social exclusion. An experience of

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<sup>8</sup> W. Benjamín, 'La obra de arte en la época de la reproductibilidad técnica', in *Discursos inter-rumpidos*, Taurus, Madrid 1982

<sup>9</sup> M. De Certeau, *La invención de lo cotidiano. Artes de hacer*, Universidad Iberoamericana, México 1996

<sup>10</sup> See for example *De los medios a las mediaciones. Comunicación, cultura y hegemonía*, México, G. Gili, 1991

interaction that does involve risks also opens up new possibilities for the future. The current dynamics are breaking through the networks of folkloric understanding of the highly traditional communities, leaving less and less room for nostalgic contemplation of the traditions and creating more awareness of the need for a symbolic re-elaboration requiring a renewed construction of the future. They take on strategic validity by helping the communities confront a purely mechanical transplant of modernity, and represent a fundamental challenge to the supposedly universal validity of tradition, which is losing its historic meaning under the influence of the current process of modernisation and its homogenising pressure. In the face of this, they are aiming for a cultural strategy that they do not intend to keep indefinitely but which stimulates their own capacity of unfolding and recreation.

Ever since the beginning of our history, Latin American Studies have been of special interest to Latin American communities. In the world of science in general, Latin American intra-, inter- and trans-disciplinary studies have intensified and diversified all possible aspects of the continent's cultural-historical reality and response. Today's epistemological and methodological debate has resulted in a notion of being and configuration of truth that is also based on a narrative conception of identity. Consequently, history, linguistic and literary theory, the theory of art and religion, sociology, economy and politicology, anthropology, archaeology, Indo-American and Afro-American studies, migratory studies, studies of social identities, etc., together with their respective interactions and reciprocal influences, are offering a wide variety of and detailed information and interpretation of this reality. This presentation of reality demands an adequate response from political praxis, to enable traditions to continue and change to be deployed.

In the philosophical world we can distinguish two orientations that are divergent but at the same time claim each other. The first is the so-called 'History of ideas', recorded in the continent in general as well as in individual countries. It is a collection of statements, authors, debates, orientations and movements on different cultural aspects and in different eras. Subjects include thought, art, religion, society, economy and politics. This task of registration requires knowledge and interpretation, which are by definition unfinished but indispensable to represent the continent's history, as are an awareness of mainline thinking and the great debates that have dominated the lives of our people until the present challenges. The second orientation concerns an attempt at establishing a qualified 'Latin American' philosophy, not only to convincingly participate in philosophical thinking – the 'philosophical normality' praised by F. Romero – but also to creatively express the singularity of the continent's experience. This is how in the 1960ies, riding the wave of liberation movements worldwide, Latin American liberation philosophy emerges. Its views emphasised the need for freedom from normative Eurocentric logic, which conditioned and impaired the continent's sense of identity and its concrete display in all layers of society. Its aim at otherness involved a critical stance.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>The T. 3, N.1 of the journal *Nuevo Mundo*, San Antonio de Padua 1973, contains articles by the members of the founding group. They also appear in *Hacia una filosofía de la liberación latinoamericana*, ed. Bonum, Buenos Aires 1973. E. Dussel's *Para una ética de la liberación latinoamericana*, Siglo XXI, Buenos Aires 1973, recently published in a new edition, is one of its main exponents, and characterises Latin American philosophy of liberation as political-ethical praxis and analectic logic.

Although there had always been antecedents, this urge, together with the hermeneutic exploration of Latin America's culture, in the 1970ies led to the idea of formulating premises for a way of thinking of its own. This required a transformation of attitudes, categories and philosophical accounts<sup>12</sup>, which in the 1990ies developed into a movement and a society of 'intercultural philosophy' initiated by non-European thinkers, including from Latin America, who shared the idea of starting a dialogue among the different historical and cultural centres to which they belonged but which are also present in all contemporary societies. These debates have taken place at special congresses and in their subsequent publications. They reflect the multicultural and indeed intercultural nature of the experiences, possibilities and difficulties of the thinking it is aiming for, considering the wide variety of themes and the need for the inter-logic construction of its intelligibility and rationality<sup>13</sup>.

## From Globalisation to Ecumene

One major task still to be accomplished, however, is the recognition of historical and political players involved. The protagonists of the historical and cultural tradition and renewal should be enabled to actively participate in the organisation of institutions and political praxis, instead of remaining submerged in their condition of mere object of study or politics. If this were not to happen, the countries would be deprived of the initiatives and contributions from many of their greatest talents.

Such recognition requires adequate institutional support to enable historical communities<sup>14</sup> to address their particular exigencies in collaboration with the institutions, which process would also imply their continuous transformation. It is generally known that the idea of universal citizenship, a product of the French revolution aiming to free the people from aristocratic rule, no longer satisfies today's demands, because it does not account for local particularities. The continent does not need the idea of the modern State, because it represents bourgeois liberties, nor the Anglo Saxon idea of tolerance, protection of private rights and its way of life,

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<sup>12</sup>J. Scannone's *Nuevo punto de partida de la filosofía latinoamericana*, E. Guadalupe, Buenos Aires 1990, proposes a new horizon of thinking with respect to other main horizons relevant to the philosophical experience - christian-judaism and Greek metaphysics. Cf. the debates contained in Carlos Cullen, *Pensar desde America*, ed. Fund. Ross, Rosario, 1986, which give the different aspects of Latin American identity and history, as well as its thinking. See also prolific Rodolfo Kusch's *Obras Completas IV*, Edit. Ross, Rosario, 2000.

<sup>13</sup>The society of intercultural philosophy has been publishing a series in three languages (German, French and English): H. Kimmerle/R. A. Mall compil. *Studien zur interkulturellen Philosophie*, Rodopi, Amsterdam/Atlanta, as well as the international philosophy journal *Concordia*, the international Congress acts of intercultural philosophy and a series of related monographs, edited by R. Fornet Betancourt, IKO, Frankfurt am Main.

<sup>14</sup>In his *Lecciones de Filosofía del Derecho*, Hegel recognises politics as the organisation of historic communities through institutions, within the framework of the debate of the time about the origin of the state.

because this would create isolation; nor does it suffice to follow the path of mere assimilation of diversity – indigenous, black, mestizo, creole, immigrant, etc. – as practiced in our countries, because this would be copying a particular model considered normative; nor is it an option for governments to negotiate in isolation, because they would be relying only on themselves. The institutions, and through them the political organizations, should be the fruit of the voices and deeds of the different protagonists, so that the patrimony of each contributor can be available to all and at the same time reconfigure itself in relation to the others<sup>15</sup>.

The institutions in Latin America have failed to adjust to social reality ever since the national organisation of our countries, which came about according to the prevailing models of the time. This is the underlying cause of today's institutional failure, with the majority of people still being excluded from participation and treated like objects and not subjects of politics. In this respect, the events in Chiapas are representative of the remainder of Latin America, as are the social movements – the landless, the homeless, the unemployed, pensioners, workers, immigrants, women, children, young people, old people, etc. These movements can be found in many other contemporary societies as well; particularly those with an increasing need to know how to unite the diversity and thus how to build theoretical-practical rationality.

Similarly, in decolonised countries – in Africa, for instance –, independence is still only incipient. The traditional structures were broken down by colonisation and slavery, and regional politics has failed to provide any replacing framework to unite and empower the local forces and resources for the benefit of all. Policymakers remain subject to international games of power, missing opportunities to fulfil the great needs among the population.

All this constitutes a challenge that we refer to as 'intercultural' in an attempt to adequately identify it. The challenge is for civilizations and cultures to make the right choices from globalisation's objectifying rationality and its transformations, and from all other forms of intelligibility and rationality that help shape local identities. The challenge is to bring all the multifarious experiences and realities of human kind together and convert the current process of globalisation into an ecumenical movement, in which forces interrelate and people from all backgrounds and convictions embark on dialogue from the contemporary need for political restatement, if only to prevent us from having to live again such sad experiences as totalitarianism, fundamentalism, anarchy or their derivatives.

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<sup>15</sup> See for example M. Lacarrieu-M. Alvarez compil., *La (indi)gestión cultural - una cartografía de los procesos culturales contemporáneos*, Ed. Ciccus-La Crujía, Buenos Aires, 2002

# Universalism and Relativism of Knowledge Dissipate. The Intercultural Perspective

Rik Pinxten

## Universalism–Relativism

The ‘sin of relativism’ is as old as western civilization, I state. In other words, one might claim that the ‘fear of relativism’ has grown alongside it. As happens often with such grand and encompassing notions, I think we lost track of context completely in most of the debates on this issue, since we safely found ourselves in one of the two presumably exclusive trenches: one is either in favour of ‘real’ knowledge and hence a universalist, or against it and hence one is a relativist. It might be healthy to consider that dichotomies and scientific seriousness never had a good and durable relationship. On the other hand, theology and ideology seem to embrace every dichotomy that comes along. That, at least, is my opinion after working in this field for a lifetime. My position is that dichotomizing thinking in its most absolute form can be found in the Christian tradition, feeding on the Greek philosophy to a large extent but unequalled in the later Christian European tradition. I cannot go into this here and can only refer the reader to specialists in that field like J.P. Vernant and C. Perelman.

What is it all about? In a variety of studies cognitive relativism and cognitive universalism are pitched one against the other as the two exclusive positions. There is no other option, it appears, than either of these two positions. Of course, in the history of our western (or European) intellectual tradition this dichotomy was developed by scholars of a decidedly theological breed: truth was universal (and God-given) or it was not. Any room for alternative views tended to be considered either heathen or heretic in nature. In that sense, relativism has a bad omen since the beginning of our particular history of knowledge: the pragmatism of the sophists was contrasted with the search for ‘real’ knowledge in Plato, and early science was seen to doubt or offer an alternative for the ‘real’ knowledge of revelation. My claim is that scientists, as subjects in this culture, largely continued to reason in this way, certainly when invited to reconsider their views on a fundamental level. Substantial argumentation along these lines has been offered primarily by rhetoricians (e.g., Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1957 have attempted to demonstrate what

'human' features scientists possess, – as opposed to the view of theologians – since they have to resort to persuasion and to use arguments with human beings for their theories and models to be heard and accepted). In the second place, historians of science (with prominently Koyré 1957; Kuhn 1962) have argued how much the historical and hence the cultural context mattered in the adoption or rejection of knowledge. And thirdly, social studies of science are documenting since the 1970s that scientific research is a unique mixture of context, human agency and 'truth'. Fallibility remains a difficult discipline, and the appeal of dichotomic thinking stays with us, notwithstanding such important insights of recent decades.

In a very general way I hold that scientific research is embedded in the socio-political and the cultural context of the West. The socio-political embeddedness implies that funding, promotion chances and even freedom of research will be co-determined by the political context of the researcher to a smaller or larger extent. In the case of the humanities this point has been illustrated by such volumes as Chomsky (1996) and Nader (2000), which show how the development of the Humanities in the 1960s and 1970s of the past century were influenced and sometimes curtailed by the military and political powers of the USA. In a similar vein, the explicit offer of research jobs by the CIA (in the USA) and by MI5 (in the UK) from 2006 on through advertisements in the major anthropological journals gave rise to a debate in the discipline: it is clear that the freedom of research is not guaranteed in these circumstances, knowing that already in the past anthropological results have been (ab)used in warfare, without the awareness or consent of the researchers (Houtman 2006).

Moreover, the cultural roots of aspects of the scientific endeavor have been pointed at on a more irregular basis. I mention the important work of the sinologist-historian of science Needham (1965) on China, and the critical approaches by D. Campbell and others on the status of scientific theories (Pinxten 1997). Lately this line of thinking has been pursued in a more systematic way in the claim that any and all theories in the Humanities is caught in a religionistic view on human beings and cultures (Orye 2003). That is to say, whichever way one tries to conceptualize knowledge or social and cultural action one always lands up with a religiously framed view on matters. For example, morality is automatically linked to conscience (like it is in the monotheistic religions, but not so in several other traditions), or worldview is intrinsically thought of in terms of consistency (which is typical of the theological views in the Christian tradition, but foreign to e.g. Navajo Indian or Chinese cultures). It is only through a thoroughly comparative perspective that it becomes clear to what extent such views are 'local' and religiously framed. Orye shows convincingly that so far, and notwithstanding critical attempts by philosophers and social scientists on these issues, no escape from such religious biases has been achieved.

The tenacious biasedness of our view on knowledge (and truth) poses a serious problem. It is even more important that the simple dichotomy between 'our knowledge' and 'their knowledge' (the latter referring to the truths and knowledge repertoires of other cultural traditions) is beside the question. Since we cannot escape from our own biases at the level of intuition and worldview, we will necessarily

import them into the view on ‘other truths’ we produce. In other words, relativism is a false pretension: we project a slightly different perspective of truth or knowledge onto the other tradition, rather than represent or ‘speak in the language of’ a different cultural perspective on reality. We are caught in our own biases, even when claiming relativism. In Pinxten (1997) I went into great detail on this point: I distinguish between three major so-called types of cognitive relativism:

- The theory of Kuhn (1962) is sometimes presented as an example of socio-historical relativism. Kuhn himself has fought against such an interpretation of his approach, and has stressed his faith and loyalty to rationality. Without doubt he has a point and the relativistic interpretation of his theory is too shallow to be taken seriously.
- The social constructivism of Lukes and Horton poses as a second type of relativism. These predominantly British authors have been discussing the impact of presumably valid African systems of thought in the light of scientific standards. In a thorough debate on the issue the final conclusion seems to be that rationality forms a basic and unmistakable universal threshold for dependable knowledge in any and all traditions. Hence, here again the label of relativism does not apply, since the actual basic rules and procedures are believed to be universal.
- A final and most interesting type of relativism can be found in scholars studying other traditions or civilizations. Some anthropologists can be cited here, although none have done the type of monumental work that Joseph Needham (1965–) has produced on Chinese civilization and science. Also, he is the only one to situate knowledge in the total context of history, religion, culture and intercultural exchange (or not). In that perspective his work is in another class. With the deep knowledge he possessed about the western scientific tradition and that of the Chinese history of ideas and of institutions he was able to come to a grand and at the same time deeply founded comparative stand on relativism. Comparing knowledge and truth in the Chinese and the western tradition he thus states: ‘Interest in Nature was not enough, controlled experimentation was not enough, empirical induction was not enough, eclipse prediction and calendar calculation were not enough – all of these the Chinese had. Apparently, a mercantile culture alone was able to do what agrarian bureaucratic civilization could not – bring to fusion point the formerly separated disciplines of mathematics and nature-knowledge.’ (Needham 1972: 44).

What Needham claims in this analysis is that situated knowledge is what matters in the discussion about relativism and universalism. Knowledge and truth do not exist and persist in the void, but should be seen and evaluated in the broad material, cultural, historical, political and religious context(s) in which they emerge, grow and decline. In his case study, China did not grow out of the bureaucratic peasant society it has been embodying for ages during the 15th century. The decidedly ‘primitive’ Europe (at that time) did. Needham points to mercantilism and Christianity as triggers for the peculiar growth of science in Europe, and states that this (cultural) factor lacked in the Chinese case. I think that, notwithstanding discussions on the details and on the particular claims of Needham, this

general point stands. If we would call his view relativistic, then this branch of relativism seems to stand. However, I prefer to call it a perspective on 'situated knowledge': knowledge (a truth) does not exist in the void, but is contextual and constrained. The question then remains not whether, but to what extent context and constraints impact on the universal status of concepts and theories.

An intriguing topic I want to address here is: what status does relativism have in this case? In my understanding cognitive relativism here refers to the constellation of knowledge and truth which are coinciding with and hence develop parallel with a broader cultural and political context. Knowledge and truth are not dependent upon contextual elements in a cause-effect relationship, but they can only be assessed and understood adequately by taking into account these contextual parameters. My interpretation amounts to saying that truth and knowledge formats and procedures are co-constituted with (and not necessarily by) the cultural and political factors of the larger context. In that sense, one might say that the contextual elements are necessary conditions for the truth and knowledge forms to pertain, but they cannot with any strength be considered to be the sufficient causes. Neither do truth and knowledge constitute sufficient causes for the appearance of the said contextual formats (as philosophical idealists would have it), at least in my appreciation. Knowledge is grounded in context and is itself context for cultural and political developments under certain circumstances. No simple 'mono-causal' explanations do suffice in such complex matters. If this type of interrelationship between the contextual and the epistemological is called 'relativistic', then I abide with that labelling, stressing at the same time that the term is then used in an entirely new and decidedly more restricted way than before.

## Scientific Truths

One more thing must be mentioned here. Scientific knowledge is, for me, that type of knowledge which proves to hold the most tenable statements available for the time being. 'For the time being' highlights that this view on truth specifically implies that falsifiability is intrinsic. To my knowledge history never showed one solution of a problem to be perennial or absolute in any clear sense. Notwithstanding this important feature, scientific knowledge still aims at universal truths. Finally, there is no contradiction between these two features (falsifiability and the strife for universal truth). This statement needs some explanation.

My position is that scientific research can yield universal truths or in a more acceptable phrasing: it can produce that kind of knowledge, which is the most durable and dependable knowledge conceivable. Because of the fallibility rule, the products of such knowledge will never be universal in the old, theological, sense of not-falsifiable or perennially true. But it will be stronger and more powerful than any competitor, precisely because it is always open to criticism. It is the aim of the scientific endeavour to produce that kind of dependable knowledge. Hence, it is the aim of scientific research not to be satisfied until 'universal knowledge' is reached.



Practically, this means that any test imaginable should be allowed at all times to be applied on a scientific result, in order to continuously scrutinize the universalistic status of the statement. This basic attitude combines the two principles, which are held to be each other's opposite in the theological tradition: we aim for universal truth, but we allow for a research attitude of heuristic relativism at the same time. No truth or knowledge is 'received' or sanctified at any time, and any statement can and should be put to the test at all times. The attitude needed for this complex mission is that of a healthy heuristic relativism, combined with a strife for universal truths. In that configuration there is no simple opposition or contradiction between relativism and universalism. Rather, there is a dynamic interrelationship between both: universalism is a distant but persistent aim, and relativism arms the researcher with the necessary attitude of doubt and criticism. This is an argument which is only empirically sustainable. It might hence not be taken aboard by many philosophers, because it refuses to be satisfied with a normative epistemological stand. It grants an important value to contingency and constraints. However, this is precisely the sort of argument I want to bring in here, stressing that a contextualized view on knowledge is more convincing than a decontextualized one.

## **Intercultural Skills**

When I plead for a naturalized or contextualized view on knowledge and then turn to the world of the present millennium, I automatically come to the concept of intercultural capacities and skills. Indeed, together with the tremendous expansion of urbanization in the world we witness an intense growth in religious and cultural diversity in the city areas. This entails that, unlike any period in history, the research communities are getting mixed as well and that our understanding of knowledge is held against the light of cultural differences. This is especially true in the social sciences and the humanities, where deep criticism has been building up over the past decades: 'orientalism' (referring to the exclusive textual and western biased view on religion, culture and knowledge: Said 1972), post-colonialism (adding the dimension of how get beyond the misrepresentation of other traditions: Mignolo 2000, De Munter 2004) and gender-sensitive study (Longman 2004) are only a few of the new critical perspectives on knowledge. I understand and advocate these perspectives at the epistemological level as further forms of 'naturalisation'.

Piaget and Kuhn were understood to open the road to a naturalisation of theory of knowledge: Piaget laid the foundations for the genetic psychological understanding of the growth of concepts and strategies of thinking in the child, explaining how they eventually yield the scientific theories and the types of logical reasoning in the adult scientist (Piaget 1950). Kuhn (1962) on the other hand placed the scientific researcher convincingly in his political-historical context, investigating to what extent contextual constraints impact on the concepts and theories, and most of all on the reception of research results. I hold that today we move one step beyond these positions in the naturalisation of epistemology and explore the impact of

cultural, gendered and post-colonial predicaments on concepts, theories, argumentation styles and learning formats on the process and the products of scientific research. This is no relativism, in my view. It is the recognition of the relevance of the subject of the researcher in the research. So, it is decidedly in opposition with the objectivistic view on knowledge, which is appreciated by me as an outgrowth of the former Christian theological view. The detached, purely objectifying and so-called neutral position of the logical positivist would be the last version of that particular format.

The so-called 'Methodenstreit' between positivists and phenomenologists lasted for a few decades, and was a vain attempt to prove objectivists of one or two branches (positivists and phenomenologists) right or wrong. Basically it was a barren struggle, yielding no genuine victor. In the social sciences and the humanities of today a deep revolutionary shift is taking place in the wake of the early naturalisation theories, I hold (Piaget, Kuhn and others: see Campbell 1989 and *Evolutionary Epistemology*: Callebaut & Pinxten 1987). This shift now leads to a few radically new epistemological stands. I mention two of them, which stand out to my mind.

Bourdieu (1972, 1981) set out to criticize positivism (in the disguise of structuralism, first and foremost) as well as phenomenology (in the form of 'participant observation' anthropology). His critique is epistemological first and methodological in the second place: neither of the two aforementioned 'trench positions' in the social sciences can get out of the unidirectional mode of thinking: both define the position of the researcher as a superior one, from which all decisions on relevance, object-construction and interpretation of data are taken. Both thus blatantly ignore the dependability of the researcher and of the results on the subject of research. Whether one 'objectifies' the other (making her into a foreign body like a stone or a microbe) or 'becomes the other' in order to 'study her from the inside' (through empathy, but neglecting one's own subjectivity and culturedness in the process), the impact of the subject of study is denied. One major problem here is that the 'double biasedness' of the research situation is naively ignored, yielding incontrollable, contradicting or misguided reports (Pinxten 1997). Bourdieu proposes to overcome this situation by recognizing the role of the subject of study in the research process: we develop a 'third' worldview in research, which is the product of praxiological analysis. That is, the researcher develops a dialectic relationship with the subject, by interiorising the data gathered about the external world (the way positivist and phenomenologists do), but exteriorizing one's interpretations and views immediately and repeatedly in a second movement. This process goes on and on, involving the subject in a deep and critical way. That is to say, the researcher and the subject are co-constituting the knowledge about the subject through this dialectical knowledge gathering process. Fabian's performative ethnography (Fabian 1990) is another and only slightly different form of this deep epistemological turn: the ethnographer learns to 'play along' with the subject under study by 'performing' with the latter in his or her cultural activities.

A second important shift can be linked first and foremost with the work of Clifford Geertz. His research went beyond the so-called struggle between objectivists

(positivists and phenomenologists) by promoting a synthesis of both. Geertz initiated what is sometimes called the 'hermeneutic turn': he worked in biological anthropology and made deep contributions to the social and cultural anthropology of the agricultural tradition on Java. Through his acquaintance with Islam in Indonesia and Morocco he then decided that the study of symbolic action in humans more attention, which he introduced by emphasizing the role of interpretation in cultural analysis. In ethnographic studies (Geertz 1971 with the famous text on Balinese cockfights) and in comparative anthropological treatises (Geertz 1983 with the famous text on comparison of local juridical systems) he paved the way for the 'hermeneutic' line of research in anthropology, in conjunction with other approaches. So, in his work, the 'Verstehende' line of research goes hand in hand with the analysis of state or the description of material culture. He thus showed how an integral approach combines the strong points of the opposing schools of thought in the 'Methodenstreit', while overcoming at the same time the handicap of their exclusive foci.

The importance of these two lines of epistemological renovation in the social sciences and the humanities (both Bourdieu and Geertz have a wide audience, spanning over several disciplines) is that they redefine epistemological boundaries in the way I hinted at above: the object of study is delineated as the multifaceted interaction itself between researcher and subject of research. That is to say, the subjectivities of both parties are recognized and 'science' is then seen as the methodical exploration, both descriptive and comparative, of that interaction with the aim to reach the most dependable mutually negotiated knowledge possible. We are indeed a couple of steps removed from the exclusive positions of the positivist or the phenomenologist. The relevance of both path-breaking authors for the present discussion is that they put the subject of the researcher unmistakably in the centre of the research process and develop basic methodological principles and rules of conduct to safeguard the scientific status of the knowledge gained. Once the subject of the researcher is allowed in the epistemology, I claim, the features of the subject in the interaction process of knowledge gathering and building become an issue. In my interpretation, this involves that one has to take a conscious and deliberated stand on the type of interaction the researcher is likely to engage in. It is here that I choose for an intercultural perspective. The rejection of the unidirectional views of the 'Methodenstreit' thus yields a possible opening for interculturality in the research design, and is not only an intra-cultural matter (which it was up to and including Popper's critiques).

Returning to the point of this contribution one last time, it will be clear that these innovating approaches are moreover better adapted to the new predicament than their exclusivist forerunners: when the world in general and the contexts of the home towns in particular are changing towards life spaces where urbanity and diversity (at the cultural, linguistic and religious level) become dominant (Pinxten & Dikomitis 2006), then approaches to social sciences and the humanities which address interculturality at the epistemological level are likely to be more adequate than the unidirectional researcher-centred approaches of the

inter-bellum. Moreover, it is clear when adopting such an intercultural perspective on the subject-matter that the mutual exclusivity of the universalism versus relativism stand dissipates at the same time. The mechanisms which shape interculturality or intercultural capabilities may be many. I will only focus on learning procedures, since they are considered by me to be of primary impact (Pinxten et al. 2004).

## **The Learning Citizen**

What could be the societal impact of such a shift in epistemological positions? In the unidirectional perspectives on knowledge of positivists and phenomenologists alike, the subjects under study did not really enter in the process of knowledge gathering, since they were not allowed in. Their role was that of the passive object of study (for the positivist) or the passive subject (thereby rendered into an object, for the phenomenologist). In the praxiological and in the complex hermeneutical approaches mentioned above, the subject of the researcher enters into interaction with the subjects under study in the very process of knowledge gathering. The latter becomes a process of communal knowledge production or co-building. The very notion of 'subject' as in 'subject under study' is dramatically changed by this perspective on knowledge: the subject becomes of a sudden a learning subject. That is the case because (s)he is involved in a continuous and bidirectional process of observation, conversation, selection, interpretation, theoretisation, testing and modelling. It is this change of position and status which allows for the engagement in intercultural relationships, so needed in the new predicament of the urbanised world. Not surprisingly a focus on the citizen of the future allows a lot of room for learning processes, since the citizen and the scientist alike are involved as interacting subjects in the world they are living in. that is to say, they cannot 'hide' anymore behind the safe wall of 'truth' with an objective status. Rather, they are involved in the interactive processes of knowledge building as subjects. Hence, it is inescapable for them to learn to interact and communicate across cultural borders. The few models of intercultural learning we have so far are still of a poorly developed status. The perspective has only just started and may need several decades to mature. Nevertheless I can mention what look like promising approaches so far: in the first synthesis of a 'cultural psychology' since Wundt's *Völkerpsychologie* Cole (1996) develops a genuine learning theory which implies the (inter)cultural context of the subject. Likewise, Pinxten and Verstraete (2004) developed a model on identity processes for the citizen in intercultural settings. Furthermore, the intercultural perspective on social psychology is taking shape in this decade (Dasen, Platinga & Segall 2005). I think it is fair to say that no 'mainstream' theory has emerged already, and that the necessary weeding and testing procedures have to be gone into now.

## Conclusion

In this contribution I showed how the dichotomy of universalism versus relativism is too much vested in the western (theologically inspired) tradition of epistemology to stand the test of time. Through the revolutionary developments in social sciences and the humanities of the 1980s of the past century, a major shift in epistemology is taking shape and allows for a bidirectional process of knowledge building, which is more in phase with the urbanized and diversity-laden life of the present citizen-knower.

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