



ESCUELA INTERNACIONAL DE FILOSOFÍA INTERCULTURAL
INTERNATIONALE SCHULE FÜR INTERKULTURELLE PHILOSOPHIE
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL FOR INTERCULTURAL PHILOSOPHY
ÉCOLE INTERNATIONALE DE PHILOSOPHIE INTERCULTURELLE

CONCORDIA

Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie • Revista Internacional de Filosofía
Revue Internationale de Philosophie • International Journal of Philosophy

Intercultural Philosophy: An Anthology of Texts

Digital Edition
© 2021 EIFI

CONTENTS

Editor's Note	3
Bianca Boteva-Richter	5
HARMONY AND JUSTICE ON THE NECESSITY OF INTERSUBJECTIVE JUSTICE TO CREATE AND ESTABLISH HARMONY	
Choe, Hyondok	23
MIGRATION, GENDER, TRANSCULTURALITY – PHILOSOPHIZING BETWEEN CULTURES	
Edward Demenchonok	43
RETHINKING CULTURAL DIVERSITY: INTERCULTURAL DISCOURSE AND TRANSCULTURE	
Edward Demenchonok	73
DISCUSSIONS ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND INTERCULTURALISM IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA	
Vincent Gabriel Furtado	113
THE CONCEPT OF POWER IN HINDUISM	
Vincent G. Furtado	127
SOUTH-SOUTH INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE FROM INDIAN PERSPECTIVE	
Jorge J.E. Gracia	137
INTERPRETATION, TEXTS, AND INTER-CULTURAL STUDIES AN INTERVIEW	
Rainier A. Ibane	151
HYBRIDITY AS A TRANSVERSAL VIRTUE	

J. Obi Oguejiofor SELF IMAGE AND DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY	159
J. Obi Oguejiofor JUST WAR THEORY VERSUS HUMAN RIGHTS: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE	171
Wale Olajide YORUBA EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY AND GENEALOGY	185
Olatunji A. Oyeshile HUMANISTIC CULTURAL UNIVERSALISM AS A VERITABLE BASIS FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT	195
Fred Poché GLOBALIZATION, DE-TERRITORIALIZATION AND CITIZENSHIP	213
Mayra Rivera CARNAL CORPOREALITY: TENSIONS IN CONTINENTAL AND CARIBBEAN THOUGHT	219
Héctor Samour LIBERATION AND INTERCULTURALITY	231
Rolando Vázquez QUESTIONING PRESENCE: THE SURVIVAL OF THE PAST IN WALTER BENJAMIN AND HANNAH ARENDT	245

Editor's Note

With this selection of texts, *Concordia, International Journal of Philosophy*, offers the English-speaking reader a series of articles regarding various aspects of the current intercultural challenges, from a diversity of experiences and contexts.

The original texts were published in different Concordia Journals between the years 200 and 2020.

This digital re-edition has the intention of contributing to an international and intercultural interchange.

Bianca Boteva-Richter (Vienna)

HARMONY AND JUSTICE
ON THE NECESSITY OF INTERSUBJECTIVE JUSTICE TO CREATE AND
ESTABLISH HARMONY¹

“Harmony” and “justice” are well-known and well-elaborated concepts, which, however, are each subject to differing connotations in varying philosophical cultures.

But while “justice” is at first glance associated with human existence, “harmony” is chiefly differentiated as being cosmic or divine. Thus, it is usually assumed that they are not interwoven, interrelated, or linked with each other, respectively. In this article, an attempt is now made to explain why harmony both between people and between humans and the divine cannot be established without justice.

But before any such connection can be presented, it must first be described how “harmony” is differentiated in various cultures of thought and what is meant by “justice” as it is understood in various interpretations.

“Harmony” is, especially in the philosophical cultures of East Asia, an important concept that permeates the whole of thinking and decisively shapes the history of philosophy. For example, in the different schools of thought in Japan and China many philosophical concepts exist under the heading of harmony, i.e. the harmonious coexistence between the people or under the heavens, which directs related thought in certain directions and positions subsequent content.

But not only in East Asia is the term “harmony” of decisive and difficult importance. In European thinking, too, we find a thread of reflection, which is spun in terms of “harmony” and stretches into thinking today. *The Historical Dictionary of Philosophy*, edited by Joachim Ritter, attempts to subsume this concept, which is different in meaning, as a “connection through interlocking (intermeshing) and, as a result, adjustment of a whole, unity in the multiplicity of a whole”².

This interpretation, that is, unity in multiplicity, which already arose among the Pythagoreans on account of their resonating strings in music production, has been worked out even more clearly in East Asian philosophy, and especially that of China. However, for some European thinkers, starting with the

¹ Translated by James Garrison

² Ritter, Joachim: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 3: G-H, Basel: Schwabe Co. Verlag 1974, p. 1002.

Pythagoreans, harmony is not only a concordance of the one and the many, but also an activity needed to protect the purity of the soul from the danger of being polluted by the sensual, in order to preserve the body³, with the mentioned elaboration of the interaction of the parts and the whole appearing to me to be a particularly important aspect. For this elaboration of the term bridges Eastern and Western thought by sketching an interaction of unity and difference, transforming the individual parts into a whole, then conversely splitting them up, and then linking and later balancing these individual parts. “Harmony” can thus be understood as meaning that the difference can become unity through harmony and that unity can be reconciled by difference⁴.

But this very general initially established finding, being based on musical investigations and medical presentations, there soon followed practical application. For example, the Pythagoreans saw harmony as another important aspect of human behavior; a lifestyle of solidarity is to be cultivated as an “ideal of friendship and brotherhood for all people”⁵.

This idea of solidarity is, as to a certain extent, positioned amongst the heavens and the many, as an eternal cycle of conflict, where harmony emerges as the determining factor in the connections amongst humans and in the connections between humans and heaven (the cosmos)⁶.

Cultivating the self as a fundamental, constitutive tone of harmony is very important to the Pythagoreans and is experienced as a “culture of the soul and mind,” which is constantly worked upon and advanced to a higher level through asceticism, mental exercises, ethical self-reflection and indeed also physical exercise, and renewed through tireless effort⁷. This activity of self-cultivation is also to be found a little later among Confucian thinkers; and there it plays an even more important role, both in promoting refinement of the individual, and in regulating relationships between humans and the heavens.

Another prominent manifestation of the term cannot be withheld—and this comes from Leibniz, with his elaboration of pre-established harmony. His concept is so prominent that it has to be mentioned, albeit briefly, even if its exposition veers far from the intended poising of the problem. As early as 1695, Leibniz regularly used the term “harmony” and interpreted it ontologically and phenomenally. In its first interpretation, he focuses on the “communication of substances among each other”⁸ and refers to “the regulation of the relationship

³ Hirschberger, Johannes: *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Band I: Altertum und Mittelalter, Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Verlag Herder 1991, p. 24.

⁴ See Ritter: p. 1001.

⁵ Hirschberger: p. 24.

⁶ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 25-26.

⁷ Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 24ff.

⁸ Ritter, p. 1002.

of monad and monad”⁹ by God himself. In the phenomenal elaboration Leibniz becomes clearer as he maintains that “[t]he series of representations of the soul and that of the movements of the body” are “like two independent (yet coordinated) clock, where God is the chief watchmaker. They correspond not only in their sequence, but also in their intensity, the clarity of the perceptions, which depends on the power of the movement”¹⁰. God, as concertmaster of matter and souls, as well as of the whole cosmos, directs, arranges, and coordinates the movements of the monads, their intensity and sequence, and thus determines from the highest point the sequence, which runs uniformly and without any irregularity.

But why is Leibniz mentioned, albeit briefly, if his monadology bears no direct connection to the conclusions intended here? There are two strands of thought that owe to Leibniz, and which appear in another paper in this article: first, there is the notion of harmony as being due to God’s intervention, or rather, God’s pre-established perfection that allows monads to act in perfect coordination. This therefore stands as the presupposition of God as the cause of harmony, which later appears as an important connection between God and humanity in another train of thought. And secondly, there is the correspondence of relationships or connections, not only in their sequence, but also in their intensity, which are equally important in another context¹¹. In Leibniz’s thinking, therefore, there is the Greek idea of wholeness, where “wholeness...is especially manifest in the realm of the living.”¹², and to continue, “All nature without exception is an infinitely wonderful work of art, because everything fits into the harmony of the whole”¹³.

But the idea of cosmos, strategies of brotherhood or solidarity, self-cultivation, as well as the concordance of the parts and the whole are not only reflected in European thinking. In many non-European thought systems, such as those found in India, China and Japan, “harmony” is sometimes represented or focused more on philosophical terms. There are a number of well-represented philosophical schools, where the term “harmony” is an important key concept, which in turn serves as a basis for other concepts, connecting them together or helping them to differentiate them.

In Chinese philosophy, especially in the “Book of History of the States” (*Guo Yu* 國語) but also for Kong Zi 孔子¹⁴ “Harmony” *he* (和) is interpreted

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ See Hirschberger, p. 156.

¹² See Leibniz, *Monadology*: § 64, 70, cited by Hirschberger, p. 158.

¹³ Hirschberger, p. 158.

¹⁴ This is the contemporary rendering of “Confucius.”

as the “compatible unification of diversity in a whole” and the difference between “Wholeness/identity” or “*tong*” (同) and “multiplicity/harmony” or “*he*” (和), which is even applied as a moral principle, differentiating noble and “common” attitudes¹⁵.

Even more important, however, is the term “harmony” as it serves as the basis for the unity/connection between heaven and humanity, as encapsulated in the notion “*tian ren he yi*” (天人合一)^{16 17}. Here there exists another “*he*” (合), and in the interpretation of harmony this sign represents a dialectical “unity, which [is] a fusion of two things, which must first be well differentiated”¹⁸. This dialectical unity, which brings together the multiplicity of heaven and the people living below stands for the “great unity” and can be understood as the “plurality in the unity” of all things. It regulates the position of humanity in the cosmos¹⁹ and refers to the Confucian mandate of the heavens (*tianming* 天命), which orders things from top to bottom hierarchically²⁰. Moreover, it also “recasts” interpersonal relationships as governed by (仁) humanity. For in this “heavenly mandate,” the heavens act according to ethical standards and are generally purpose-directed. In that sense, the heavens are calculable for man and influenced by virtue”²¹.

According to Confucius, “*Ren*” (仁) or humanity is, “the potential creativity of the human person through cultivation of which the human person can be transformed and perfected. In fact, *ren* is both the initial value of human perfection and the ideal of perfection of humanity in which all other values or virtues will be achieved.... Confucius says that: If I desire *ren*, *ren* is within my reach”²². In Confucianism, then, humanity is something that is not innate or that is instilled by the family, i.e. not a property that comes from outside and that is only received and used by us as human beings. On the contrary, humanity is a value that can be achieved through self-cultivation and self-activity, and it is

¹⁵ Geldsetzer, Lutz, Hong, Han-ding: *Chinesische Philosophie. Eine Einführung*, Stuttgart: Reclam Universal Bibliothek 2008, 142ff.

¹⁶ The symbols mean: heavens, humanity, unite, one.

¹⁷ Roetz, Heiner: *Mensch und Natur im alten China: zum Subjekt-Objekt-Gegensatz in der klassischen chinesischen Philosophie; zugleich eine Kritik des Klischees vom chinesischen Universalismus*, Frankfurt a.M./New York: Peter Lang 1984, p. 111.

¹⁸ Geldsetzer, Hong, p. 143.

¹⁹ See Roetz, p. 111.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 119 ff.

²¹ Ibid., p. 127.

²² Cheng, Chung-ying: “A Theory of Confucian Selfhood: Self-Cultivation and Free Will in Confucian Philosophy”, In Elberfeld, Rolf, Kreuzer, Johann, Minford, John, Wolfahrt, Günther (Ed.): *Komparative Philosophie. Begegnungen zwischen östlichen und westlichen Denkwegen*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag 1998, p. 57.

achieved at the end of a successful effort. For Confucius as well humans are self-acting subjects, who, to a certain extent, influence their fate, but who can receive help from the heavens through the mandate of the heavens. This mandate seeks to promote good in the world and minimize evil by applying the virtues of justice, equality, freedom, and brotherhood as emanating from the ruler to the subjects. In this way the world can be established as a “kingdom of humanity”²³. Justice on earth or “[a]ll in the human world ought to be due to the person as such”²⁴, but relations between people are not understood as a purely intersubjective matter. Rather, they are formed and regulated as relationships between the heavens and people, with the heavens as a kind of overseer (via the heavenly mandate).

All these questions and theses of Chinese Confucianism are well thought out and presented, such that they began their triumphal procession across national borders into Japan, having been adopted by various thinkers and carried on in a slightly different form.

In Japan, the term “harmony” or “*wa*” (和)²⁵ has an important, indeed a central role. “*Wa*,” however, broadened in its meaning here and now connotes more than being merely harmonious, peaceful, getting along (和する), and so forth. “*Wa*” stands for Japan or being Japanese, this being seen also in everyday usage, such as Japanese language and culture, Japanese teaching (*wagaku* 和学) etc. What this important term for the Japanese thinking means is described by Japanese researcher Lydia Brüll and quoted after the well-known thinker and founder of the Yomei school, Nakae Toji. According to him “*wa*” describes “Realized self-existence...because all things and circumstances find their appropriate place in a comprehensive harmony”²⁶. The Yomei school is one of two main Confucian strands that took root in Japan and underwent a genuine intellectual development. The first school, the already mentioned *Yomeigaku*, is based on the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Wang Yangming (Oyomei),²⁷ with the second important Confucian school being the so-called Shushi School (*Shushigaku*). The course of their thinking follows that of the Chinese philosopher and Confucianist system-building Zhu Xi (Shushi), who renewed Confucianism through his own interpretation of the classics. The “different philosophies of his immediate predecessors... [through him underwent] a new

²³ Geldsetzer, Hong, p. 91ff.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ The same symbol is read in Japanese in a different manner, whereby the meaning is retained.

²⁶ Brüll, Lydia: *Die japanische Philosophie. Eine Einführung*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1993, p. 83.

²⁷ This school was founded in China by Chu Hsi and started appr. 1313. Wang Yang Ming (Oyomei) was one of the most famous philosophers of this school.

evaluation”²⁸. The embedding of the term “harmony” in Japan as a human practice and order of norms for a successful, good and just way of people, nature, and cosmos co-existing is therefore part of this tradition of thought. Here above all the term *jin* (仁)²⁹, consisting of the characters “person” and “two,” plays an important role. It “means etymologically, ‘a human in community.’ All Confucians ground themselves on this root meaning of harmonious coexistence and co-humanity, even if their particular interpretations have nuances...The most common renderings are kindness, benevolence, love, compassion, co-humanity, and humaneness”³⁰.

But “*jin*” (仁) is more than just the production or cultivation of certain norms and values. “On the level of the cycle of life, *jin* represents the mental-spiritual constitution that makes a person human and to which the other forces of action exist in a functional relationship. It concerns the basic voices which themselves are to be drawn into the prevailing universal harmony...Therefore, ‘*jin*’ is understood by the scholars as dynamic and crucial for development”³¹.

Harmony, then, is directly brought into connection with the qualities or values, and indeed those that make one human. With this comes a dynamic, unfolding activity that not only serves for self-cultivation of the individual, but also benefits society by perfecting people and ultimately striving for unity with heavens/cosmos. This balance, i.e. the desired “harmonious” connection between heavens and humanity, must not be disturbed (by disharmony), because it controls the balance between body and soul and ensures ethical adherence to Confucian principles. These qualities of the connection being undisturbed or uninterrupted between heavens and humanity are essential and important, because “a person is bound...from birth to cosmic law”³² and this makes it possible for “matter-energy [to give] corporeality (*kata*, *kei*, *shin*) to the person, including the mental-spiritual realm (*shin*) with the functions of thinking, feeling and willing”³³.

In these brief outlines of Confucian ideas on “harmony,” we already see some parallels or overlaps with the previously mentioned European conceptual frameworks.

And so, in this manner “harmony” can therefore be subsumed as follows and would be sketched out as follows. Harmony is:

²⁸ Brüll, p. 63.

²⁹ The Japanese reading for the same symbol for “humaneness.”

³⁰ Brüll, p. 75.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., p. 74.

³³ Ibid.

- a concordance that regulates plurality and unity as a conformity of the individual parts within a structured whole
- an active sequence that determines the intensity of connections and separates the undisturbed (harmonic) from the disturbed (disharmonic) flow within these relationships
- a determination of the connection or relationship between different types of (human) being and between human being and God (likewise also different in intensity)
- something given to people by God or the divine/cosmos, which runs the risk of being destroyed and should therefore be striven for, preserved, or restored
- one of the most important tasks of people, which, through self-cultivation and active application of virtues, harmony between humanity and the divine is to be established
- something dependent on justice and a sense of humaneness.

However, as has already mentioned, “harmony” can be disturbed or even destroyed by negative influences from without, in particular by certain disharmonious interpersonal actions. Such actions may include, for example, unfair treatment, egoism and inhumanity in interaction between or against others, which subsequently lead to disturbed or dysfunctional connections between people and the divine. But even before these disturbances can be clarified or dealt with, we need to briefly discuss a few explanatory paradigms of justice in order to explain the meaning of just actions for harmony (or its dysfunction).

According to the historical lexicon Ritter presumes justice to be “an always-grounded mutual relationship of partners, according to the peculiarity thereof, the lawfulness of the relationship develops”³⁴. This is the important notion to which most Euro-American philosophers—from Aristotle to Thomas Aquinas, to Kant, to Hegel, and up to and beyond John Rawls—have dedicated themselves, having more or less adhered to this brief definition.

For Aristotle, for example, the term “justice” is so important that he devotes a whole book to it within his *Nicomachean Ethics*. On the one hand, he understands it as a perfect virtue that embraces other values, but on the other hand as a single virtue. For it is a “total virtue...only insofar as it orders behavior with fellow people, being related to others” (Ritter: 330). As an individual virtue, it appears “depending on whether it is the exchange of goods and contracts or whether distribution within a community is abandoned. In both instances the principle of equality [must] be applied”³⁵.

³⁴ Ritter, p. 330.

³⁵ Ibid.

For Aristotle, then, justice is not an absolute “goodness of character (*arete teleia*)”, “but [occurs] in relation to the other person (*pros heteron*). Therefore, righteousness is often considered to be the most important of virtues, and neither the evening star nor the morning star is so wonderful.”³⁶ In any case, it is a perfect characteristic goodness when “one who possesses it possesses the virtues also in relation to other people, and not just for oneself”³⁷.

Aristotle thus pays attention to reciprocity in respective actions when it comes to illuminating justice in exchange. For him, however, it is not just fair for everyone to do the same thing³⁸. For this would mean that even unjust acts should be recompensed to the same extent and with equal resources. This may serve to establish balance for the unit of measure or in the exchange of goods, but it does not achieve justice by distributing injustice equally³⁹.

But what we are particularly interested in is the concept of justice as an interaction with other people, which makes something of these people or puts them in certain situations, has consequences for them, etc. This relates to dynamics that take place between people (and between people and the heavens) that are either fair or unfair or that bear or reveal such character being explained shortly thereafter by the example and the presentation of an extended existence.

For John Rawls justice is also an important term, one to which he dedicated his important work *Theory of Justice*. He wrote, “Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust. Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override...Being first virtues of human activities, truth and justice are uncompromising”⁴⁰

The philosophical dictionary, which propagates socialist ideas of justice, writes on the matter: “For the working class and allied working people, justice ultimately expresses the demand for fundamentally equal social conditions and opportunities for the free and all-encompassing development of the personality of all working people”⁴¹.

³⁶ Aristoteles: *Nikomachische Ethik*, Usula Wolf (Hg.), Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag ⁴2013, p. 162.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See Aristoteles, p. 172.

³⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 172ff.

⁴⁰ Rawls, John: *A theory of justice*, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press 2001, pp. 3-4.

⁴¹ Klaus, Georg und Buhr, Manfred: *Philosophisches Wörterbuch*. Band 1. A-K. 13. Auflage. Berlin: Verlag das Europäische Buch 1985, p. 456.

In these different formulations of justice, however, a common thread in these interpretations is visible: justice is a virtue that does not thrive or can be made to exist by itself. It is social and is realized or applied in an intersubjective relationship. Although it can be created or cultivated in a single individual, it is not exercised by or on its own (Aristotle also argues along these lines when he says that there cannot be injustice to oneself).

Justice, then, is manifested in activities between people, revealed in intersubjective relationships through righteous or unjust actions, which in turn influence the connection between individuals and the unity of being.

Even in Confucianism, the concept of justice is not entirely unknown. There it stands in close contact with the mandate of the heavens or in the equivalent of the heavens and humanity. Meng Zi 孟子⁴² (372-289 BC) “‘democratized’⁴³, the idea of the supremacy of the Son of Heaven and extended the ‘community of sages’ to all people. A person is good as such by nature, and what a person has in oneself is a dowry of heaven”⁴⁴. This facility for goodness of the person belongs above all to humaneness (*ren*) and justice (*yi*)⁴⁵, the latter also counts among “the four agents” in Japanese Shushigaku⁴⁶. These forces are important because they uphold the cause of life and “mental-spiritual and ethical laws”⁴⁷.

Therefore, what justice represents or causes can be summarized as:

- something dependent on a sense of humaneness
- based on the same distribution of goods, social benefits, etc.
- the center of the individual social action and thus ensures order in the world
- requiring ethical behavior both from individuals and from society/the state
- given from the heavens to the people and should be therefore maintained through self-cultivation and actively used in relationships
- the first and necessary virtue of human activities

But even though I have endeavored to cite different interpretations of justice, for many, if not almost all, the talk is of Euro-American definitions of goods, ownership and its corresponding distribution, social and other benefits, as

⁴² This is the contemporary rendering of “Mencius.”

⁴³ This is to establish an equality with the idea of Confucius.

⁴⁴ Geldsetzer, Hong, p. 58.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴⁶ The four agents are: humaneness (*jin*), righteousness/justice (*gi*), ritual decorum (*rei*), and wisdom (*chi*). Additionally a fifth agent comes later: truthfulness (*shi*) (Brüll 75).

⁴⁷ Brüll, p. 75.

well as of laws that govern individual ownership and that regulate its possession/robbery. These conceptualizations attest, especially in the case of Rawls, that justice is predominantly supposed to exist in the relationship between individuals and therefore the legal anchoring of this understanding should govern, monitor, or punish a fair or unfair distribution. Aristotle also argues that it is unfair or just by the willful or unintentional execution of acts through the examples of individuals A, B, C, and D. Although he writes in a subchapter on political justice that it is still considered a type of justice to be understood as occurring between individuals (citizens) and a higher individual (ruler/tyrant). The state or its representative are poised as executors of the laws, and as existing for the fair distribution or punishment for unjust acts. To ensure social coexistence, there is the law that “persists among people...for their mutual relationships...For the law is the distinction between the just and the unjust”⁴⁸.

Thus it also comes to be that Rawls arrives at an individualistic stance, which grants the individual stronger rights and seeks to protect them.

This individuated portrayal of justice cannot be readily applied in an intercultural context, or where we are dealing with a different understanding of being. For in intercultural philosophy there are good reasons for working with multiple concepts for the subject, which also entail different definitions of justice, humanity, human rights, etc. In realms of thought outside of Europe and North America, there are quite different elaborations of the subject that do not have purely individualistic character traits but consider further extended dimensions of human existence.

I have been working for many years with such an alternative subject model, namely that of human-being-in-between or “ningen” (人間), as elaborated by the Japanese philosopher Tetsuro Watsuji⁴⁹, and have even applied it as an attempt at explicating existence in the mode of migration. The well-known researcher Lydia Brüll writes on “ningen”: “Watsuji addresses the problem of ethics in two main respects: among concrete spatio-temporal structures as the

⁴⁸ See Aristoteles, p. 178.

⁴⁹ Tetsuro Watsuji (personal name, family name) lived from 1889 to 1960 and was one of the most well-known ethicists in Japan. He originally belonged to the circle known as the Kyoto School until he went to the University of Tokyo. He was a distinguished connoisseur of his own culture and philosophy as well as the history of European philosophy. His approach to cultural philosophy were used by nationalist forces before and during World War II, for he himself composed a pamphlet during the Pacific war proclaiming a special Japanese self-consciousness. Watsuji later publicly apologized for his statements. Cf. Yasuo Yuasa: “Kiyoshi Miki und Tatsuro Watsuji in der Begegnung mit der Philosophie Martin Heideggers”, In: *Japan und Heidegger*, Ed. H. Buchner, Sigmaringen, Germany: Thorbecke Verlag 1989, p. 75.

environment and the shared world in which a person understands and represents oneself, and among the concrete structure of humane-ethical relations.”⁵⁰

According to this model of existence, people are involved in a multiplicity of networks. Here it is possible to be simultaneously a wife, mother, daughter, colleague, and/or citizen. Different loyalties are given simultaneously, but are lived out in different directions depending on the intensity. If I am at the same time a daughter and a colleague, the relationship direction in the workplace is stronger or more intense with my colleagues and supervisors than with my parents, which means that I behave as a colleague and not as a daughter in my job. On the one hand, the reciprocity of the connections—their interlocking and respective foci—determine the intensity of the respective connections. On the other hand, they enable multiple and simultaneous loyalties which play an important role—especially in migration—through expanding or reflecting of the nexus of existence.

It is also thanks to this multiple networking that, according to Watsuji, a person is at the same time individual and society. In our human mode of being, society is formed by connecting with other people through language, emotional interconnections, through making tools and cultural artefacts, as well as through common religion or cultural praxis. This social side is connective and empathic, but it cannot take over unilateral rule in us, for then we would dissolve as individuals, we would become faceless or “man,” as Heidegger says. Thus, the social side in us must be negated, with the individual side appearing more in the foreground. However, this cannot always be leading things, because the human individual cannot live for and by itself, as an individual in isolation. So once again this side is negated in us and the social aspect once again emerges stronger.

In this model of existence, therefore, the individual characteristics of humans, such as character traits, aspects of work, education, language, spirituality, etc. are closely interwoven with social aspects such as general social and cultural practices, general religious practice, the general and connecting language of the social environment, working conditions and/or laws etc. And precisely through and in these correlative interlockings of the connections of existence, justice or injustice, harmony or disharmony become manifest in a particularly obvious way. If the alignment of the connections or the respective foci is disturbed or interrupted by injustice, disharmony occurs in the respective connections. This disharmony does not only affect one strand of the alignment, because of the multiply networked interconnection, several areas of existence are affected and thus suffer similarly unjust or disharmonious consequences. This is the case, for example, when a woman can no longer be a daughter, or a

⁵⁰ Brüll, p. 150.

mother, or a colleague, and has to live her life from a certain point in time in a function other than this original orientation. This situation often occurs in the case of migration, when migration and change in the living environment focuses on new aspects of existence and the roles within the network of existence are not infrequently reversed.⁵¹

Here the inside and outside, the individual and the social interconnection are sketched out and the extent of the correlativity of the relations is shown. For the individual-social structure of existence consists, according to this model of existence, always in whether people spend their lives in their ancestral social environment or migrate, willingly or unwillingly. "... when people migrate they take themselves along. And they take themselves as intersubjectively networked beings as well as individual personalities. And so human existence expands, suffers breaches in old relationships (to loved ones left behind in the old homeland), and at once establishes new relationships and new alliances that enable living and situating oneself on new terrain. Through this polyphonic alignment multiple loyalties and intersubjective alignments are possible... This extended polyphonic existence counteracts the fixed attributions and fixed locations of existence as Turk, Serbian, and Syrian, and enables a bi- or even polynational life beyond geopolitical borders"⁵².

This is, as migration, as a fall from an originally familiar environment, fatefully reach into the assignment of existence connections. Migration partially rearranges, corrects, and/or interrupts them, for a long time or forever.

The example of so-called "care migration" of women from Eastern to Western Europe can be explicated or illuminated as such a development of existence. This has to do with just or unjust social-individual structures and causes disharmony in intersubjective connections. If mothers (and fathers) from Eastern Europe, for example, have to migrate to the richer countries of Western Europe in order to make a living for themselves and their families, it is, according to the idea of subject's extended existence, not the single individual as such whom is affected by the change in environment. If we understand human existence as an intercorrelated dialectical existence, all of the multiple connections are affected in a weaker or stronger way by this change. Here, the person is not understood as a single, solitary being, which is merely monadically linked to other human beings. The existence of women from Eastern Europe is lived out

⁵¹ This will be presented a bit later in the example of "care migration" from Eastern to Western Europe.

⁵² Boteva-Richter, Bianca: "Die Entgrenzung der Ethik oder die Frage nach den verlassenden Kindern", In: Bianca Boteva-Richter, Madalina Diaconu Hg.): *Grenzen im Denken Europas. Mittel- und Osteuropäische Ansichten*, Sammelband, Wien: new academic press 2017, p. 261f.

as a dialectical, individual-social, existence that is extended and mirrored in and through migration.

For on the one hand, migrating women as individuals and suffer first breaches in their own biography as women, as a nurse or as a doctor, as a Bulgarian-, Russian-, Ukrainian-speaker. On the other hand, they are interconnected with their loved ones, especially intimate with their children, with the parents, whom they often leave behind. Here they suffer breaches in their sociology that is so closely interlinked with the individual side of existence, such that a strict distinction between or decoupling of the two—individual and social—often seems impossible.

By migrating and entering a new, more or less familiar social environment, this existence is extended and takes on a new, additional form. Migrants learn a new language, sometimes complete additional training, learn the semantics of their new home and then form new alliances. These new alliances allow for the construction of a new home. But this homeland is of no “eternal value”, for the establishment of the new home and thus being newly situated depend on the intensity and quality of the interpersonal connections. Because “[T]he people who establish connections in different connotations, correct, interrupt or let them be revived, are those who, through this “involvement of the subject,” enable a subjectivation of place as perceived inner spatial consciousness, assigning location to existence and thus creating a home.”⁵³

However, a new home can hardly be established without the completeness of existence, i.e. without harmony in the respective connections of existence. Without their children, their partners, or the people who constitute and sustain the intimate inner world of existence, neither the old nor the new connections can be experienced in life as intact and harmonious, as just and authentic.

The researcher Anca Gheaus, reporting on the abandoned children of Romania, has written articles about such incompleteness and its consequences, and reported on their dramatic situation and their impact on both parents and society in the poorer countries of Eastern Europe.

“For the past several years, the headlines of Romanian newspapers have been telling stories of children missing their parents - usually mothers - who work abroad. Occasionally, one reads about children’s desperate acts as a consequence of what they perceived to be abandonment, or out of mere longing

⁵³ Boteva-Richter, Bianca: “Wieviel neue Heimat braucht der Mensch? Heimat und Heimatlosigkeit in und durch Migration,” In: *Concordia -Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, No 68, Aachen: Wissenschaftsverlag Mainz 2015, p. 5.

- as suicide notes explain.”⁵⁴ “The situation of those who migrate in order to take care of their employers’ children - the vast majority of them - is particularly painful. Their parenting their parents and their families, their parents and their families, and their relationship with each other and their children, sometimes their love is being transplanted into the country of immigration. When migrating mothers work as nannies, in relative social isolation, they may end up forging with children; these connections overwrite the emotional relationship with their own children.”⁵⁵

And: “The temporary migration of parents who cannot take their children with them involves moral harm, particularly the frustration of children’s developmental and emotional needs. [...] I argue that the moral issues raised by care drain are also issues of social justice and therefore call for rectification by the states involved.”⁵⁶

Here, two problems, theoretical and practical, become obvious: on the one hand, there is the theoretical, referring to how inadequate the European conception of the subject is, which illuminates the structure of existence only one-sidedly. It is focused on the individual aspects and its needs, thereby minimizing the social side of the being. On the other hand, practical, the constitution and transmission of injustice based on intersubjective connections. The injustice experienced by parents and their children, who have to overcome things in daily life separately from each other, is generated by the unequal financial distribution in the East and West and further distributed or extended through migration. The fragmentation of existence as a result of the unequal and unfair distribution of assets and financial resources culminates in the exploitation of future generations. In Eastern Europe, a whole generation grows up without parents and on the care of relatives, as grandparents, aunts, cousins, etc. By eliminating their own mother, the grandmother, the aunt or the uncle must take their place in the web of existence and take decisions for the physical and emotional care and for the future of the children. The result is a reversal of the existence of relationships, as a result of grandparents or aunts or uncles become parents, as well as from the older siblings. The original harmonic distribution of the existence connections is disturbed, the focus turned around and partially perverted. Examples such as injustice in the public sphere, the power gap between East and West, unequal distribution of income, etc., directly fragment existence, and new injustice in the private sphere, such as leaving children, parents, partners, and

⁵⁴ Gheaus, Anca: “Care drain: who should provide for the children left behind?”, In: *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 16, Taylor and Francis online 2011(<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2011.572425>) [02.08.2011], p. 1-23.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

others generates again. But that's not the end of suffering: Further injustice comes in the migration by everyday racism, restrictive legislation in the destination countries, which prevent a family reunification etc. This new injustice is further transported through the intersubjective connections as well as counteracted and fragmented the respective existence in its harmonious wholeness.

It can thus be subsumed that injustice in intersubjective connections caused by the disruptions in biography and sociography in migration, inhumanity, unjust experiences, broken narratives, etc. itself as a further consequence creates a dissonance in the functioning of the system intersubjective connections. Meanwhile, the narratives of migrants document and convey the dissonance that is expressed within human relationships, but generated by external conditions. These external conditions can be called tyranny, inequality in the distribution of financial resources, war, and persecution. Harmony or disharmony is thus an intersubjective matter as it relates to human acts and their interactivity. It can and often is, however, caused or generated by external social circumstances. Harmony and disharmony are thus constitutive parts of the individual-social aspects of existence.

But how can this intersubjective, individual-social harmony or disharmony affect the relationship or the connection between humans and the divine?

As already mentioned, it is not only Leibnitz or the Confucians who see the divine and the spiritual as a source of harmony. In other concepts as well, the relationship between God and/or the spiritual and humans is visible, extensively explored and explained. The themes and theses of Solovyov and Berdjaev stand as examples of this, along with those of the Japanese Kyoto School member, Nishitani.

Visibly, the connection can be once made using the example of “care migrants”. In migration, with distance of those whom they love, “care migrants” seek such a connection that minimizes injustice and again allows a harmonious alignment. They seek and find them by praying to God and seeking in their spiritual quest to achieve an inner stability that can grant them a perspective or at least some hope for the future. If anyone has been able to observe the women praying in the church or the mosque, who pray for their children, parents, and partners, the inner need and the search for higher and spiritual support can be recognized and understood as well. By expressing their spirituality and with their prayers women address their concerns and fears, their yearning and loneliness, their despair and hope, to a higher authority. Religious scholars have also in the meanwhile recognized and revalued the importance of prayer sites for migrants.

But here, in the act of prayer, especially in this intimate inner moment, praying women acquire strength. Here, through the intimacy of communion and

through the interconnection of the human and the divine, the concerns and consequences of flight and expulsion testify to disharmony in the world. And so, through prayer, this disharmony is transported from the human to the divine, thus giving testimony to injustice and disharmony in the world. This is an injustice and disharmony that contradicts the order originally established under the heavens and counteracts the perfect process. Therefore, only just relationships between human beings—humanity and solidarity with each other—will enable us to cultivate ourselves and a harmonious being-in-between—between humans themselves and between humans and the divine, as restoring the original order of the heavens and the people living thereunder.

Literature:

Aristoteles: *Nikomachische Ethik*, Usula Wolf (Hg.), Reinbeck bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag ⁴2013

Boteva-Richter, Bianca: “Die Entgrenzung der Ethik oder die Frage nach den verlassenden Kindern”, In: Bianca Boteva-Richter, Madalina Diaconu (Hg.): *Grenzen im Denken Europas. Mittel- und Osteuropäische Ansichten*, Sammelband, Wien: new academic press 2017, p. 257-271.

Boteva-Richter, Bianca: “Wieviel neue Heimat braucht der Mensch? Heimat und Heimatlosigkeit in und durch Migration”, In: *Concordia - Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, No 68, Aachen: Wissenschaftsverlag Mainz 2015, p. 3 -17

Brüll, Lydia: *Die japanische Philosophie. Eine Einführung*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1993

Cheng, Chung-ying: “A Theory of Confucian Selfhood: Self-Cultivation and Free Will in Confucian Philosophy”, In Elberfeld, Rolf, Kreuzer, Johann, Minford, John, Wolfahrt, Günther (Ed.): *Komparative Philosophie. Begegnungen zwischen östlichen und westlichen Denkwegen*, München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag 1998, p. 57.

Geldsetzer, Lutz, Hong, Han-ding: *Chinesische Philosophie. Eine Einführung*, Stuttgart: Reclam Universal Bibliothek 2008

Gheaus, Anca: “Care drain: who should provide for the children left behind?” In: *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 16, Taylor and Francis online 2011(<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13698230.2011.572425>) [02.08.2011]

Hirschberger, Johannes: *Geschichte der Philosophie*, Band I: Altertum und Mittelalter, Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Verlag Herder ¹⁴1991

Klaus, Georg und Buhr, Manfred: *Philosophisches Wörterbuch*. Band 1. A-K. 13. Auflage. Berlin: Verlag das Europäische Buch 1985

Rawls, John: *A theory of justice*, Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press 42001

Ritter, Joachim: *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 3: G-H, Basel: Schwabe Co. Verlag 1974

Heiner Roetz: *Mensch und Natur im alten China: zum Subjekt-Objekt-Gegensatz in der klassischen chinesischen Philosophie; zugleich eine Kritik des Klischees vom chinesischen Universalismus*, Frankfurt a.M./Ney York: Peter Lang 1984

Schirilla, Nausikaa: “Feminisierung der Migration und zurückgelassene Kinder. Diskurskritische und ethische Aspekte”. In: *polylog. Zeitschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren*, Bianca Boteva-Richter und Nausikaa Schirilla (Hg.), Wien: WiGiP 2013

Watsuji, Tetsuro: *Ethik als Wissenschaft vom Menschen*. Übersetzt von Hans Martin Krämer. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 2005 (Im Original: *Ningen no gaku toshite no rinrigaku*. Zenshu 19, Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten 2003)

Watsuji, Tetsuro: *Wastuji Tetsuros Rinrigaku. Ethics in Japan*. Translated by Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter, Albany – NY: State University of New York Press 1996

Choe, Hyondok (Berlin)

**MIGRATION, GENDER, TRANSCULTURALITY –
PHILOSOPHIZING BETWEEN CULTURES ***

1. Migration as the Challenge to Create a “Place of New Humanity”

Migration and the problems entwined with it require an urgent reconsideration in today’s society. Just recently in Germany there have been many immigrant-related cases that have made the newspaper headlines: the situation of extreme violence in a Hauptschule in Berlin-Neukölln, which brought the teachers to demand of the authority to close the school; the court case against a Kurdish youth who shot his sister because she had damaged the so-called honor of the family; the brutal attack of a German engineer originating from Ethiopia by right-wing extremists. The tragedy of the latter case – an example of ‘successful integration’ – dramatically illustrates how inaccessible or even helpless the ‘integration policy’ is in today’s reality.

While there are also migration cases of well-educated or wealthy people who are admitted legally and without any noticeable trouble, the overall squalor, tragedy and human rights violations of immigrants are increasing. One must also note that the fate of the affected people is in no way a private, merely coincidental matter, but a part of the man-made order of this world¹. It is obvious that today’s society needs to find a new way to facilitate a peaceful, communal and solidary cooperation.

Migration is neither a situation exclusive to one place or time, nor is it a new phenomenon – there were already stories of migration in the Old Testament. What is new is the following:

* This article is the translation and revision of the paper presented in German at the *UNESCO-Welttag der Philosophie* which was held at the University of Bremen in December 2005. (The revised paper in German was published in: Hans-Jörg Sandkühler (Hg.), 2008, *Philosophie,, wozu?*, Frankfurt/M., 349-368.)

¹ Fornet-Betancourt 2004, p. 12.

1. Within the context of globalisation – the worldwide spread of capitalistic economic systems, the expansion of a free market economy all over the world – migration has gained a new socio-economic significance as a ‘shift’ of manpower in the new international job market.
2. The amount of immigrants is increasing drastically and in unexpectedly high numbers. According to a 2002 statistic, migrants now make up three percent of the entire world population, which has doubled since the year 1975.²
3. There is also a detectable female tendency in the immigration phenomenon, as more and more women head out into the world. In 2000 the amount of migrant women in Asia outnumbered the amount of migrant men. This yields a new situation of the international gender division of labor, as well as new complexities under the patriarchal, ethnic and economically structured constellations of power.
4. The immigration policy takes on an increasingly important place in the policy of highly industrialised countries.³ It is paradoxical because on one hand it has been established that the worldwide circulation of goods, consolidation of communication and widespread disposability of highly developed transportation and transnational networks allow for a borderless ‘world society’. On the other hand, governments attempt to seal off their countries’ borders against migration.

Migration is one of the most important challenges of humanity today because it forces human beings to create a “place of new humanity”, wherein a culture of “living together (*convivance*)” with foreigners or strangers can develop.⁴ It also challenges philosophy: In view of the problems arising from the present *de facto* multicultural society, philosophy should ask the questions of fundamental values and ethical norms and debate topics such as ‘the hermeneutics of the stranger’, ‘dealing with the difference’, ‘conditions of dialogue’, ‘mutual recognition’ and ‘transcultural identity’. Philosophy should reveal hidden relationships and analyse factors for the construction of old and new world views and reconsider its

² Tshmanga 2004, p. 60.

³ Tshmanga 2004, p. 55.

⁴ The name of a section during a conference organized by *the Institute of Missiology missio* called “Migration and Interculturality. Theological and Philosophical Challenges” (Aachen, November 24-28, 2003). Cp. Fornet-Betancourt 2004.

value systems. Last but not least it should anticipatively and correctively engage in the foundation process of the society, in order to make possible a peaceable cohabitation with strangers.

I am writing this article from my own transcultural experiences and reflections, which also include the gender perspective. I will begin with my own actual experiences within the context of migration in Germany and will then discuss conceptions of national culture and multiculturalism, interculturalism and transculturalism. In doing so I will address the situation of migration in South Korea. The goal is to work on the development of a concept that could better describe and explain the contemporary problems as well as anticipate an adequate vision of a convivial society.

2. From My Biography

Of course I wanted to study the philosophy of Hegel, but there was a deeper subliminal reason why I came to Germany. The societal pressure to conform in my homeland was unbearable to me, arbitrated concretely in everyday life through both my schooling and parental upbringing. My parents did their best to provide me with a good education, something I know to cherish, but perhaps for this reason I started to feel my progressively narrowing limitations.

There were three sorts of limitations in particular. Firstly, in South Korea at the time there was an extreme, anti-communist military dictatorship in power under which freedom of knowledge had no place. The second limitation has to do with the evangelical-, fundamental-, pietistic-, ascetic-influenced Christian culture of my family. Pop music, romance novels and romance films were not allowed; censorship even extended to rules regulating clothing and hairstyle. The third limitation was the patriarchal surveillance that aimed to protect or preserve virginal celibacy until a girl's wedding day. Any opportunity that could have offered any chance for the daughter to lose her virginity (also included were student activities or happenings that required staying overnight) had to be prohibited. The preservation of her celibacy was more important than creative development of her personality. (Although my parents were not altogether uncritical of the military dictatorship, they tried as hard as they could to keep me from being involved in the student movement against it. One reason was their fear of sexual torture to which their daughter could have been exposed.)

These limits were additionally backed by the Confucian and Christian commandment, “Honour thy father and thy mother”, which was interpreted as, “Obey your parents”.

I wanted to go beyond these severe constraints and extend the breadth of my world; to let myself evolve in a more open space. In order to do that, I needed my freedom and above all distance, or to be distanced, from my parents. I overstepped the geographical boundary and moved to Germany.

When I had first come to Germany (Frankfurt/Main), the people with whom I made my first friendships were coincidentally the ones who, in the late 1960s-early 1970s, had all been actively involved in the student movements – the so-called '68 Generation. Their ideas, their experiences with emancipatory movements and more than anything their critical knowledge, something that had always been withheld from me, had fascinated me. I had also really liked that their movement was not only focused on the changing the system on a political level, but had also spoke out against the authoritarian, patriarchal culture. It had impressed me that they had actually carried out many experiments in real life, whether it was anti-authoritative education or sexual revolution – regardless of the evaluation of its significance today.

I felt that I had discovered the ‘home’ I had once longed for in my own country. When my German friends asked me whether I wasn’t homesick, it embarrassed me at the time, for I was not homesick but enjoyed my newly achieved freedom. In this freedom I felt more ‘at home’ than I had in Korea. ‘Feeling at home’ also meant that I was allowed to be *myself*. But to admit this openly felt as though I was betraying my parents, my origin.

Looking back, I can say that the culture of the German Left, who were influenced by the '68 Movement, had played a significant role in the process of building my own identity.

But my new life in Germany was not just a pleasure cruise. I noticed very quickly that I lived a life as a foreigner, as a stranger. Let me explain it with an example: I come from a culture where ‘silence’ and ‘reticence’ are appreciated as an integral element of interpersonal communication. Already as children in Korea we learned to communicate in silence. ‘Silence’ is like an empty space wherein the milieu of potentialities are left open, allowing latent creativity to develop. Silence pushes one to engage in the unspoken. One recognises the imperfection of conversation and develops a sensibility to discern the unspeakable. In our country the urge to thresh out

about a problem to its end is not so strong. Sometimes we prefer to leave some things undiscussed. In our cultural tradition, the insufficiency of language to express things is more consciously understood. The teachings of the Chinese philosopher, Laozi who said, “If one calls Dao ‘Dao’, it is no longer Dao” (Daodejing), are well embedded in our minds.⁵

In Germany, a person often goes unnoticed if he or she doesn’t speak. Should such a person ever be noticed, he or she will either be perceived as dumb, lacking self-esteem or insecure, like those who internalized the behavioral norms of slaves. It only strengthens this perception if a person is not a native German speaker or if he or she only speaks broken German. However, if someone recognises that this person is not dumb or insecure, then one assumes withdrawnness or underhandedness. If this quiet person is an Asian woman, the usual bias acknowledges this behavior as a *symptom* of patriarchal oppression. The silent Asian woman attracts such criticism, even from the feminist perspective: “You all need to develop self-confidence!” In this moment it is forgotten that patriarchal oppression exists all over the world and that ‘Asian women’ are not just a symptom of the patriarchal oppression, but rather a subject of its way of life and its feminist movement within its world.

This is a typical problem of differing cultural codes. When I was new in Germany, I couldn’t articulate it in such a way. Back then I hadn’t entirely consciously processed the distinct cultural contexts. Every now and then this lack of understanding, or rather *misunderstanding*, hurt. That’s why I was compelled to make myself talk more often than I normally would have. Thus, an assimilation for the sake of ‘survival’. During this process I had also begun to consider our silent culture. It was a detour in finding myself in light of the view of others.

Differing cultural codes require among them a translation. In the aforementioned case, critical German friends would have needed my help in understanding my cultural foreignness and its background, assuming they would have been willing to accept my ways as a difference, instead of pre-judging it. In the perspective of intercultural hermeneutics Fernet-Betan-

⁵ There is another pertinent aspect in the culture of silence and reticence, especially in feministic discourses. A colleague and I co-edited a book in 2005 with articles by Asian feminist theologians called “Breaking the Silence ...” (Choe/Meuthrath 2005). I do not discuss these aspects here.

court stresses the necessity of equal participation of both parties in the acknowledgement of mutual subjectivities between natives and foreigners in the translation process:

“One who wants to understand a stranger needs to translate. [...] Hermes Logios doesn’t linger anymore among us and we have to ask ourselves, who the subject of this translation is, or who brings the world of the strangers into our world. [...] We need to take the Hermes’ work upon ourselves, *not as a sole, single subject (this degrades the strangers as a mere object of interpretation)*, but rather as a subject recognizing them as [equal] subjects. In this case the strangers, as the interpreters of their own world and self-interpreters of their own foreign ways, approach us, and consequently they are *not voiceless objects of conversation*, but able, equal interlocutionists. The alienness of the strangers can only be translated by people who are aware that strangers can only be understood as subjects with their own cooperation. One cannot understand a stranger if one doesn’t learn to understand them in cooperation with them. The involvement on the collective task of translating the alienness of strangers is an exercise of achieving ‘understanding’ in company with strangers, and it is a process of learning about one’s self. Therefore it should be recognised that the collective translation cannot remain *without consequences for one’s own self interpretation as well as for the positioning of one’s own culture in relation to the strangers.*”⁶

3. National Culture and National Identity

“Are you a real Korean?” One day when I was still thoroughly enjoying my new way of life, this question astonished me, although I knew that question was always a topic in the company of immigrants. “Are you a genuine Indian?” “Are you a normal Turk?”⁷ etc. And these questions are usually asked by indigenous members of a country – be it from one’s homeland or the country to which one has immigrated.

Here a question of identity is entangled with the problematic concept of national culture. Implicit in this question is the reproach of ‘Westernisation’ or ‘Europisation’ having had a fatal effect on the person involved if

⁶ Fornet-Betancourt 2002, p. 53f. (accentuated by me).

⁷ Blioumi 2002, p. 35.

this person comes from a country that had suffered under colonial rule. In these countries, nationalism (in the sense of a national liberation from foreign rule) is particularly legitimate within its society. Betrayal of the nation results in expulsion, disgrace and loss of being publicly influential, etc. Such accusations and their consequences often affect feminists in their own countries, a burden imposed especially upon those in the southern countries.

But this reproach overlooks the fact that feminist ideas and feminist-inspired movements or lifestyles in the southern countries have been around long enough to have become a part of their own culture and contribute as a part of their history's formation.

Let us pay attention to what sort of questions are raised by this very reproach. It is very interesting to notice how selectively the ever condemnable word 'Western' is used. In this day in age it is impossible for any country on this planet to avoid the push toward industrialisation, or the capitalistic development following the Western model. Western cultural elements have long been ubiquitous in the everyday lives in these countries. What developed in Singapore or in South Korea under the slogan of 'modernisation' is well known. Lee Kwan Yew and Park Chung Hee immensely advanced the industrialisation according to the Western model, while contrarily reputed democracy and human rights as being something 'Western' and therefore incompatible in their own country. Reproaches against feminists are raised within this context, for it is a virtual paradox that Asian advocates of Marxism or liberalism discredit the feminists in their own countries due to 'Westernisation'.⁸ In other words, the 'Reproach of Westernisation' is a pretense that serves those in power in their respective societies with the purpose of suppressing resistance and protest of their own power.

This clearly exemplifies that the concept of 'national culture' is highly ideologically instrumentalized. Can such a conception be adequate for understanding the cultural problems in today's world? Wolfgang Welsch worked out a typology of 'single culture' (for example, national culture) from the concept of 'culture' coined by Herder at the end of the 18th century, which is still well-respected as being valid today.

⁸ Narayan 1997, p. 6.

Herders concept of culture “is characterised by three elements: by social homogenisation, ethnic consolidation and intercultural delimitation. Firstly, every culture is supposed to mould the whole life of the people concerned and of its individuals, making every act and every object an unmistakable instance of precisely *this* culture. The concept is unifactory. Secondly, culture is always to be the ‘*culture of a folk*’, representing, as Herder said, ‘the flower’ of a folk’s existence (Herder, 1966: 394 [13, VII]). The concept is folk-bound. Thirdly, a decided *delimitation* towards the outside ensues: Every culture is, as the culture of one folk, to be distinguished and to remain separated from other folks’ cultures. The concept is separatory.”⁹

The point here is not for us to dispute Herder’s concept of culture. It is sufficient for our discussion to adhere to this sort of cultural conception. Considering the reproach of ‘Westernisation’ and underlying concept of national identity, a national culture also fits this type of concept that is problematic in the following ways:

(a) A homogenously uniform culture of a folk is an artificial construction. Welsch also points out that the societies today “are differentiated within themselves to such a high degree that uniformity is no longer constitutive to, or achievable for them. [...] [T]he culture of a working-quarter, a well-to-do residential district, and that of the alternative scene, for example, hardly exhibit any common denominator. [...] [G]ender divisions, differences between male and female, or between straight and lesbian and gay can constitute quite different cultural patterns and life forms.”¹⁰

But there’s more. The constellations of power also play a pivotal roll here. The forms of culture bound to the ruling powers readily pose themselves as *the* culture of the current society. With this mentality they try to disregard, outsource or completely ban any cultural form that poses a threat to the ruling powers, despite the fact that they inherently have the very same right to exist in the society. Feminists in southern countries are often accused of betrayal of their own culture and identity; they should assert their place and their right to exist in their own societies. Such an accusation veils patriarchy’s true interests.

⁹ Welsch 1999, p. 1 (Internetpaper).

¹⁰ Welsch 1999, p. 1-2 (Internetpaper).

(b) The powerful concept of a culture of a folk (national culture) assumes the equally powerful, fictitious concept of *tradition*. The culture of a society develops in a dialectical tension between tradition and innovation, but is in a permanent state of change. ‘A culture that wishes to live on the pension of its tradition sanctifies its tradition and thus cuts off its own vitality. It deteriorates fundamentalism turning itself into an ‘unculture’ because it robs its members of every possibility to develop autonomously, pinning them down to the repetition of a holy manifested tradition.’¹¹

“Are you a real Korean?” It’s clear that the question is not about my legal citizenship, but of my identity. Although this type of question in migrant societies still has an important place, it actually has become obsolete. Even my own former identity in the days before I came to Germany founded itself in no way upon the homogenous, self-contained Korean culture. Is the Evangelical, Pietistic, Christian culture really Korean? Even my own Christian identity fed off of various, sometimes mutually contradicting sources.

Thus, it would be wrong if I were to characterise the further formation of my identity in Germany as kind of ‘cross breeding of *the* Korean and *the* German cultures’. It wouldn’t be *the* German culture that I had acquired, but rather certain ways or forms of life that I had come across, encountered and was inspired by in Germany.

Furthermore there are cultures in both Korea and Germany that significantly influenced me in the formation of my identity through the 1980s, even if they don’t have the same form anymore today. In today’s Germany who still talks about the present meaning of the ‘68 Generation? Meanwhile, the situation in South Korea is now completely different ... Since the onset of the democratisation process, political censorship has nearly all but phased out. The women’s movement even fought so hard as to establish a women’s ministry. (In 2000 I held a lecture on human rights of women and debated on the system of the so-called “*head of the family (hoju)*” in the South Korean family law. In 2005 this system was abolished – an indice for an enormous change in patriarchal culture in South Korea.)

¹¹ Fernet-Batancourt 2001, p. 23.

The metaphor of the 'closed sphere' or 'autonomous island' to describe a culture does not have validity anymore. Alternative concepts of 'multiculturalism', 'interculturalism' and 'transculturalism' are a part of today's discussion.

4. Multiculturalism

The concept of multiculturalism describes the situation of differing cultures coexisting in one and the same society and has recently received significant attention in discussions of German immigration policy.

This concept, which describes a contemporary societal fact, has validity on a descriptive level. Given the earlier concept of 'national culture', defined by the homogeneity of territorial and linguistic boundaries, multiculturalism has made quite some progress. At the same time though it must be pointed out that this term is insufficient. In a situation where many cultures exist in one society, there emerges the inevitable question of how they relate to one another. The concept of multiculturalism doesn't provide any answer to this question. Examined more closely, this omission shows what lies beneath – the notion that these cultures are 'closed spheres'. Even when one realises the existence of many cultures in one society, they are often interpreted as distinct, isolated entities.

This notion also has consequences on the normative level of the concept, for it continues to perpetrate the problems brought about by Herder's idea of the 'closed sphere'. Welsch identifies the problem in the following way: "The concept seeks opportunities for tolerance and understanding, and for avoidance or handling of conflict. This is just as laudable as endeavours towards interculturalism, but equally inefficient, too, since from the basis of the traditional comprehension of cultures a mutual understanding or a transgression of separating barriers cannot be achieved. As daily experience shows, the concept of multiculturalism accepts and even furthers such barriers. Compared to traditional calls for cultural homogeneity the concept is progressive, but its all too traditional understanding of cultures threatens to engender regressive tendencies which by appealing to a particularistic cultural identity lead to ghettoisation or cultural fundamentalism."¹²

¹² Welsch, 1999, p. 3 (Internetpaper).

If we're talking about drafting an alternative human order for society with strangers, then the idea of multiculturalism doesn't match up. Meanwhile, the term *transculturality* is becoming more and more popular.

5. *Transculturality*

5.1 *The concept*

The concept of transculturality takes the contemporary global development into account: In view of the worldwide interweaving of transportation and communication systems, borderless circulation of goods and the migration process, the cultures are more and more frequently bound together, interwoven with one another. Culture will no longer be perceived as "homogenous unities with stable borders".¹³ The borders related to nations, ethnic groups, peoples, religion, language, etc. are no longer congruent with cultural identities. The borders of culture are disappearing; the concept of culture that refers to a definite entity, like national culture, ethnic culture, etc., are disintegrating. Differing cultures, which can be characterised by vertical and horizontal dissimilarity and plurality, coexist within a society. Not only are the cultural differences *between* societies a subject to debate, but rather the differences *within* a society.

The proceedings of cultures to make connections and networks with others by crossing the borders are taking place not only on a macro level of society, but also on a micro level of individuals. An individual's identity is shaped by many cultural sources and their connections, characterising itself by an internal plurality. The identity doesn't build itself by associating with merely one collective understanding anymore. Instead it refers to differing cultural references. "Modern lives are to be understood 'as a migration through different social worlds and as the successive realisation of a number of possible identities [...], we all possess 'multiple attachments and identities' – 'cross-cutting identities', as Daniel Bell put it [...]."¹⁴ The individual is faced with a range of varying cultural identities and is asked to figure out his own an identity through selective use, reinterpretation and rejection etc. of cultural components.

¹³ Sandkühler 2004, p. 81.

¹⁴ Welsch 1999, p. 4 (Internetpaper).

The concept of transculturality is attractive because it aims for “a multi-meshed and inclusive, not separate and exclusive understanding of culture”.¹⁵ Welsch elucidates this advantage:

“It intends a culture and society whose pragmatic feats exist not in delimitation, but in the ability to link and undergo transition. In meeting with other lifeforms there are always not only divergences but opportunities to link up, and these can be developed and extended so that a common lifeform is fashioned which includes even reserves which hadn’t earlier seemed capable of being linked in. Extensions of this type represent a pressing task today.”¹⁶

If we adhere this concept, then “there is no longer anything absolutely foreign [...] no longer anything exclusively ‘own’ either. Authenticity has become folklore, it is ownness simulated for others – to whom the indigene himself belongs.”¹⁷

After all of the borders have disappeared, all that remains is the atomised, individualised culture of a single person brought about by some configuration of many cultural components. But have all of the borders really vanished? Are we really sovereign, transcultural subjects who are able to autonomously and voluntarily conjugate together differing cultural components that present themselves as equally appealing options, thus creating our own identities? Is it a more harmonious, unproblematic process to mix distinctive cultural components with one another? If not, why not? Is the difference between the other and the self really resolved?

To this question I would like to introduce the situation of the female migrants in South Korea.

5.2 *Excursus: The Situation of Female Migrants in South Korea*¹⁸

Within approximately 30 years (from 1962 until the early 1990s) South Korea had changed from an agrarian-based country to a highly engineered, industrial nation. Economically speaking, this growth of change corresponds to what took around 200 years of development in Europe. In the

¹⁵ Welsch 1999, p. 6 ((Internetpaper).

¹⁶ Welsch 1999, p. 6 (Internetpaper).

¹⁷ Welsch 1999, p. 4 ((Internetpaper).

¹⁸ I owe the sociological migration research of South Korea for the information and insights in this excursus: Lee 2004, p. 189-219.

1960s and 1970s during the earlier era of industrialisation, many Korean women went to Germany as nurses, while Korean men went to Germany as miners or to the Middle East as construction workers. Back then Korea had fallen under the category of a ‘developing country’ sending its people as migrant workers to other countries. Around 1988 when the Olympic games were held in Seoul, the situation turned around and then migrant laborers from other Asian countries came to South Korea for work. In the following years the immigration of working migrants increased steadily. Statistics from 2000 show that working migrants from 14 Asian countries (actually 17 countries total, including workers from countries that belonged to the former Soviet Union, i.e. Russia, Uzbekistan, Thazikstan) make up two percent of all employees in South Korea.

More than 50 percent of the migrants are women. More than 75 percent come as tourists, as ‘mail-order brides’ or as employees of the entertainment industry. Here, the contrast to the male migrants, who are generally employed in middle- or small-scale businesses (so-called 3D Industry)¹⁹, is striking. The female migrants can be broken down into four groups:

1. A minority of them enter a country as ‘industrial trainees’ with working permits and are employed by a 3D Industry. With a trainee status they cannot lay claim to labor rights guaranteed by the South Korean labour laws. That means extremely low wages, poor working conditions and no health or accident insurance. They often become victims of sexual harassment or even violence in the workplace. If they can’t tolerate such torment and leave the contractually determined workplace, then they lose their legal status.
2. The second group is the workers in the housekeeping industry, the nursing profession, waitresses or hotel employees.
3. The third and largest group is made up of the workers in the entertainment industry. Most of them enter the country with a type of contract to work as a dancer, singer or musician in ‘night clubs’ or hotel bars. But

¹⁹ The economic growth, democratization and strengthening of the labor movement brings with it the significant improvement of working conditions and a raise in wages – but mainly for the employees of the big companies. This resulted in considerable differences between big and small businesses. The Korean workers have not want to work in the small businesses, described commonly as 3D-Businesses (*dirty, difficult and dangerous*), anymore.

there are subtle mechanisms through which they are forced to become victims of human trafficking as prostitutes.

4. The fourth group is made up of women who come to South Korea because they have been sold in the marriage trade.

Apart from exploitation, discrimination and other infractions of human rights affecting both men and women, there is an effective, gender-specific mechanism of oppression here:

1. That increasingly more Asian women travel to a foreign country to earn money speaks to the patriarchal familial structure. Men count as the important members of the family. Thus, chiefly men should be well-educated. For this reason the sisters or daughters sacrifice their own opportunities.
2. The commercialisation of a woman's body and sexuality plays a huge role in the migration of women. A woman's right to self-determination of her body and sexuality is infringed upon, partially as a result of the market mechanism, partially by means of physical violence.
3. The South Korean patriarchy exploits the weak, foreign women to make itself stronger. Here the patriarchal and discriminatory mechanisms against foreigners reinforce one another in a doubling of the oppressive power. In order to clarify this, let me introduce a new social phenomenon in South Korea – marriage between Korean men and women from other Asian countries (i.e. Vietnam, Philippines and the Korean minority living in China). There are many unmarried men, particularly in South Korea's rural areas whose socio-economic situation is not attractive to most women in South Korea. These men are the target group for the international marriage trade. The woman's native country will be determined by similarities in appearance and skin tone. Usually there is a large age difference: the men between 35 and 45 years old, the women generally in their early 20s. The bride selection process in Vietnam displays a typical market setting in which the perfect reification, objectification and the marketing of the female body and a woman's fertility take place.

The following is a description of a selection scene: the future bridegroom and the mother-in-law are given a pool of around 100 female candidates, rotated in groups of five, then shown one group after another.

After selecting about five or six women from the larger pool, these women are physically examined, after which they finally decide on one. If she passes the gynecological tests (of fertility and venereal diseases), then they will get married. The man's family pays for everything. After the wedding the bride is immediately pressured to bear children. Women as baby-making-machines represents the ultimate degradation of women. It is also expected of the foreign wives that they adopt to the Korean language and kitchen, while their own cultural traditions are disregarded, even scorned. In the case of the progeny, there is also the contrary behavior of some South Koreans who absolutely refuse to allow a foreign woman to produce a child. Female immigrants have reported that they were forced by their husbands and their families to undergo abortions. On one hand, the racist idea of purity of blood plays a role here; on the other hand, there is a societal prejudice against children of mixed heritage: hybrids are considered prostitutes' children. This prejudice is connected with the experience of the Korean War.

This forced childlessness is of course also joined with a further discrimination against the bride: If a woman has a baby in a patriarchal society, as the bearer of the family's offspring, she will be accepted as a member of the family. This familial integration creates in turn a foundation for the integration into the society. Consequently, if the foreign woman is not allowed to give birth, her concurrent integration will be denied.

5. 3 Critique on the Concept of Transculturality

Cultures are borne of human beings. When we speak of a dialogue of cultures, it is not the cultures, but rather the human beings representing different cultures who lead the dialogue. However, as long as each human being is not granted equal rights, as long as there is an unequal distribution of power, these circumstances and consequences affect also the culture.

The example of my biographical fragment (the discrimination against the silent culture in a culture where communication is mostly verbally oriented) and the situation of the international marriage through a marriage trade both clearly show that the borders between capital and labor, rich and poor, women and men and even between the nations, states or ethnic groups, etc. do exist *under certain circumstances*. These borders notate differences among cultures as well as power. However, that is no evidence

that there would have been, on the national or state level, a single, self-enclosed culture. But the notion of the complete disappearance of borders is not suitable, because it cannot explain the existing problems due to unequal relationships of power.

The transcultural composition of the cultural components, be it on the macro level of the society or the micro level of the individual, does not always happen harmoniously or unproblematically. It is often the case that this process develops under certain forces that are far from a voluntary, sovereign choice. The foreign brides in South Korea will surely accommodate themselves to the South Korean everyday life and in this way develop the transcultural identity. But this occurs under conditions of racial discrimination, the marketing of the body and patriarchal oppression. The conjugation of the cultural components can not be harmonious here because they are loaded with conflict. The concept of transculturality does not account for this complication.

The basic idea of transculturality states that we are all more or less hybrids – that our differences really only exist due to the arrangement and combination of particular cultural components, thus making us all different – veils a dangerous result: that everything is illustrated as a shade of grey among other shades of grey. Certain cultural dynamics in society relative to particular categories cannot be recognised anymore. Even if one rejects the general concept of a culture based on nations (e.g. Korean, German or Vietnamese culture), there are certain circumstances in which it is necessary, or just makes sense, to consider the recognised national borders in working out problems – like in the case of the marriage trade.

We cannot give up the categorization of differing cultures. It is much more important to not let the multi-layered complexities fall to the side when we operate with one category or another. Even after my investigations of the transculturality discussion, I had no trouble facilitating a German-Korean or Korean-Vietnamese dialogue (or any combination). On one hand I am aware that it is not the dialogue between *the* German and *the* Korean cultures; on the other hand, I don't want to give up a frame of reference we associate with words like 'Korean', 'German' or 'Vietnamese' depending on the time or context.

The argument that there exists neither the other nor the self is too exaggerated. What's more, it ignores the existing relations of power. The contemporary problems of migration show that the borders and distinctions

against strangers do exist. With a mutual respect, it is more important to perceive these borders and distinctions, develop a dialogue and find ways to take part in the world as emancipated subjects who shape the order of peacefully ‘living together (convivance)’. In today’s situation it is necessary to have a concept that makes the borders, distinctions, and above all the relationships of power clearly visible. Any subject or bearer of a respective culture must be manifest in this concept.

6. *Looking Ahead*

In light of this critique, I suggest that we differentiate the ways how to deal with the concept of cultures with relation to particular group entities differently: that is to say, we should reject such concepts of culture based on substantial or essentialistic understandings attached to a homogeneous entity of society (i.e. nation). On the other hand, within a specific context, we can apply a concept of culture that refers to a certain entity of society in the methodical sense (with restrictions) if the following conditions are met:

1. It will be recognised that many cultural entities can operate at the same time within one and the same society.
2. Depending on the context of the problem, the combination of cultural entities presents itself anew each time. If necessary, a certain selection of definite, individual cultural components, or the creation of a hierarchy among them must be conducted.
3. As a result, a dialogue can be executed. In this case it is better to characterise the dialogue as an intercultural dialogue because the borders between the two sides of the conversation are perceived consciously.

In the Debates concerning transculturality there is a tendency to frivolously shrug off the concept of interculturality. It is argued that the concept of interculturality underlies Herder’s ideas of culture, too; thus the accompanying problems are unable to be solved.²⁰

²⁰ Welsch 1999, p. 2 (Internetpaper).

This critique would have its justification if the borders of cultures that are assumed within the concept of culture would be substantially identified with the actual geographical borders. But if these borders are to be recognized within the framework of the relations of powers, which can be distinctly drawn depending on the context, this concept has a significant potential to understand the problems of differences attached to the relations of power. Furthermore this concept awakens the attention to the cultural reciprocity displaying an important foundation for the development of a discourse of peacefully ‘living together’.

Translated from German by Jocelyn Polen

Bibliography

- Blioumi, A., 2002, Interkulturalität und Literatur. Interkulturelle Elemente in Sten Nadolnys Roman ‚Selim oder Die Gabe der Rede‘. In: A. Blioumi (Hrsg.), Migration und Interkulturalität in neueren literarischen Texten, München.
- Choe, H., 2004, Südkorea: Menschenrechte im Demokratisierungsprozess, Aachen.
- Choe, H. / Meuthrath, A. (Hrsg.), 2005, Das Schweigen brechen. Asiatische Theologinnen ringen um die befreiende Dimension des Glaubens, Freiburg.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried, 1966, Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man, New York: Bergmann.
- Fornet-Betancourt, R. (Hrsg.), 2001, Kulturen zwischen Tradition und Innovation. Stehen wir am Ende der traditionellen Kulturen? Dokumentation des III. Internationalen Kongresses für Interkulturelle Philosophie, Frankfurt/M.
- Fornet-Betancourt, R., 2002, Hermeneutik und Politik des Fremden. Ein philosophischer Beitrag zur Herausforderung des Zusammenlebens in multikulturellen Gesellschaften. In: W. Schmied-Kowarzik (Hrsg.), Verstehen und Verständigung. Ethnologie – Xenologie – Interkulturelle Philosophie. Justin Stagl zum 60. Geburtstag, Würzburg.

- Fornet-Betancourt, R. (Hrsg.), 2004, Migration und Interkulturalität, Aachen.
- Lee, Sooja, 2004, Migrantinnen Diaspora – Internationale geschlechtliche Arbeitsteilung, Kulturhybridität, Entfremdung und Sexualität. In: Soziologie in Korea (Hanguk Sahoehak), Vol. 38, Nr. 2 (Koreanisch).
- Narayan, U., 1997, Dislocating Cultures. Identities, Traditions and Third World Feminism, New York.
- Sandkühler, H. J., 2004, Pluralism, Cultures of Knowledge, Transculturality and Fundamental Rights. In: Ders. / H.-B. Lim (Hrsg.), Transculturality – Epistemology, Ethics and Politics, Frankfurt/M.
- Tshmanga, H., 2004, Migration at the forefront of political and theological reflections. In: R. Fornet-Betancourt (Hrsg.), Migration und Interkulturalität, Aachen.
- Welsch, W., 1999, Transculturality – the Puzzling Form of Cultures Today. In: Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (eds.), Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World, London: Sage, 194-213. Also in:
<http://www2.uni-jena.de/welsch/Papers/transcultSociety.html>.

Edward Demenchonok (Georgia, USA)

**RETHINKING CULTURAL DIVERSITY:
INTERCULTURAL DISCOURSE AND TRANSCULTURE ***

After the World War II and the establishment of the United Nations, the process of decolonization and the movements for national liberation and cultural diversity stimulated the emergence of Latin American, African and other “Third World philosophies”. The cultural identity issue came to the forefront of social consciousness during the second half of the twentieth century, and manifested itself in the movements for cultural diversity. The interest in cultural identification showed its positive impact in helping individuals regain the cultural dimensions of their personalities, and in uniting people in their cultural-spiritual resistance to the depersonalizing influence of socio-economic-political systems.

The existing differences in languages and cultures are perceived less and less as God’s “judgment” preventing the completion of the Tower of Babel for the glorification of man by confounding languages, impeding their understanding and breaking the unity of the race, but rather as a “blessing” of cultural diversity which can prevent a depersonalizing homogenization of people, and which can also help to forestall their subjugation to totalitarian and imperialist projects. Cultural diversity contains a rich potential and opens new opportunities for the creative self-expression of individuals and for an interactive development of cultures and human liberation. But cultural identity is also used as an ideological weapon in political power-games under the banners of nationalism, racism, and religious fundamentalism.

Freedom of cultural self-identification presupposes a responsibility for respecting the same freedom for others, and thus promoting mutually beneficial intercultural relations through dialogue. Otherwise, the continuation of historical patterns of “cultural wars” and “clashes of civilizations” will be even more devastating in the globalized world, unless mutually respectful dialogical interrelations among culturally diverse people prevail.

The wave of publications on national cultures and philosophical thought during the second half of the twentieth century was in part a reaction to Eurocentrism and the universalistic pretensions of Western philosophy, for which many of these issues were invisible. The theoretical articulation of these issues has substantially contributed to the transformation of philosophy. However, a side-effect of the overemphasis on difference is the underestimation of unity,

* Published with the permission of Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

which may lead to disintegration. The challenge to philosophical thought on national cultures, ethnicity, race, and gender is the reconciliation of difference with commonality, and diversity with unity.

In the Americas, issues of identity and intercultural relations are addressed by Latin American, African-Caribbean, and African-American philosophical thought, which emerged in the form of the philosophical self-consciousness of ex-colonial nations, challenging Eurocentrism and striving for the creation of their own thought in order to help their quest for cultural identity and independent socio-cultural development. However, an emphasis on cultural originality, if exaggerated, or not balanced by any recognition of others, can lead to extreme nationalism and ethnocentric fragmentation (many isolated centers, or one hegemonic center pretending to be universal).

These and other “Third World philosophies” are the original phenomena of contemporary philosophical thought. These philosophies, striving for development and recognition, face a twofold task: on the one hand, they challenge the Western-centrism and, in the search for their originality or “authenticity”, turn their focus onto their own cultural traditions. On the other hand, their further development requires them to interrelate with other philosophical traditions and to elaborate their intercultural dimensions. In the historical development of these philosophies, they show the tendency to evolve from ethnocentrism to more openness to the ideas of cultural diversity and dialogue. The struggle between the “centrist” tendency and dialogical, intercultural tendency is present in today’s philosophy. In the historical development of these philosophies, they tend to evolve from initial ethnocentrism to professional philosophy, and then to more critical self-reflection and openness to intercultural dialogue.

The discourse of cultural diversity involves the issues of ethnic, racial, and national identities. Human history shows that these issues have been sources of satisfying pride, but also sources of grave crimes and abuses. They are considered “one of the greatest challenges to the survival of humankind in the twenty-first century”, for they influence the social fabric, personal identity, the way we think of others and ourselves, our morality, and our political behavior. Thus, in order to understand today’s society, there is a need to explore philosophically and systematically such existentially embodied and politically charged concepts as ethnicity, race, and nationality (Gracia 2005; 2008).

Cultural diversity is frequently perceived as a source of conflict. If the leveling globalism and the isolating multiculturalism are engaged in ideological wars, is a third way still possible? The attempts to find an alternative theoretical view of cultural diversity and universality are represented by the concepts of “intercultural dialogue”, “intercultural philosophy”, and “transculture”. This

model is especially needed in world politics, where the factor of fixed cultural identity based on ethnos, race, religion or ideology has turned out to be a source of conflict and violence. It opens a possibility for nonviolent and non-uniform globalization, and it is viewed as an alternative to the clash of civilizations, thus being a hope for lasting peace.

In today's complex power structures, the demarcation between the dominating and dominated, between the self-serving ruling elites and the interests of the people, between the "haves" and "have nots" – crosses racial, ethnic and national boundaries. The dominated majority of society, which includes people of different races, ethnicity and gender, has a basic common interest in protecting their freedom and economic well-being. However, it frequently has fallen prey to the domination policy of "divide and conquer". Conversely, the historical achievements in human liberation – from slavery, exploitation, racial and other discrimination – were result of people's solidarity and grass-roots movements for social equality, justice, and civil rights. People seduced by nationalism and chauvinism are in danger of losing their civil liberties and democracy. A society fragmented into conflicting minorities is likely to become a hostage of a self-proclaimed "moral majority" and unified by the politics of war.

For people in every society and across all nations, who resist the excessive control of the powers that be and who strive for freedom, human rights and basic socio economic interests, it is vitally important to preserve a common ground for a uniting dialogue rather than to divide themselves racially or culturally. The aggravation of global problems such as the ecological crisis, wars in an Atomic Age, and of the underdevelopment of the Third World, which are threatening the survival of humanity, shows the vital necessity of a dialogue and a joint effort for a solution to problems.

This essay explores the issues of cultural identity and intercultural relations and their interpretation mainly in Latin American and Afro-Caribbean philosophical thought. The first section of the essay examines the evolution of Latin American philosophy. The second section analyses Afro-Caribbean philosophical thought. The analysis shows that in the evolution of these philosophies, the initial focus on the search for identity is followed by more interest in dialogical relationships with other philosophies as a condition for their own development. Attention is paid to the ideas of intercultural dialogue and "intercultural transformation of philosophy". The sections which follow broaden the scope of analysis beyond the region: The third section examines the concept of transculture. The fourth section analyses the problem of egalitarian universalism and cultural rights.

I. Latin-American Philosophy

In Latin America, since the middle of the nineteenth century, progressive thinkers have expressed the necessity of creating their own philosophy. Latin American philosophy was baptized by fire: a hot debate which ensued in the 1950's-60's regarding the question of its existence or even the possibility of such philosophy. This debate brought to the forefront the problem of the inter-relationship between the culturally specific and the universal in philosophy.

This controversy reflected the different concepts of philosophy (Gracia 2007). Some philosophers presuppose a view of philosophy as a universal discipline which is not adapted on the basis of experience. They claim that philosophy, like mathematics and other disciplines, is interested in truth and does not depend on the place where it is practiced. For them, the notions *Latin American*, *African* or *intercultural* seemed to be incompatible with philosophy as universal knowledge. Their opponents argued that philosophy, unlike other disciplines, is culturally embedded: it has to do with particular cultural and historical points of view and it bears their influence. Yet in some extreme versions the culturally specific was exaggerated as opposed to the universal. The leading Latin American thinkers criticized such excesses of ethnocentrism as “tropicalism”. They also criticized “abstract universalism”. Instead, they approached the issue dialectically, going beyond the opposition of universalism and particularism. They developed a broader and more pluralistic concept of philosophy, viewed as embedded in certain cultural and philosophical traditions, while dealing with perennial questions and aiming to find universally valid answers (Demenchonok 1990, 22-30).

Often overlooked in the Western canon is the large number of original publications produced by Latin American philosophers, covering a variety of topics on many philosophical themes. The importance, perhaps, comes from their originality, stemming from different cultures and perspectives.

A hallmark of this phenomenon is the recent volume entitled *El pensamiento filosófico latinoamericano, del Caribe y latino [1300-2000]: Historia, corrientes, temas y filósofos* (Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino philosophical thought [1300-2000]: History, currents, themes, and philosophers), edited by Enrique Dussel, Eduardo Mendieta, and Carmen Bohórquez. The volume eclipses more than a thousand pages, and is as comprehensive in scope as it is in length. The encyclopedic content has quickly become a fundamental work, comprised of numerous contributors, representing many countries within the region.

This volume attempts to provide a comprehensive picture of the philosophical thought of Latin America and the Caribbean, including Latino philosophers

in the United States. It contains two hundred biographical entries about key philosophers of the region. The volume is envisioned by its editors and authors as “more than a book, but rather as a beginning of a continent-wide philosophical *movement*” (Dussel 2010b, 7). It provides a panoramic picture of the historical development of philosophical thought in the region – from the ancient pre-Colombian civilizations through colonial and modern periods, and up to the end of the twentieth century. It covers the contributions of Latin American and Caribbean philosophers to the major philosophical currents of the twentieth century, as well as the central philosophical themes, which were not mere imitations of European ideas, but their own elaboration within their socio-cultural context, marked by their own voice and originality.

Latin American and Caribbean philosophies emerged as an attempt to overcome the Eurocentric view of history and of philosophy from their own perspectives, thus contributing to the non-Western-centered, pluralistic view of the culturally diverse world. The volume highlights the original characteristics of this thought, in particular, in the area of philosophy of culture, with a strong interest of the authors in the issues of cultural identity, indigenous thought, and intercultural philosophy.

View of Globalization from an Ethical Perspective

In Latin American philosophy, first of all the adherents of Liberation Philosophy develop a critique of the negative consequences of the current globalization from historical, cultural, and ethical perspectives. This theme is presented in debates about a philosophy of Latin American history (Leopoldo Zea), “civilization and barbarism” (Arturo Roig), “dependence and liberation” (Enrique Dussel, Juan Carlos Scannone, Horacio Cerutti-Guldberg), and intercultural philosophy (Raúl Fonet-Betancourt). They show that the globalism is carrying out the main assumptions of Eurocentrism and Western cultural and economic hegemony. Analyzing the economy-centered technocratic concept of globalization, they reveal its ideological function as a justification of neo-liberal policy. The current globalization is essentially the result of an uncontrolled expansion of political and economic neoliberalism and of hegemonic policy which are aiming to homogenize the planet according to the requirements of a “free-market” dominated by multinational corporations.

Latin American philosophers develop their critique of globalization from two theoretical perspectives: *postcoloniality* and *interculturality*. These two approaches interrelate and complement each other. While postcolonial theories advanced by intellectuals from Third World countries expand the postmodern

critique of the Modernity and of Eurocentrism from the colonial difference, ideas of interculturality developed by theorists from both the First and Third Worlds are focused more on cultures and their possibilities for serving as the basis for creating an alternative to the homogenizing forces of globalization.

Walter Mignolo shows the preeminence of Latin American thought in developing the philosophical basis for a systematic critique of colonialism and Occidentalization. He proposes a comparative and philological methodology and a pluritopic hermeneutics as an approach for the radical rethinking of cultural differences, of the Other as a subject to be understood, and of the understanding subject itself (2005). Mignolo argues for a critical cosmopolitanism, oriented to a form of universality that he calls “diversality”, which combines diversity and universality.

Eduardo Mendieta analyzes the role of liberation philosophy and theology in the formation of postcolonial thought. He traces the “original sin” of Modernity back to the birth of Christianity. He states that Modernity is a secularization of the Christian chronogram, and that the revealing of God throughout history is reflected in the concept of progress, whether moral or technological. Mendieta echoes Heidegger’s analysis of the modern concept of time underlying the teleological representations of society and history. Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit* was a reaction against this “temporal fetishism” and Hegel’s historicism. His concept of *Dasein* (Being here) etymologically gives a local-spatial view of human individual as being in time, but not manipulated by it, and having the ontological privilege of “being history”. Mendieta’s position coincides with that of Dussel, Roig, Zea and other Latin American authors, who show that the postmodern concept of the “end of history” is an apology of the status quo.

A deterministic view of history asserts that history does not know the subjunctive mode. In contrast, a view of history as open and in the subjunctive mood might well open out the discipline of history itself. Max Weber in his critical theory pointed out an element of understanding of meaning in the methodology of human sciences and that the meaning ascribed to events is only valid when possible alternatives are considered. Latin American philosophers approach history as open, as containing many potential possibilities and alternatives. They emphasize that their nations, which are burdened with stinging social-economic problems, do not want to “close history” and that their purpose remains liberation.

Mendieta indicates that liberation theology and liberation philosophy have articulated a new vision of our planet and the human community, being post-modern before the Europeans thought of postmodernism; at the same time they have advanced beyond postmodernism, or rather they are trans-modern. They

look at history from its “underside”, revealing the growing gap between wealth and poverty. Europe and America are the “interpretative institutions” and distorted mirrors in which representations of the other and themselves are reflected. Mendieta criticizes “imperial” cosmopolitanism and calls for a dialogic cosmopolitanism that is reflexive and rooted, and that departs from the mutuality of teaching and learning in a world that is global but not totalized (2007).

Among the various aspects of the analysis of the current globalization, the works of the Latin American philosophers are distinguished by developing an *ethical* approach towards globalization. They are grounding philosophically the ethical criteria in order to evaluate the controversies of globalization. The ethical perspective provides us with a holistic view of these phenomena and enables us to evaluate them from the point of view of humanity and its vital interests. The ethical criteria serve as the basis for the critique of the negative effects of the current globalization, which aggravates the ecological crises, underdevelopment, and other global problems. At the same time, the ideas of the meta-ethics of humanity developed by the Latin American and other contemporary philosophers, serve as the normative base for the solution of these problems and the search for positive alternatives to current globalization.

Arturo Roig develops the concept of the “emerging morals” (*la moral emergente*) as an alternative to the dominant ethic associated with rational egoism and neoliberal globalization. The emergent morals serve for the grounding of the principles related to the category of human dignity. Human dignity is negated by the neoliberal “discourse of necessities”, which follows the “forms of satisfaction” typical for a consumerist society (2002). As a contrast, for most of the Third World population, necessities are related to survival. Roig traces the emerging morals to the ethical ideas of Juan Bautista Alberdi, Eugenio María de Hostos and José Martí in Latin America, as well as to Kant’s theory of the categorical imperative and his ideal of the cosmopolitan humanity.

The Latin American philosophers place the human being in the center of their analysis (Gracia and Zaibert 2004), and considered as a criterion of judgment for the positive or negative effects of globalization. Arturo Roig, Andriana Arpini, Jorge Gracia and Raúl Fonet-Betancourt, among others, expand the moral concepts of human dignity and justice to the legal concept of human rights. The concept of human rights is understood as a whole complex of the political, social, and economic rights which would guarantee a decent human life for everybody in the planet.

Enrique Dussel, in his book *Ética de la liberación en la edad de la globalización y la exclusión* (Ethics of liberation in the age of globalization and exclusion), makes a survey of the various kinds of “ethicality” in world history,

putting modern ethical discourse in an historical perspective. He analyzes the problematic of ethics in its foundation. He makes a critical analysis of existing ethical theories as representing the different types of grounding ethics. One is a “formal morality”, developed by Kant and discourse ethics (with the principle of discursive validity). The other is a “material ethics”, expressed in various ways by Aristotle, Max Scheler, and more recently, Alasdair MacIntyre (with the universal material principle or practical truth). Dussel also analyzes “the universal principle of ethical feasibility”, related to the possibility of obtaining the “good”. He reviews them from the perspective of liberation ethics. He creatively develops Karl-Otto Apel’s discourse ethics, articulating a new level of architectonic distinctions. In addition to the distinction between Parts A (universality) and B (particularity) of discourse ethics, Dussel introduces a third “level C”, namely “singularity”. Thus, the “good” or an act with a goodness claim is neither merely the universality of principles nor the particularity of their mediations, but rather a concrete synthesis of the practical true-valid-possible.

In the architectonic of Dussel’s theory, the categories from fundamental ethics are used in critical ethics (as their mirror-like “negative” counter-parts) (1998, 464). The critical principle of feasibility states that the critical community ought to deconstruct the system and transform its negative aspects, then construct a new and more just future community of life and communication. Dussel calls this the “principle of liberation”. It states that those who act critically-ethically have an obligation to liberate victims by means of a) the transformation of norms and institutions which cause the material negativity of exclusion from discourse, and b) the construction of new norms, actions, institutions, and systems of ethicality so that victims can live and participate as equals. This is the claim to a qualitative “development” and to human progress (559-560).

Dussel’s material ethics is life-enhancing. The reproduction and growth of human life is the main criterion of truth (theoretical and practical), since it is the absolute condition of the possibility of human existence. This criterion is internal to each culture and allows it to establish a dialogue from the universality of the value of human life. Liberation ethics provides a conceptual framework for addressing the issues of underdevelopment and other global problems. Based on this ethics, he sketches a prolegomena for a future political philosophy (2006).

The new global situation requires a new mentality and a new political culture based on democratic relations and dialogue. An international dialogue regarding the problems of contemporary society and the future of humanity is possible only if it is based on a universally accepted moral groundwork and ethical principles. The ideas of meta-ethics of humanity developed by the Latin American and other contemporary philosophers, serve as the philosophical framework for

the discussion about issues of globalization (Apel 2001, Dussel 1998, Roig 2002). Their search of the foundation of a universally valid ethics is in keeping with the quest for a rationally grounded universal normative base for the solution of contemporary global problems.

Intercultural Dialogue and Asymmetry of Power

In a broad, general manner, Latin American philosophy endorses intercultural dialogue, providing a philosophical foundation for it to flourish. First, it asserts the intrinsic value of the originating country, evaluated by their own criteria. Second, it critically deconstructs the Eurocentric or Western-centric “monological” and hegemonic view of cultures, offering instead a philosophy that asserts plurality of cultures, each with their own intrinsic value. From this foundation Latin American philosophy also asserts that the people, gaining awareness of the value of their own cultures and focused on their preservation and development, should not isolate themselves in the shelves of parochial ethnocentric or nationalistic presumption. Rather, they should open themselves to dialogical relations with the other cultures, as equally deserving of respect.

One example of this wave of thought is the philosophy of Dussel, who examines the problems of intercultural dialogue within his concept of trans-modernity. He argues for a broad concept of philosophy and for a revision of the history of philosophy, in which the contributions of the non-Western cultures and their philosophical thought would be fully acknowledged, understood, and appreciated. Moreover, the effort of Latin American and Caribbean philosophers to regain their traditions, considered as a root and a source of inspiration for further development of philosophy, is viewed not ethnocentrically, but rather universally as a part of a larger element of a world-wide philosophical dialogue of the twenty-first century.

In asserting the possibility (and necessity) of such a dialogue, Dussel summarizes his arguments as follows: All of humanity has always sought to address certain “core universal problems” that are present in all cultures. The rational responses to these core problems first acquire the shape of mythical narratives; and a subsequent development in human rationality took the form of categorical philosophical discourses, which, however, does not negate all mythical narratives (Dussel 2010b, 15-20). There are formal universal aspects in which all regional philosophies can coincide, and which respond to these core problems at an abstract level. This serves as the basis for an inter-philosophical dialogue, respectful of differences and open to learning from the achievements of other traditions. This opens an opportunity for a new philosophical project “capable of

going beyond Eurocentric philosophical Modernity, by shaping a global Trans-modern pluriverse, drawing in part upon the ‘discarded’ resources of peripheral, subaltern, postcolonial philosophies” (Dussel 2008).

Latin American philosophy is critically aware of the current situation facing its region. The growing gap between the economically developed and underdeveloped countries and the asymmetry of their powers affect the cultures and their interrelations. Take culture, for instance, and the way in which Dussel applies his insight to the situation facing Latin American culture. It is examined within the context of the predominance of Western culture (Eurocentric during the colonial era and the U.S.-centered since the second half of the twentieth century), as well as within the economic-political context of social disparity and polarization, viewed from the perspective of marginalized social groups within society and underdeveloped countries of the “periphery” of world system.

From this conceptual perspective, Dussel criticizes the idea of “liberal multiculturalism”, which acknowledges equality of cultures, but in name only, without addressing the striking inequality due to the asymmetry of power. In coming to terms with liberalism, Dussel questions “the superficial optimism” of those who believe in the possibility of multicultural communication or dialogue, presupposing an idealized multicultural symmetry in communication between rational participants, which does not exist in reality. Liberal multiculturalism accepts the diversity of cultural values, but at the same time requires the acceptance of certain procedural principles (which are culturally Western) by all members of a political community. These formal rules for coexistence are themselves a vehicle for imposing a certain predominant cultural structure. “Politically”, Dussel observes, this presupposes that “those who establish the dialogue accept a liberal, multicultural state, overlooking the fact that the very structure of this multicultural state – as institutionalized in the present – is an expression of Western culture and restricts the possibility for the survival of all other cultures” (Dussel 2010a). This concept of multicultural dialogue – but only on the terms of the dominating culture and under the conditions of the most powerful participant – leads to the imposition of cultural homogenization and neoliberal ideology, in which “overlapping consensus” is interpreted as conformity.

Dussel questions also another kind of aberration, overly pessimistic regarding relations among cultures, coming mainly from theorists (such as Richard Rorty and to some extent Alasdair MacIntyre) who believe that communication is extremely difficult or even impossible due to the complete incommensurability of the participants. Dussel takes these ideas on, asserting that these theorists make overly generalized observations without considering how these cultures are situated within their own societies and without studying the concrete history and

structural content of these cultures. He points out that this approach fails to recognize the asymmetry that results from the respective positions of the countries in the colonial system in which the Western culture has marginalized all other cultures as “primitive” and underdeveloped.

This paradox of liberal multiculturalism is evident in the hegemonic unilateralism of the lone superpower, which asserts its dominance through both cultural-ideological and military-political means. Dussel traces the connection between the politics of culture and the self-interest policy of economic and military domination. He points out that the U.S. invasion in Iraq was accompanied by the ideologically distorted stereotypical portrayal of Islamic culture, which failed to differentiate properly between the excesses of militant *jihadist* fundamentalism and the sound core of modern Islam. As he observes, this sort of sterile multicultural dialogue (which also frequently takes place between universal religions), becomes in certain cases aggressive cultural politics, such as Huntington’s call, in *The Clash of Civilizations*, for the defense of Western culture through military means, particularly against Islamic fundamentalists (under whose soil coincidentally exists the greatest petroleum reserves in the world), and without referring to the presence of a Christian fundamentalism on a comparable scale, especially in the United States (2010a).

Dussel also mentions “the fundamentalism of the market” and “an aggressive military fundamentalism” of preventive wars, which are justified as cultural clashes or as a forcible spread of democratic political culture.

The shift in world politics from multilateralism to the hegemonic unilateralism in a unipolar world signals the steps that have been taken from the liberal multiculturalism, claiming the existence of a symmetrical intercultural dialogue, to “simple suppression of all dialogue and the forced imposition of that same Western culture through military technology” for the sake of pursuing economic interests in a region rich with oil resources (2010a).

In search for an alternative to liberal multiculturalism, Dussel sketches a concept of “*trans*-modern intercultural dialogue” aimed at “mutual liberation of postcolonial cultures.” He further elaborates on his concept of “*trans*-modernity” as an alternative going beyond both modernity and post-modernism, this time applying it to the relations among cultures. Adopting the theory of “multiple modernities”, Dussel criticizes the Eurocentric view of modernity and argues that it took different shapes in culturally different regions. Modernity, he argues, was unable to radically transform the “ethico-mythical nucleus” (Ricoeur) of great ancient cultures like the Chinese and the Japanese, the Hindustani, the Islamic, the Russian-Byzantine, or the Latin American, all of which still preserve their deeply rooted cultural traditions. They are simultaneously pre-modern,

modern, and *trans*-modern. These cultures have, in many complex ways, been partly colonized, but not annihilated, and they are alive (2010a).

The concept of *trans*-modern emphasizes “the radical novelty of the irruption from the transformative exteriority” of those cultures that are challenged by modernity and post-modernism. Dussel’s concepts, “exteriority” and “border”, are similar those of Mikhail Bakhtin’s “outsidedness”, “being beyond”, or “exotopy” (*vnenakhodimost*). Dussel believes that currently these cultures are “in the midst of a process of rebirth, searching for new paths for future development”. He envisions this path as the path toward “a future *trans*-modern culture”, predicting that this will result in authentic intercultural dialogue and will have “a rich pluriversality” (2010a).

Within this conceptual framework, Dussel argues for pluri-cultural dialogue with respect to *trans*-modernity that is critical and free from the illusion of a non-existent symmetry between cultures. It is a part of what he calls the *trans*-modern project of liberation. This project involves strategies for the growth and creativity of a renovated culture. It suggests the affirmation, the self-valorization of one’s own cultural aspects, which still remain outside homogenizing globalization. These traditional values, ignored by modernity, should be a point of departure for an internal critique, from within the culture’s own hermeneutical possibilities. But the critics should be those who, living in the biculturality of the “borders”, can create critical thought. However, Dussel notes, this might require a long period of resistance and the creative cultivation and development of one’s own cultural tradition. This is how to enter the path toward a *trans*-modern project. In contrast to a cultural trend towards an undifferentiated or empty globalized unity, an abstract universality, the new project is characterized as that of a “*trans*-modern analogical pluriversality”, and engaged in critical intercultural dialogue (2010a).

Intercultural Transformation of Philosophy

The idea of interrelations and dialogue among diverse cultures is articulated in the concept of interculturality. The term “intercultural philosophy” refers to both: a philosophical reflection on the phenomenon of inter-cultural relations and a view of philosophy itself from an intercultural perspective. Intercultural philosophy reflects on the impact of a cultural framework on philosophy as such, exploring the “fundamental differences of cultural coinages in the forms of thinking itself” (Wimmer 1998, 1). There are two main models of intercultural philosophy: one is the “interreligious intercultural” paradigm represented by Raimon Panikkar, who argues the necessity of dialogical interrelations among

various cultures as a prerequisite for collaboration and the solution of the problems of the contemporary world. The other is the “liberational intercultural” paradigm developed by Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, a Cuban philosopher currently residing in Germany. He views philosophy as culturally embedded and elaborates a project of “the intercultural transformation of philosophy” (2001).

The emerging intercultural philosophy draws our attention to the cultural embedding of philosophical thinking. The examining of its cultural contexts has far-reaching implications. It introduces a new perspective in our understanding of what philosophy is, of the history of philosophy and of its present role in today’s society. The transformation of philosophy, based on the intercultural dialogue, is so significant that Fornet-Betancourt considers it a new paradigm. Whether or not intercultural philosophy will become a new paradigm (in Thomas Kuhn’s sense), only the future will tell. However, the term “paradigm” is useful as a working hypothesis, helping to express certain important ideas. First of all, it denotes the substantial changes in the theoretical framework for understanding philosophical questions, in light of the fundamental role of culture in the development of philosophy. Second, it places intercultural philosophy as the next step in a sequence of paradigms, which represent the dialectics of tradition and innovation in the historical development of philosophy. Intercultural philosophy is situated above the rationalism and subjectivism of modernity, above the limitations of analytical philosophy, and as an alternative to the nihilism of postmodern philosophers. It is in tune with the existing critique of scientism and narrow academicism of philosophy, and with the call for a pluralistic, community oriented and culturally rooted style of philosophizing.

A philosophy which accepts intercultural dialogue as a context of its reflection enters into a process of transformation that requires it to reconstruct its history, its methods and forms of articulation. Fornet-Betancourt asserts the necessity of reviewing Eurocentric philosophical historiography and, based on the reconstruction of the history of ideas in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, of creating a new view of the history of philosophy. He criticizes claims of any philosophy to universality. The universalistic pretension of European ethnocentrism was a type of self-proclaimed universality. As he writes, “In this sense, the criticism is perfectly applicable to any other type of universality – whether African, Asian or Latin American – which would be the result of a monocultural proclamation” (2001, 166). He views intercultural communication as a means to transition from abstract universality to concrete and historical universalities. Intercultural dialogue creates conditions which allow a philosophy to reach a genuine universality, because it arises from shared communication between the different cultural universes of humanity.

Fornet-Betancourt applies these principles to Latin American philosophy and sketches some ideas of its transformation on the basis of an intercultural imperative. This task requires a radical self-criticism and the dissolution of the predominant logocentric and mono-cultural image of philosophy. It is also necessary to broaden the horizon of our thinking and use various sources for the interpretations of reality and of life itself. Among these sources are the popular wisdom, as well as the indigenous and Afro-American traditions with “their symbolic universes, their imaginaries, their memories and rituals” (2010, 645).

Latin American philosophers approach globalization as a philosophical problem, focusing on the human subject. They examine the situation of culture and of its creator, the human being, in today’s globalized world. Cultures are viewed as evolving and interrelated, and as being a product of human creativity. Concurrently, homogenization and other problems which cultures are facing in the process of globalization are epiphenomena of the drama of the human individual in a dehumanized world.

Fornet-Betancourt develops the concept of the subject as an alternative to postmodern “anti-humanism”. He considers the ideas of the critical-ethical humanistic philosophical tradition as the basis for developing a bold, new concept of the subject. He aims for a philosophical understanding of a real human being, in his or her multidimensionality, historicity, and creativity. The new concept presents not an abstract incorporeal subject, reduced to a reflectivity, but rather includes such essential dimensions as materiality and contingency. It is rooted in the ideas of the living subjectivity, developed by Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre, and in the Hispanic philosophy by Miguel de Unamuno, José Ortega y Gasset, and Xavier Zubiri. The author develops the concept of a free, conscious, and active subject, able to reason critically and to act in order to mold him or herself and transform society.

Fornet-Betancourt shows the important role of culture in society. For him, culture is not just an artistic heritage or an issue of the inner life of an individual; rather it plays an extremely important public role as a sphere of social creativity and organization and as a center of a life-world. This essential social function of culture is undermined by the processes of globalization. Humankind, with its cultures, is no longer a subject, but instead a mere object of this process, suffering the uncontrolled expansion of an economical system which usurps the material base of the cultures. As result, the cultures of humankind are losing their materiality, or their own “territory” where they can proceed effectively in the modeling of society according to their own values and goals. Thus, cultures remain excluded from the areas in which they are practically forging the socio-economic, political, and ecological future of humanity.

In contrast to historicism and techno-economic determinism, Fernet-Betancourt develops the concept of an open history, which is a result of the activity of social groups, movements, and other historical subjects, and contains potentially many possibilities. The neoliberal “model”, while in our time predominant, is not necessarily the only possible nor the best one. In the variety of cultures, Fernet-Betancourt sees a real basis for different life-worlds and historical alternatives. He develops the idea of interculturality as an alternative to homogenizing globalization.

The idea of intercultural dialogue is used by Fernet-Betancourt not only as a criterion for the critique of the negative consequences of globalization but also as a “regulative idea” in creating an alternative to it. Each culture has the right to the necessary material base for its free development. Thus, intercultural dialogue becomes an instrument of the cultures for their struggle to have their own contexts with their specific values and goals, namely “to liberate the contexts of the cultures” (2001, 281). This intercultural dialogue creates a new framework for philosophical reflection. It breaks the image of world homogeneity and affirms the plurality of cultures which represent various visions of the world. It shows that the present historical world, shaped by globalization, is not limited by its formal, technical, and structural contextuality. It is challenged by intercultural dialogue as an alternative program for the communication of cultures. There is the homogeneous influence of globalization, but on the other hand, there is also the plurality of many cultural worlds in which the diversity of humankind is reflected.

First of all, human beings have the right to their own cultures. While globalization is standardizing the world, cultures are maintaining the differences and plurality of world views. In contrast to globalization which promises “one world” imposed by the high price of the reduction and equalization of the different, interculturality implies a new understanding of universality as a dialogue of cultures. Culture is not only a realm for the cultivating of the plurality of world views and mutual respect among them. The plurality of cultures presupposes their interrelation and dialogue.

Interculturality also serves as a guideline for the concrete realization of the plurality of the real worlds. It requires the reorganization of the world order in such a way that it will guarantee fair conditions for communication between cultures as worldviews which will materialize in the real world. Interculturality is seen by Fernet-Betancourt as a basis for a movement which will organize economically, politically, and socially an ecumenical union of nations and cultures. Such a movement will universalize tolerance and coexistence. The author calls it a “concrete universality”, which is growing from grass roots, recognizing the

particular, the Other, and uniting people in a common goal to make life possible for everybody. This universality presupposes the liberation and realization of all cultural universes. He summarizes the proposed alternative as: a renewal of the ideal of universality as the praxis of solidarity between cultures (2001, 379-382).

The philosophy of interculturality reminds people that history and the future are not predetermined and that they are the subjects forging the future. Culture can help people in liberating the world and history from the dictatorship of the currently predominant model. While globalization is standardizing the world and presents just one future, interculturality wants to make possible a plurality of alternatives. Which of these possible futures will become more or less generally accepted as preferable is an issue that must be decided by means of intercultural dialogue.

Cultures are realms of freedom, creativity, and realization of the human beings. This freedom is also presented as historical possibilities of innovation and transformation. Intercultural philosophy orients us in this search for an alternative, finding its inspiration in “a creative continuation of the tradition of critico-ethical humanism as an open tradition which transmits the principle of subjectivity as a driving force of the foundation of society which champions community and coexistence, and in which everybody lives in harmony at peace with their neighbor and with nature” (Fornet 2001, 320).

II. Afro-Caribbean Philosophy

The cultural landscape of Latin America and the Caribbean nations represents a variety of interrelated cultures, which are rooted in three major traditions: American Indian, Iberian and African. The growing self-consciousness of people of African descent, their quest for cultural identity, and their engagement in movements for social justice underpin the development of African-Caribbean philosophical thought. The tradition of this thought and its recent evolution is reflected in the works of Edward Blyden, Aimé Césaire, Frantz Fanon, Marcus Garvey, Lewis Gordon, Wilson Harris, Paget Henry, C.L.R. James, Charles Mills, and Sylvia Wynter, among others. Caliban (the Carib) from Shakespeare's *Tempest* became for Caribbean intellectuals a symbol of their search for cultural identity and independent development. They characterize postcolonial and subaltern studies as “Caliban studies” (Gordon 2000, 3).

The emerging phenomenon of African-Caribbean philosophy is thematized in a number of publications (Bogues 1997; Gordon 2007; Henry 2000, Torres 2005; Vest 2005). The adherents of this philosophy, in searching for its identity, turn to the cultural heritage of the Caribbean and Africa. These philosophers

emphasize the need to reconstruct African cultural traditions, which were distorted and silenced by colonialism, slavery, and racial oppression. They are focused on the originality of a tradition rooted in Africa, its distinctive characteristics, and non-African components added from other cultures. In constructing the identity of African-Caribbean philosophy, they refer to the originality of the cultural heritage of people of African descent and to their race as blacks. The interplay of the issues of culture and race sets the parameters for theorizing about the identity of this philosophy. It also determines to some degree the locus of this philosophy – how this philosophy positions itself in the spectrum of contemporary philosophical currents: its affinity with some and its distancing from the others.

“Afro-Caribbean philosophy is a subset of Africana philosophy and Caribbean philosophy”, writes Lewis Gordon. “By Africana philosophy, I mean the set of philosophical reflections that emerged by and through engagement with the African diaspora, and by Caribbean philosophy, I mean both philosophy from the region and philosophies about the unique problems of theorizing Caribbean reality” (Gordon 2007, 146). It addresses the issues of culture, race, identity, modernity, oppression and human liberation. This philosophy “focuses on theoretical questions raised by the struggle over ideas in African cultures and their hybrid and creolized forms in Europe, North America, Central and South America, and the Caribbean”. It also “refers to the set of questions raised by the historical project of conquest and colonization ... and the subsequent struggles for emancipation that continue to this day” (Gordon 2000, 1).

African-Caribbean philosophers are engaged in dialogue with intellectuals of African descent in Latin America and the United States. They enhance a metaconcept of “Africana philosophy”, which connects African philosophical thought with that of the African Diaspora in the Americas. Lucius Outlaw characterizes Africana philosophy as an “umbrella” notion “under which to situate the articulations and traditions of Africans and peoples of African descent collectively, as well as the sub-disciplines of field-forming tradition-defining or tradition-organizing reconstructive efforts, which are to be regarded as philosophy” (1992, 64; 2007).

The concept of Africana philosophy plays an integrative role in establishing links between philosophies of African descended people in the Americas and in Africa. At the same time, it raises questions about the specificity of each of them, of how the experiences of African-Caribbeans differ from those of African-Americans in the United States, as well as from those of Africans. Consequently, this leads to an issue of their interrelation.

Theorizing About Race and Culture

The increasing immigration of intellectuals from Latin America and Caribbean countries to the United States is a relatively new aspect of the interrelations between the Third and the First Worlds and their cultures in the age of globalization. Many of the Latin American and Caribbean intellectuals working in U.S. universities are struggling to transform the politics of knowledge as “outsiders within the teaching machine”. There are attempts to create a new type of work with a “border epistemology” that goes beyond the Western pattern and allows for the emergence of new thought from the perspective of minorities, immigrants, refugees, etc.

The presence of these intellectuals in the United States brings a new perspective in theorizing about race and culture. Charles Mills, drawing on his own experience, describes the paradoxical situation of a black Caribbean philosopher in the North American academy, whose interest in the issues of race, culture, identity, Negritude, pan Africanism or Third World issues is in conflict with the mainstream of analytical philosophy, which ignores them. He points out the limitations of Western political philosophy which offers no conceptual basis for the issues of race and culture in Third World studies. He argues the necessity of an innovation in political philosophy. As an alternative approach, he suggests to “place race at the center stage” of political theory (2000, 473). Mills criticizes classical social contract theory for ignoring the race issue. He inverts it into the concept of “racial contract” and uses this as a theoretical vehicle to explore the phenomenon of race. He aims to find out the inner logic of racial domination (1997, 6).

Mills’ book *The Racial Contract* sheds light on the racial aspect of domination in the history of colonialism and slavery. However, an attempt to assume the racial contract as a basis of political theory is problematic. It suffers from the limitations of contract theory itself. The postmodern and feminist critique of contractarianism shows the historical abstractness of the contract, its inability to explain civil and political subordination and women's subordination, as well as its use as the ideological justification for the curtailing of individual freedom by a bureaucratic political system.

Attempting to analyze the issue of race from within the contractarian framework limited the heuristic scope of the theorization of racial domination. Reviewing Mills’ book, Anthony Bogues concludes that the concept of the racial contract is “a static, over-arching, primarily ideological construct” and it “is not able to adequately explain the different complexities of racial formation” (Bogues 2001, 269). Historically, these complexities were quite different during

conquest, colonialism, slavery, and in modern postcolonial states. Racial formation is a historically complex process, which involves both cultural reproduction and domination in the social structure, “so to argue that racial oppression is the result of a racial contract is to reduce this complexity to a single factor” (269). As Bogue remarks, Mills' theory is missing the rich tradition of black critical writers, represented by Du Bois, C.L.R. James, Martin Luther King, Franz Fanon, Amílcar Cabral, Julius Nyerere, among others, who addressed the race issue but did not limit their thought by it: they “did not center on race but raised profound questions about classical political values”, allowing them to “focus on the organization of society and polity” (270).

Africana Philosophy of Existence

Lewis Ricardo Gordon approaches race and culture issues from a perspective of renewed existential phenomenology. He favors a broad concept of black identity, which includes people of African descent in the North, Central, and South Americas.

African Caribbean philosophy has a strong existential flavor. The subjectivist turn in contemporary philosophy is used by Gordon to thematize the problems of black self formation and its racialization. In his book *Existentialia Africana*, he tries to work out the parameters of Africana existential philosophy. Existential philosophy addresses questions concerning freedom, responsibility, anguish, embodied agency, identity, moral action, and liberation through a focus on the human condition. These existential questions, states Gordon, permeate black thought. In contrast to the postmodern thesis of the “death of subject,” he revitalizes existential phenomenology and shows its importance for developing a new humanities and a new social theory.

Gordon's work bridges both European existentialist tradition and Africana existential thought. “Problems of existence address the human confrontation with freedom and degradation”, writes the author. He indicates that this was a theme of “the various dialogical encounters between twentieth century Africana theorists and European and Euro American theorists” (Gordon 2000, 7). Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir were particularly interested in the existential situation of blacks. As Gordon noticed, “Sartre stands as an unusual catalyst in the history of black existential philosophy. He serves as a link between Richard Wright and Franz Fanon (undoubtedly the twentieth century's two most influential Africana existentialist ‘men of letters’)... .” (9).

In theorizing about the race issue, Gordon uses Sartre's philosophy, premised upon a critical encounter with bad faith (which is erroneously viewing ourselves

as something fixed or as a being of infinite possibilities) and reconciliation with responsibility. The author explores the bad faith dimensions of racism. Bad faith is a lying to the self, trying to evade one's freedom. Racism is a dehumanization, which is a form of bad faith, as Gordon explains it, "for to deny the humanity of human being requires lying to ourselves about something of which we are aware" (Gordon 2000, 85). In bad faith, individuals deal inauthentically with obstacles that stand between self-positing and self-realization. These obstacles, Gordon believes, are not only socio-economic or racial but also ontological. He explains the race issue in terms of the ontologies of black and white egos and of the interactive dynamics of these ontologies which resulted in a conflict between these two egos. He disagrees with Victor Anderson's call to reject "ontological blackness" and sees in it the path to a rejection of existential hermeneutics. Gordon indicates that the existing structuralist and psychological theories of race failed to deal with the problem of meta-stability of consciousness and the problem of bad faith. He argues the necessity of "a philosophical theory that mediates the individual's relation to the structures" (Qtd. in Alkoff 2002, 95-96).

Linda M. Alkoff, in her comments on Gordon's contribution to philosophy, writes that he "has resuscitated the tradition of existentialism" after postmodern attacks on the theory of subjectivity, and that his reconfigured existential phenomenology "helps to correct problems in both postmodernist treatments as well as individualist moral philosophy". Existential phenomenology can be helpful in dealing with postmodernist analysis which remains only at the level of cultural representation and not at the level of human action. It is also illuminating for individualist moral philosophy, which assumes that choices of action made by an individual are not influenced by socio-economic or cultural factors. She concludes that "Gordon's account provides a useful alternative to these approaches, a phenomenological indictment of racism's effects as well as its assumptions" (Alkoff 2002, 93).

Gordon's analysis of the work of a variety of black thinkers shows the manifold ways in which black existentialist thought has been articulated to establish a tradition in Africana philosophy. He demonstrates that a phenomenological reflection on the existential dynamics of the black self is important for this philosophy. He grounds the project of Africana philosophy in the shared task of reconstituting the racialized black self in the wake of the "phenomenological disappearance" of its humanity and its African cultural heritage (Gordon 1995, 40).

Observing the development of Afro-Caribbean philosophy, Gordon notes that it "has placed the question of Afro-Caribbean self as a primary concern of the identity dimension of its philosophical anthropology, and it has placed explora-

tions of how such concepts of the self relate to historical questions of social change as its teleology” (2007, 156). Afro-Caribbean philosophy is also concerned with a variety of questions in other areas of philosophy, as well as historical task of constructing Caribbean intellectual history. In his book *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy* (2008), Gordon discusses Afro-Caribbean philosophy and African philosophy, and shows the relevance of the theoretical production of the intellectuals in the African Diaspora.

Africana Identity

African-Caribbean and African-American philosophers made a critical “deconstruction” of the deformation (double consciousness) that accompanied the racialization of African identity. Although Paget Henry continues this critique, he focuses mainly on exploring the positive alternative of the reconstruction of ego-formation. Henry expands Lewis Gordon’s phenomenological analysis by referring to the concept of the traditional African ego and the mythic and religious discourses that have been integral to its formation. He also enhances Lucius Outlaw's idea of the vital importance of discursive processes to philosophical formation. His approach consists of bringing together “phenomenological and discursive strategies, as well as insights drawn from the Caribbean philosophical experience” (Henry 2003, 48).

Henry emphasizes the importance of the traditional African cultural symbols and discourses in order to define an identity of Africana philosophy “to establish its core”. He asserts the necessity of regaining the African heritage of predecessors and contemporaries, of reconstructing “a comprehensive phenomenological history of Africana subjectivity” (2003, 56). The tradition of African thought was mainly oral, and studied by ethnographers; thus the author assumes that the methods that this phenomenological history will employ should be ethno-philosophical.

How will this phenomenological analysis of African cultural symbols and discourses help to define the identity of this philosophy? In answering this question, Henry relates cultural symbols with the identity of Africana philosophy based on the concept of ego-formation. As he writes, “because of the critical importance of traditional African symbols and discourses to the ego formation of African philosophers – continental and diasporic – they are crucial for the identity of Africana philosophy” (2003, 56). In his project, the author expects that the self-reflection of philosophers from various countries will reveal their differences as well as their similarities. The latter are viewed as the most important

factor in elucidating a common ground of these philosophers and thus in defining the identity of Africana philosophy.

Henry indicates that philosophy, being culturally embedded, shares “the cultural birthmarks” of literature, arts, music, and other discourses that express a national, collective identity. At the same time, he faces the necessity of clarifying the epistemological status of philosophy. The author goes beyond the post-modern critique of the rationalistic Cartesian *cogito*. As he states, philosophy is a rationally oriented discourse, but this does not negate its cultural rootedness. This cultural aspect is important for examining the Africana dimensions of African-Caribbean and African- American philosophies. The cultural identity of philosophy is “the necessary moment of prior cultural definition and mythopoetic instituting that the philosophical *cogito* must inherit. It is the latter’s necessary encounter with time bound symbols and discourses” (Henry 2003, 57). The author’s discourse is based on the premise that the unique features of African cultural tradition are engraved in the subjectivity of African descended philosophers and influenced on their thought; therefore they can be analyzed phenomenologically (57).

However, if culture and its role in philosophy are bounded with the concept of ego-formation, culture appears to be a determining factor rather than an area of free choice and creativity of the individual. Instead, philosophers can relate to a cultural heritage not necessarily as already given and engraved by ego-formation, or as a set of ego-genetic relations, but rather as something which can be freely chosen and which, by virtue of its intrinsic value, deserves to be explored, learned, internalized, and thematized theoretically. Such a self-reflective approach will open a new dimension in their philosophical creativity. To his credit, Henry views an Africana philosophy not as already accomplished, but rather as a possibility or “an open-ended collective project”. Its realization depends on the creative efforts of philosophers.

Henry recognizes that the dynamics of black self-formation cannot by themselves establish the identity of this philosophy, thus he explores the role of discursive formations and publications. His project combines the existential phenomenological approach with an analysis of discursive practice to identify a common unifying content of Africana philosophy. The author focuses on the discursive processes vital to the formation of African, African-Caribbean and African-American philosophies.

As a positive trend in the evolution of African-Caribbean and Afro- American philosophies, Henry notices that recently they “have been moving away from their near exclusive politico-ideological focus and have begun engaging a broader range of issues” (2003, 62). The evidence of this movement towards

new discursive formations is that they are more open to other intellectual traditions. Both philosophies are related to African philosophy. Both are likely to be “similar in their African components but dissimilar in their non-African components”. They are also engaged with Euro-American pragmatism and various European philosophies. Endorsing this inclusive tendency, Henry points out the large Indo-Caribbean population and the necessity to be engaged in more systematic dialogues with American Indian and Indo-Caribbean philosophies. Both Indians and African descended peoples in the Caribbean have been victims of the phenomenological and discursive invisibility, and neither has been able to see the other’s philosophies. “Hence”, he concludes, “the urgent need for dialogue” (2003, 63).

The importance of dialogue is stressed by other authors. Jennifer Vest, for example, emphasizes that Caribbean philosophy must be plural and dialogical, and she argues for the “New Dialogic” in philosophy (2005).

A journey in the search for identity leads not to a final destination of substantialist “core”, but rather moves the philosophies to the realm of polyphonic interrelations of living thought. We can see traces and possibilities of these interrelations. The dialogue of African-Caribbean and African-American philosophies with African philosophy can be considered as inter-cultural relations, given the originality of each tradition, and at the same time as intra-cultural relations of participants under the Africana “umbrella”. Each of these philosophies is engaged with various branches of European and Euro- American philosophy, which can be viewed as inter-cultural relations. Thinking in more general terms of culturally embedded unities or “families” of philosophies like Africana or European, they would represent interrelations among large cultural types or traditions of thought. The borders identifying each of these philosophies and their constellations on all levels are not absolute but rather historically conditional, alterable and transparent. Each of these philosophies is shining with its own internal light of wisdom and with the reflected light of other philosophies. The possibility of each of them developing as a part of the multidimensional and dynamic network of interrelations derives its potential from being ultimately embedded in the all-embracing philosophical culture of humanity.

III. From Multiculturalism to Transculture

The recognition and celebration of cultural diversity was a hallmark of the second half of the twentieth century. “Multiculturalism” became a fashionable term. Frequently, however, merely lip service is given to the development of diverse cultures: in liberal multiculturalism, the other’s “right to exist” is

acknowledged, while considering one's own culture or truth superior or absolute. Since the beginning of twenty-first century, with the neoconservative shift in world politics, multiculturalism was overshadowed by the reverse tendency toward ethnocentrism and ideological fundamentalism, suspicion of "the others" and the anti-multiculturalist politics of "integration". Multiculturalism has shown its conceptual failures. It presented the holistic, rather than the dynamic, model of cultures as hermetical and self-sufficient (Will Kymlicka and Charles Taylor, among others). But if cultures are focused mainly on their differences and on maintaining their borders with other cultures, rather than being open to shared values and dialogue, then the result is warlike relations ("cultural wars" inside societies and a global "clash of civilizations"). This plays into the hand of the hegemonic domination.

The postmodern critique of the dominating "mass culture" unmasks the relations of knowledge and power. However its weakness is relativism and skepticism regarding universal concepts and values. The multiculturalist critique of power from the perspective of ethnic, racial, or gender identities undermines the value-based grounds of the critique itself. Not only did multiculturalism fail to become a vivid alternative to the dominating "mass culture", but also it itself was not immune from knowledge/power relations, such as the dependence of individuals on the group's ideological dogmas and the authoritarian power of their leaders. In the postmodern theories of culture, there is an internal tension between multiculturalism and deconstruction. Multiculturalism implies an essentialist connection between cultural production and ethnic or physical origin. In contrast, intercultural philosophy and transculture argue for a concept of cultural diversity free from determinism and representation.

The failure of multiculturalism stimulated the efforts of many philosophers to find an alternative theoretical view of cultural diversity and to rethink the matters of identity/diversity. One example of this alternative approach is the idea of "transculture" developed by Mikhail Epstein, a philosopher from Russia currently residing in the United States, a Professor of Cultural Theory and Russian Literature at Emory University (see Chapter 17 in this book). He elaborates the concept of transculture as a different model of cultural development. He defines it as "an open system of symbolic alternatives to existing cultures and their established sign systems" and "a way of expanding the limits of our ethnic, professional, linguistic, and other identities to new levels of indeterminacy and 'virtuality'" (Epstein 1999, 24-25). He critically analyzes the postmodern theories of culture and points out an internal tension between multiculturalism and deconstruction. Multiculturalism implies an essentialist connection between cultural production and ethnic and physical origin (race or gender), viewed in terms

of “representation”. From a transcultural perspective, origins need to be acknowledged in order to be exceeded by the cultures which relativize natural identities, and as the next step, undergo a transcultural movement which demystifies cultural identities. Thus deconstruction will become positive and constructive, and cultural diversity free from determinism and representation.

While culture frees humans from dependence on nature, transculture is a path of liberation from the symbolic dependencies of culture itself, from its own linguistic prison and self-imposed cultural identities. It transcends the boundaries of “native cultures”, thus liberating us from “those symbolic dependencies, ideological addictions, patriotic infatuations that belong to us as members of a certain cultural group” (Epstein 1999, 24). Transculture considers as an inalienable right of the individual the freedom from one’s own “inborn” culture. It implies diffusion of initial cultural identities as individuals cross the borders of different cultures and assimilate them.

Epstein develops a concept of a new, critical universality. As distinguished from the metaphysics that was focused on the general as a quality that is common to many objects, the “universal” refers to one object in as much as it possesses the qualities of many. Plurality itself can be viewed as an aspect of universality (internal diversity or multidimensionality). Critical universality has nothing to do with the neglect of the individual and the particular; it is rather a recognition of the individual's inherent potential of diversity. Universality means diversity as a property of a single individual or a single culture insofar as they can include the diversity of others. In contrast to multiculturalism as a superficial multiplication of differences, concrete universality means a capacity of a single individual or a single culture to be different from itself, to incorporate the multiplicity of others, and to embrace the value of universality. Unlike globalization, which disseminates identical models of “mass culture”, transculture views cultural diversity and universality as an asset of one individual.

Transculture is a state of virtual belonging of one individual to many cultures. In building up his/her identity, an individual may rely on a variety of potential cultural signs, similar to the variety experienced by an artist in freely choosing from a universal symbolic palette the colors for painting his or her uniquely-universal self-portrait. The universality is viewed as internal diversity of individuals, their dialogical openness to others and self-identification primarily as members of humanity.

Critical universality does not prescribe any pre-established value system or canon, identified with a certain culture. Rather it articulates a critical philosophical-methodological approach at the heart of which is an “outsidedness” (Mikhail Bakhtin) and the critical distancing in relation to any existing culture,

including one's native culture. It is "humble" and self-critical to the time and locus of its claims on truth.

From transcultural perspective, each culture is incomplete and its potential can be realized only if it transcends its borders and is engaged in dialogue with other cultures. To Jacques Derrida's concept of "difference", Epstein opposes the principle of "interference", of "dispersion" of symbolic values of one culture in the fields of other cultures. The critical self-consciousness and the openness of cultures to interrelations can lead to their mutual "interference" and to build new trans-cultural communities. Critical universality orients us towards a whole picture and approaches different cultures as interrelated integral parts of the comprehensive human culture, thus each culture can be viewed and evaluated by its relation to this diverse universality.

III. Egalitarian Universalism and Cultural Rights

In his recent works, Jürgen Habermas pays attention to the claims of the identity/difference movements. He approaches the problem of cultural identity and diversity in terms of the liberal conception of equality and cultural rights. He indicates that culture provides a milieu in which human beings develop into distinct individuals. An individual depends on interpersonal relations and on cultural traditions in the formation and development of personal identity. Considering the legal person as the bearer of subjective rights makes it possible to derive cultural rights directly from the principle of the inviolability of human dignity. The constitutional guarantee of equal protection for the integrity of the person implies the same access to information necessary for the development of personal identity.

In analyzing the theories of Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka, Habermas points out a paradox of multiculturalism: that the individual basic liberties are restricted in name of the securing collective rights of culture groups. The cases of the paradoxical conversions of freedom into repression are also criticized by postmodern philosophers (Christoph Menke, Brian Barry) who "deconstruct" them and interpret them as evidence of a self-contradiction inherent in the conception of civic equality itself, thus challenging the universalistic principle of civic equality and its formalization in positive law. In contrast to them, Habermas argues that precisely the universalistic principle of civic equality, if implemented in a manner based on law, can serve as a safeguard against the restriction of basic individual rights in name of collective rights of culture groups. He emphasizes that "group rights are legitimate only if they can be understood as *derivative* rights – derived, that is, from the cultural rights of the individual

group members” (Habermas 2008, 300). The right of freedom of association implies the voluntary character of group membership and the right to dissent and exit. Individual rights are also a condition for the preservation and development of cultural traditions: a dogmatically protected culture will degenerate.

Habermas indicates that the discussion of cultural diversity necessitates a more careful differentiation in the concept of civic equality. Analyzing the facts of violation of civic equality of minorities, it is necessary to distinguish between the politics of distribution and the politics of recognition (the unequal inclusion of citizens). Unlike social rights, cultural rights must be justified in terms of their facilitating the equal inclusion of all citizens. They can counteract the incomplete inclusion of the members of disrespected ethnic, racial, and religious minorities.

These problems can be solved only from the perspective of egalitarian universalism, which orients civic solidarity toward a solidarity among “others”, universalistic constitutional principles and human rights. As Habermas writes, “Only the egalitarian universalism of equal rights that is sensitive to difference can satisfy the individualistic requirement that the fragile integrity of unique and irreplaceable individuals should be guaranteed equally” (2008, 290).

The “politics of recognition,” however, cannot be implemented through the legal medium or threat of sanctions alone, if mentalities remain unchanged. Habermas emphasizes that the mutual recognition of the equal status of all members requires a transformation of interpersonal relations through communicative action and discourse and ultimately by way of public debates over identity politics.

Similar ideas are developed by Karl-Otto Apel, who analyses the problem of justice in a multicultural society from the perspective of discourse ethics, pointing to “a means of settling intercultural conflicts by discourse” (Apel 1999, 160). An approach to the identity/diversity issue, based on the universalistic assumptions of the discourse theory of ethics and communicative action, is also developed by Seyla Benhabib, Nancy Fraser, and Axel Honneth, among others.

The new concepts of culture – intercultural dialogue, intercultural philosophy and transculture – mark an advance toward a new understanding of cultural diversity and universality. The authors argue for a freedom of an individual from the symbolic dependencies of knowledge/power, from being an object of manipulation; rather they emphasize the individual’s role as the subject of cultural creativity.

Works Cited

- Alkoff, Linda M. 2002. Introduction: A Philosophical Account of Africana Studies: An Interview with Lewis Gordon'. *APA Newsletter on Hispano/Latino Issues in Philosophy*. 01, no. 2 (Spring): 92-101.
- Apel, Karl-Otto. 1999. The problem of justice in a multicultural society: the response of discourse ethics. In *Questioning Ethics: Contemporary debates in philosophy*, ed. Richard Kearney and Mark Dooley, 145-163. London: Routledge.
- Bogues, B. Anthony. 1997. *Caliban's Freedom: The Early Political Thought of C. L. R. James*. London: Pluto Press
- . 2001. Book Review *The Racial Contract*. By Charles Mills. *Constellations*, vol. 8, no. 2: 267-272.
- Demenchonok, Edward. 1990. *Filosofía latinoamericana: Problemas y tendencias*. Bogotá: El Búho.
- Dussel, Enrique. 1998. *Ética de la liberación en la edad de la globalización y de la exclusión*. México: Trotta.
- . 2006. *20 tesis de política*. México: Siglo XXI Editores.
- . 2010a. Transmodernity and Interculturality: An Interpretation from the Perspective of Philosophy of Liberation. Keynote address at the ISUD Eighth World Congress, Beijing, China.
- . 2010b. Introducción. In Dussel, Mendieta, and Bohórquez 2010, 7-20.
- . 2008. A New Age in the History of Philosophy: The World Dialogue Between Philosophical Traditions. Paper presented at XXII World Congress of Philosophy, Seoul, Korea. Abstracts, 6. Seoul.
- Dussel, Enrique, Eduardo Mendieta, and Carmen Bohórquez, eds. 2010. *El pensamiento filosófico latinoamericano, del Caribe y latino [1300-200]*. México: Siglo XXI Editores.
- Epstein, Mikhail. 1999. From Culturology to Transculture. In *Transcultural Experiments: Russian and American Models of Creative Communication*, ed. Ellen E. Berry and Mikhail N. Epstein, 15-30. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Fornet-Betancourt, Raúl, 2001. *Transformación intercultural de filosofía*. Bilbao: Desclee de Brouwer.
- . 2010. La filosofía intercultural. In Dussel, Mendieta, and Bohórquez 2010, 639-646.
- Gordon, Lewis R. 2008. *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2000. *Existential Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought*. New York and London: Routledge.

- . 1995. *Fanon and the Crisis of European Man: An Essay on Philosophy and the Human Sciences*. New York: Routledge.
- . 2007. What Is Afro-Caribbean Philosophy? In Yancy 2007, 145-174.
- Gracia, Jorge J.E. 2008. *Latinos in America: Philosophy and Social Identity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- . 2005. *Surviving Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality: A Challenge for the Twenty-First Century*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- . 2007. What Is Latin American Philosophy? In Yancy 2007, 175-196.
- Gracia, Jorge J.E., Elizabeth Millan Zaibert, eds. 2004. *Latin American Philosophy for the 21st Century*. Buffalo, Prometheus.
- Henry, Paget. 2000. *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy*. New York: Routledge.
- . 2003. "African-American Philosophy: A Caribbean Perspective." In *A Companion to African-American Philosophy*, ed. Tommy L. Lott and John P. Pittman, 48-66. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Habermas, Jürgen. 2008. *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Mendieta, Eduardo. 2007. *Global Fragments: Globalizations, Latinamericanisms, and Critical Theory*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Mignolo, Walter. 2005. *The Idea of Latin America*. Malden: Blackwell.
- Mills, Charles W. 1997. *The Racial Contract*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- . 2000. Revisionist Ontologies: Theorizing White Supremacy. In *New Caribbean Thought: A Reader*. Eds. Brian Meeks and Folke Lindahl. Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press.
- Outlaw, Lucius. 2007. What Is Africana Philosophy? In Yancy 2007, 109-144.
- . 1992-3. African, African American, African Philosophy. *The Philosophical Forum*, vol. XXIY, nos. 1-3, (Fall-Spring): 63-93.
- Roig, Arturo A. 2002. *Ética del poder y moralidad de la protesta*. Mendoza: EDIUNC.
- Torres, Nelson Maldonado, ed. 2005. New Caribbean Philosophy. *Caribbean Studies* 33, no. 2 (July-December).
- Vest, Jennifer L. 2005. The Promise of Caribbean Philosophy: How It Can Contribute to a "New Dialogic" in Philosophy. In Torres 2005, 3-34.
- Wimmer, Franz M. 1998. Introduction to Intercultural Philosophy. *Topoi: An International Review of Philosophy*, 17(1): 1-13.
- Yancy, George. 2007. *Philosophy in Multiple Voice*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Edward Demenchonok (Georgia, USA)

**DISCUSSIONS ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND INTERCULTURALISM IN THE
UNITED STATES AND CANADA**

During recent decades, the philosophical landscape of America, traditionally dominated by analytical philosophy, along with pragmatism and continental philosophy, has been changing. One trend in the academy has been a turn toward an interest in the issues of cultural diversity, labeled as “multiculturalism,” and more recently, as “interculturalism.” This has been accompanied by a growing visibility of African-American and Latino/a philosophies in the United States, which have brought the problem of the relations between philosophy and culture to the forefront of intercultural philosophy.

Cultural minorities in search of their self-consciousness and identity, not only express themselves in their original literature, music, and arts, but they also attempt to reconstruct their history and develop their own authentic philosophical thought. These emerging philosophies represent the original response to the search for self-consciousness of racial and ethnic minorities or minority nations, challenging stereotypes of the dominant culture in which the minorities reside, and striving for the development of their own thought in order to help their quest for cultural identity, recognition, and preservation of their civil and human rights.

Of note are certain affinities and parallels in the development of these philosophies with that of African and Latin American philosophies. In search of their authenticity, they turned their focus to their cultural heritage. However, an emphasis on cultural originality, if exaggerated, or not balanced by reciprocal recognition of others, can lead to ethnocentric fragmentation (many isolated centers pretending to be universal), and solidifying the differences that keep these groups marginalized.

African-American and Latino/a philosophies are confronted by twofold task: On the one hand, they challenge the predominant philosophical currents, offering alternatives that are informed by their own cultural traditions. On the other hand, their further development requires them to interrelate with the other philosophical currents and elaborate their intercultural dimensions.

For any groups that resist excessive control and discriminatory policies prevailing powers and who strive for freedom, equality, and civil and human rights, it is vitally important to preserve a common ground for unifying dialogue and solidarity rather than to deepen any racial or cultural divides.

This article explores issues of cultural diversity, identity, and intercultural relations, and their interpretation in African-American, Africana, and Latino/a philosophical thought in the United States, as well as in the discussions about multiculturalism and interculturalism in Canada. The first section examines African-American philosophy in dialogue with African and Afro-Caribbean philosophies. The second section analyzes Latino/a philosophical thought. The third pays attention to the discussions about interculturalism in the francophone Quebec, Canada.

African-American Philosophy in Dialogue with African and Diaspora Philosophies

Cornel West, in his reflection on *philosophia* as love of wisdom, writes that a quest for wisdom requires us “to be open to the voice, viewpoint and vision of others” (2011, 25). He raises the question: How does philosophy relate to the Afro-American experience? (2008, 7). In an attempt to answer this question he writes, “*Afro-American philosophy is the interpretation of Afro-American history, highlighting the cultural heritage and political struggles, which provides desirable norms that should regulate responses to particular challenges presently confronting Afro-Americans*” (11).

According to West, African-Americans are confronted by two interrelated challenges: those of self-image or issue of self-identity, related to the culture, and those of self-determination, related to the political struggle for a better life. He emphasizes the fundamental role of culture with regard to Afro-American self-understanding. In historical African-American traditions, West distinguishes the vitalist, rationalist, existentialist, and humanist traditions, which represent various responses to the challenges of self-image and self determination. He considers the most promising of the four types to be the humanist tradition, which “*extols the distinctiveness of Afro-American culture and personality*” (ibid., 13).

In developing African-American philosophy, its theorists reconstruct the tradition of thought. They have taken a broad, intercultural perspective, turning their attention to African cultures, seeking their original roots to inform their philosophy. This resonates with the efforts of African and Afro-Caribbean intellectuals from different countries who are developing the broader Africana philosophy, which focuses on the African diaspora.

Like African philosophy, which seeks its ground in indigenous African culture and tradition of thought combined with some modern philosophical techniques, the African-American philosophers view it as culturally embedded—both rooted in culture and, at the same time, contributing to its development. African-

American philosophers born and educated in the United States, within its cultural milieu, and thus being natively “American,” at the same time seek to inform their unique philosophy by seeking their African cultural roots. This biculturalism opens a space for creative intercultural discourse.

Since 1990s, this interaction among the threads of Africana philosophy has been invigorated by a number of intellectuals from Africa who have immigrated to the United States to work at universities, doing research, participating in conferences, and publishing in this field. These immigrants have gained new social-cultural experiences, which may broaden their view of their native cultures from an outside perspective. Conversely, they bring new dimensions to the cultural palette of their new country of residence. The presence of these intellectuals in the United States brings a new perspective in theorizing about race, culture, identity and intercultural relationships, which are at the center of African-American philosophy, but which are ignored by the mainstream of analytical philosophy. Thus, they can critically evaluate their native cultures “from an outside perspective,” and they can evaluate American culture from their own cultural perspective—as “others.” From their position of the “outsideness” of their ethnicity, as bilingual and bicultural intellectuals, an intercultural thought has emerged. This cultural “being in between” and engagement of diverse worldviews poses challenges, but it can be mitigated and it can also be stimulating for philosophical reflection and for critically rethinking some established views on cultural diversity and interculturalism.

Many of these intellectuals from Africa, the Caribbean, and Central and South America, working at universities in the United States are struggling to transform the politics of knowledge as “outsiders within the teaching machine.” They contribute to attempts to create a new type of theorizing with a “border epistemology” that goes beyond the Western canon and allows for the emergence of new thought from the perspective of minorities, immigrants, refugees, etc.

Conceptual decolonization and intercultural dialogue

Among notable African philosophers currently working in the United States are Ghanaian William E. Abraham, Professor of Philosophy at the University of California, Santa Cruz; Kwame Anthony Appiah, son of the late Ghanaian intellectual Joe Appiah, who is currently Professor of Philosophy at Princeton University; Nigerian Segun Gbadegesin, Professor of Philosophy at Howard University; Kenyan Dismas A. Masolo, Professor at University of Louisville in Kentucky; Congolese Valentin Y. Mudimbe, Professor Emeritus at Duke University; Eritrean born Tsenay Serequeberhan, Professor at Morgan State University, Baltimore, Maryland; Nigerian Olúfémí Táíwò, Professor at Cornell Uni-

versity, Ithica, New York; and Ghanian Kwasi Wiredu, Professor Emeritus at the University of South Florida, Tampa.

Appiah (1997) wrote that in the United States in recent years, in part because of a general sensitivity in the academy to questions of cultural diversity and intercultural relationships, “allegations of the cultural—the national and, perhaps, the ethnic—specificity of philosophical practices in this country have been the object of serious attention” (16). As one of its manifestations, there was the attempt to explore the conceptual world of Africa’s traditional culture, called “ethnophilosophy.” This effort was made by philosophers both in Africa and in the American academy.

What are the lessons for an African-American philosophy from the African debate about ethnophilosophy? In critically evaluating this debate, Appiah proposes several conditions for a desirable “*critical ethnophilosophy*” (ibid., 28). He believes that “African philosophy can illuminate the currently important question—raised, as we said, in the works of Cavel, Rorty, and West—of the relations between philosophy and culture *elsewhere*” (1993, 133). He mentions W. E. B. Du Bois’s *The Soul of Black Folk* as a classic example.

Africans share many common problems of development. Appiah writes that Africa is diverse, but these differences should be approached in a positive way and celebrated: “Africans can learn from each other, as, of course, we can learn from all of humankind” (1992, 26). He views the pluralism as relevant to the United States as well. He writes, “because the intellectual projects of our one world are essentially everywhere interconnected, because world cultures are bound together,” we can talk about “one race to which we *all* belong” (27). This underlies Appiah’s concept of cosmopolitanism.

Masolo is the author of several books on African philosophy, in which he examines its history, trends, and impact, as well as its future role. He argues that works of African philosophers teach us that “all philosophy, not just African philosophy, is embedded in culture by virtue of the observation that philosophical problems stem from and are part of how philosophers consciously and critically live the cultures of their times” (2010, 50). At the same time, he is concerned about the repressive practices of culture (122). He analyzes the tension between the freedom and the authority of society, with its communalistic orientation. His books address topics such as the relevance of philosophy for cultures that are still largely based on traditional values, and the meaning of philosophy to cultures and individuals. His comparison of the phenomenological francophone and analytic anglophone trends in African philosophy shows their mutually enriching role. Comparative analysis across linguistic and cultural worlds of non-Western and Western philosophies shows that their cross-cultural

communication broadens the pluralistic picture and points to new horizons of philosophical landscape.

Since arriving in the United States, Wiredu has published several books on African philosophy, which raise some fundamental questions about the interrelation between culture and philosophy, cultural universals and particulars, and intercultural philosophical dialogue. He highlights the importance of “cultural traditions of thought” (1980, 24) and the crucial role of language in shaping them. He addresses important themes such as the relationship between academic philosophy and Africa’s indigenous culture. This contributes to a better understanding of the cultural embeddedness of philosophy, as well as the enlightening role of philosophical reasoning regarding cultural diversity and intercultural relationships. Wiredu’s works have attracted critical attention by American scholars, followed by his response, and thus sparking an intercultural dialogue.

In the postcolonial situation, the main motivation of African philosophy has been a quest for self-definition, a search of identity. The intense debate about what constitutes African philosophy itself is a substantive philosophical issue that calls for a comprehensive rethinking of traditional philosophical fundamentals. Recognition of the cultural roots of philosophy leads to rethinking the concept of philosophy and the history of philosophy.

Wiredu views philosophy as culturally embedded. He also discusses the relationship between emerging African philosophy and European (and other) philosophies. Colonial nations were characterized by asymmetry of power; it was one-way imposition of the colonizers’ canon. Postcolonial African philosophy’s search for authenticity and its own voice leads some philosophers to focus on African tradition of thought as opposed to European philosophies, while others have continued to uncritically imitate European philosophy. In contrast to these extremes, Wiredu represents a balanced tendency of those philosophers who are looking for a critical and creative approach toward philosophical thought, whether in Africa or abroad, aiming to find what is valid in them. He champions intra- and intercultural communication and philosophical dialogue.

According to Wiredu, the task of African philosophers is “to try to liberate ourselves” from a colonial mentality as far as is humanly possible (1996, 4–5). He suggests the following imperative for African philosophical research: “There is need, first, to bring out the true characters of African traditional philosophy by means of conceptual clarification and reconstruction and, second, to try to find out what is living or fit to be resurrected in the tradition” (2004, 11). As exemplars, Wiredu explores with analytic rigor the philosophical prepossessions of some concepts or aspects of the Akan language and culture.

In philosophy, conceptual decolonization involves two tasks. One is the critical task of avoiding, through a critical conceptual self-awareness, the unexamined assimilation of the conceptual frameworks embedded in the foreign philosophical traditions that have had an impact on African thought. Another is the positive task of exploring “the resources of our own indigenous conceptual schemes in our philosophical meditations on even the most technical problems of contemporary philosophy” (Wiredu 1996, 136).

The fundamental concepts of philosophy are the most fundamental categories of human thought. However, “the particular modes of thought that yield these concepts may reflect the specifics of the culture, environment, and even the accidental idiosyncrasies of the people concerned” (137). The cultural embeddedness of any philosophy will influence its concepts. The claims of any philosophy to universality should not be accepted uncritically. Wiredu leaves out no classic concept traditionally analyzed by philosophy (reality, being, existence, truth, knowledge, and mind being only a few) (ibid.).

As a believer in the universality of reason, Wiredu holds that the positive impact of this process of decolonization and of conceptual rethinking and elucidation will be of interest also of non-African thinkers and will reverberate far beyond the African continent, because, in the interrelated world, “any enlargement of conceptual options is an instrumentality for the enlargement of the human mind everywhere” (1996, 144). Through critical reflection on the concepts of various Western philosophies, along with suggestions from other cultures (as, for example, those of the Orient) “we can combine any indigenous philosophical resources to create for ourselves and our peoples modern philosophies from which both the East and the West might learn something” (Wiredu 1995, 21). Conceptual decolonization is a task common to all post-colonial regions in developing their authentic philosophical thoughts and a search of identity. It is faced by African, Latin American, and other “Third World philosophies.”

Wiredu addresses cross-cultural comparisons of conceptions in philosophy. Conceptions in different philosophies evince language-specific features. But are these compatible across cultures and languages? Is there a common ground for mutual understanding? Starting with answering these questions, he then moves further toward a more general problem of intercultural communication and dialogue. He explores “interplay of conceptual universals with semantical particulars in intercultural discourse” (1996, 7).

A philosophical concept or problem can reflect semantic particularities of a given language, depending on its vocabulary or syntax. Examining the relation between truth and fact in the Akan language, for example, “both truth and fact are rendered by the same phrase, and yet anything that can be said about the

world by means of the concepts of fact and truth in English can also be expressed within the semantical economy of Akan” (Wiredu 1996, 5). Another example is the concept of freedom. Unlike in English, in Akan, there is nothing corresponding to a problem of free will as distinct from the problem of responsibility. As Wiredu writes, in Akan ethics, “a person either did something ‘with his own eyes’ or not.” Persons determined to be free agents are held accountable as being responsible. If not found responsible, then, “reaction is one not of moral reproach but help” and advice from kin and friends. In the Akan culture, all human beings have intrinsic value, since they are seen as possessing a part of God. Irresponsibility has passed into non-responsibility. Help is regarded the restoration of personhood, that would be a “restoration of free will and *ipso facto*, of responsibility” (6).

There is no exact equivalent of the English-speaking notions of free will and responsibility within Akan framework of concepts, but an analysis shows its Akan counterparts. To express the equivalence of free will with responsibility as an interculturally valid thesis, Wiredu relies on “independent considerations,” which he defines as “considerations that are not specific to the peculiarities of any given language and are, consequently, intelligible in all the languages concerned” (ibid., 3).

Independent considerations are possible because of the intrinsic self-reflexivity of natural languages. The possibility of independent considerations can facilitate the translation of a metropolitan formulation of the concepts into an African language, and generally be “a source of fundamental conceptual insight for all; that is, irrespective of race, culture, and so forth” (1996, 3). By these examples, Wiredu illustrates “a potentially fruitful interplay of conceptual universals with semantical particulars in intercultural discourse” (ibid., 7).

Wiredu views strategy for development of African philosophy as twofold: restoration of traditional philosophical thought and the creative assimilation of the achievements of Western (and other) philosophical currents in dialogue with them. To achieve the first task, he argues for the value of the *particular* features of African and other culturally embedded philosophies, reflecting the unique characteristics of their languages and cultures. For the second, he emphasizes the importance of recognizing the universal dimension of all cultures as the common ground for intercultural relationships and inter-philosophical dialogue. In his theory, he tries to walk a fine line between particular and universal and to find a proper balance between them. Wiredu believes that all of humanity shares certain basic rational attributes and that the exploration of their role for human understanding is paramount for a cross-cultural philosophy. He points out the paradoxical situation regarding intercultural discourse. On the one hand, there is

an unprecedented informational interaction among the different cultures of the world, but, on the other hand, there is “increasing skepticism regarding the very foundation of such discourse, namely, the possibility of universal canon of thought and action” (ibid., 1). Contrarily, Wiredu disagrees with this kind of skepticism. He discounts claims about alleged incompatibility between the perspectives of universalism and particularism. The possibility of cultural universals is predicated on their humanity. He supports his argument by specifying some cognitive and ethical universals, such as the principles of noncontradiction (“that a proposition cannot be true and false at the same time”) and induction (“the capacity to learn from experience”) (27), and in he cites “the categorical imperative” (1–2).

Prima facie, cultures differ from one another, but on a more fundamental level, as expressions of a common humanity, they manifest and share important common principles. In any culture, there are elements of both particularity and universality. However, cultural particulars are accidental. He stresses that the universals of culture are what define the human species, and holds that cultural relativism obstructs intercultural dialogue (ibid., 20). Wiredu’s conceptualization of communication applies to both intra- and intercultural communication.

Wiredu also addresses the problem of translatability of language. Unlike routine translation, from the one language into the other when obviously equivalent words are available in each, the translatability issue involves stepping above both languages onto a “meta-platform.” Thus, untranslatability does not necessarily mean “unintelligibility” (ibid., 25). By this procedure, Wiredu argues that in principle, all human languages are inter-learnable and inter-translatable. Given the inter-translatability, no limits can be set to either intra- or intercultural communication (26). Of note is that Wiredu’s concept resonates with Mikhail Bakhtin’s idea that dialogism is a constitutive characteristic of the language as such. Consequently, as I mentioned somewhere, the various forms of dialogue related to language (including a dialogue of cultures) bear this “genetic” dialogic property immanent in language (Demenchonok 2014, 115).

Along with the presupposition of conceptual universals, intercultural and even intracultural communication also presupposes the existence of enough commonality of cognitive criteria for the rationality of those intimations to be assessed from the point of view of an alien culture. Recalling Bakhtin, culture can be better understood from the viewpoint of another, foreign culture: “it is only in the eyes of *another* culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly” (Bakhtin 1986, 7).

Effective intercultural communication also presupposes *cultural* universals. Wiredu discusses whether any such cultural universals exists. One of the cultural

universals is language: the use of language by all human societies is “the cultural universal *par excellence*” (1996, 28). Ethical universals are another basis for intercultural communication. Citing the Golden Rule and Kant’s categorical imperative, as well as traditional Akan ethical maxims, Wiredu formulates what he calls a “principle of sympathetic impartiality,” which, he asserts, is a human universal that transcends particular cultures. This principle combines both impartiality (what the moral rules embody) and the sympathy that moral motivation evinces. Sympathetic impartiality includes such values as truthfulness, honesty, justice, and chastity, which are moral norms common to any culture. As Wiredu writes, “whether you are a Ghanaian or American or a Chinese or of any other nationality, race or culture, truth telling is an infeasible obligation” (63).

However, for some, the very idea of a cultural universal raises the suspicion of authoritarianism and a justification of imposition of power against the will of individuals. This skepticism stems from the history of intercultural oppression, in which some cultures have imposed their ideas of good and evil, as allegedly universal, on other cultures. But what they have imposed has generally been their customs rather than any principles of pure morality. No wonder that Wiredu laments that such practice “has earned universals a bad name” (ibid., 2). Philosophy’s critical role is to clarify concepts and their genuine meaning. Wiredu is critical of the abuse of universals by neo-colonial ideologies, which impose such alleged universals (which have been rather pseudo-universals and “home grown particulars”) upon other peoples (ibid.). He asserts that this is a false and unphilosophical form of cultural universalization, nothing more than a manifestation of cultural ethnocentrism. He asserts that fallible conceptions of universals, both cognitive and ethical, should not be confused with the very idea of universals itself: “judicious claims of universality imply only that contending adults can, in principle, discuss their differences rationally on a basis of equality, whether inside identical cultures or across them” (31). He suggests a respectful dialogical approach to these matters through rational discourse (2).

Inter-philosophical dialogue under umbrella of Africana philosophy

Philosophical dialogue between the intellectuals of Africa and of the diaspora has a long history. Since 1990s, when African-American academic philosophy began to gain influence in North American universities, it attracted Afro-Caribbean philosophers. Among philosophers related to the African diaspora in the Caribbean and now working at universities in the United States are Jamaican-born African-Jewish Lewis R. Gordon, Professor of Philosophy and Africana Studies at the University of Connecticut, Storrs; Monserrat born Anti-

guan Paget Henry, Professor of Sociology and Africana Studies at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island; and Jamaican Charles W. Mills, John Evans Professor of Moral and Intellectual Philosophy at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois.

The collaboration between African-American and Afro-Caribbean philosophers, as well as some other diasporic philosophers from Central and South America, has led to the development of African diasporic Africana philosophy, which receives much attention today. The articulation of Africana tradition of thought shows important, previously ignored, aspects of cultural diversity and interculturality. For some, Africana thought includes black thought, but not exclusively such. Some others regard Africana and black as creolized or mixed cultural categories. These have also been combined with other designations of mixture, such as borders or temporal displacement.

Lucius Outlaw elaborated the concept of Africana philosophy as early as in 1996 (*On Race and Philosophy*). He characterizes Africana philosophy as “metaphilosophical, umbrella-concept”:

The notion of “Africana philosophy” is of very recent origin but is being taken by increasing numbers of professional philosophers who are African or of African descent, and by others who are not. “Africana philosophy” is very much a heuristic notion—that is, one that suggests orientations for philosophical endeavors by professional philosophers and other intellectuals devoted to matters pertinent to African and African-descended persons and peoples. (2004, 90)

In this view, African, African-American, and Afro-Caribbean philosophies construed as the components of Africana philosophy. Gordon writes, “Africana philosophy is a species of Africana thought, which involves theoretical questions raised by critical engagements with ideas of Africana cultures and their hybrid, mixed, creolized forms worldwide” (2008, 1), the geographical scope of which includes North America, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. It is also characterized as “an area of philosophical research that addresses the problems faced and raised by the African diaspora” (13). It addresses the issues of culture, race, identity, modernity, colonization, oppression and struggles for emancipation.

Within this broadly defined field, Gordon considers African-American philosophy as “an area of Africana philosophy that forced on philosophical problems posed by the African diaspora in the New World.” This broadens the concept of African-American philosophy beyond the United States, meaning “the modern philosophical discourse that emerges from the diasporic African community, including its francophone, hispanophone, and lusophone forms” (ibid., 69).

African-American philosophers engaged in dialogue with intellectuals of African descent from the Caribbean and Central and South America embody a metaconcept of “Africana philosophy,” which connects African philosophical thought with that of the African diaspora in the Americas. In the United States, the Society for the Study of Africana Philosophy (SSAP), based in New York City, gained recognition by the American Philosophical Association in 1987, thereby establishing Africana philosophy as an officially listed specialty in the discipline, which facilitated its recognition in some academic departments. There is also the Society of African Philosophy in North America (SAPINA). Of course, membership in these philosophical associations and research and teaching on African-American, African, and Africana philosophy are not limited to philosophers of African descent. The field is rather inclusive and open to scholars and intellectuals regardless of cultural identity ethnicity. Such identities as such are of no import for their philosophizing. In fact, many of these scholars are contributing to the development of these areas of studies, including from interdisciplinary and intercultural perspectives. By virtue of their competencies, researchers in these areas may be identified as, for example, “African Americanists,” or “Africanists” “Afro-Caribbeanists,” or “Latin-Americanists.” These areas of research are also the areas of dialogue and collaboration of philosophers with different cultural backgrounds. Conferences are hosted in departments of philosophy in various universities throughout the United States. In addition, there are now books, and publications in professional journals on these topics. Of particular publishing significance is the continuing, regular appearance of the journal, *Philosophia Africana: Analysis of Philosophy and Issues in Africa and the Black Diaspora*.

The interplay of the issues of culture and race sets some of the themes for theorizing about the identity of Africana philosophy. It also determines to some degree the locus of this philosophy—how this philosophy positions itself in the spectrum of contemporary philosophical currents: its affinity with some and its distancing from the others.

Gordon explores some challenges in the philosophy of culture, using an approach he calls *dialectical*, *psychoanalytical*, and *existential*. This leads to problematics of (1) theoretical philosophical anthropology; (2) freedom and liberation; and (3) metacritiques of reason (2010, p.198). He addresses them in developing his alternative, “theory in black.” He approaches race and culture issues from a perspective of Africana existential philosophy. The existential questions concerning freedom, identity, and liberation through a focus on the human condition permeate black thought. In contrast to the postmodern thesis of

the “death of subject,” he revitalizes existential phenomenology and shows its importance for developing a new humanities and a new social theory.

Gordon’s work bridges both European existentialist tradition and Africana existential thought. He indicates that this was a theme of “the various dialogical encounters between twentieth century Africana theorists and European and Euro-American theorists” (2000, 7). He notices that Jean-Paul Sartre “serves as a link between Richard Wright and Franz Fanon” (9).

African-American and Afro-Caribbean philosophers made a critical “deconstruction” of the deformation (double consciousness) that accompanied the racialization of African identity. Paget Henry explored the positive alternative of the reconstruction of self-formation (2000). His approach consists of bringing together “phenomenological and discursive strategies, as well as insights drawn from the Caribbean philosophical experience” (2003, 48). As he states, philosophy is a rationally oriented discourse, but this does not negate its cultural embeddedness. The author focuses on the discursive processes vital to the formation of these philosophies.

As a recent trend in the evolution of African-American and Afro-Caribbean philosophies, Henry notices that they became more open to other intellectual traditions. They are also engaged with Euro-American pragmatism and various European philosophies. Henry also points out the necessity to be engaged in more systematic dialogues with indigenous Americans and Indo-Caribbean philosophies. Both indigenous Americans and people of African descent have been victims of the phenomenological and discursive invisibility, and neither has been able to see the other’s philosophies. “Hence,” he concludes, “the urgent need for dialogue” (ibid., 63). The importance of dialogue has also been stressed by other authors. Jennifer Vest, for example, argues for the “New Dialogic” in philosophy (2005).

Africana philosophy has made a positive impact on contemporary African philosophy. African philosophers give credit to the African-American philosophers for supporting the emergence of “conversational philosophy” in Africa as its recent orientation since late 1990s. Jonathan Chumakonon, Nigerian-born logician, in his recently edited volume writes that some “proponents of conversational African philosophy in this era ironically have emerged in the Western world notably in America” (2015, 28). Among them, he mentions Gordon, Outlaw, Vest, and Bruce Janz. He opines that Gordon’s work, for example, “suggests a craving for a new line of development for African philosophy—new approach which is to be critical, analytical and universalizable while at the same time being African,” which is the spirit of the emerging conversational philosophy (ibid.). He also mentioned Outlaw’s corroboration, who advocates the

deconstruction of the European-invented image of Africa to be replaced by a reconstruction to be done by conscientized Africans free from the grip of colonial mentality (Outlaw 1996). Chumakonon writes, “influences from these thoughts by the turn of the millennium year crystallized into a new mode of thinking which metamorphosed into conversational philosophy, thus heralding New Era of African philosophy” (2015, 28). Chumakonon characterizes conversational philosophy as a “critical conversation among practitioners” and theoretic evaluation of the thoughts of other African philosophers (ibid.). Although he does not use term “dialogue,” there is little doubt that conversational philosophy is inherently dialogical.

A journey in the search for identity leads not to a final destination of substantialist “core,” but rather moves the philosophies to the realm of polyphonic interrelations of living thought. We can see traces and possibilities of these interrelations. The dialogue or polylog of African-American, African-Caribbean, and African philosophies can be considered as inter-cultural relations, given the originality of each tradition, and at the same time as intra-cultural relations of participants under the Africana “umbrella.” Each of these philosophies is engaged with various currents of European philosophy, which can also be viewed as inter-cultural relations. Thinking in more general terms of culturally embedded unities or “families” of philosophies like Africana or European, they would represent interrelations among large cultural types or traditions of thought. The borders identifying each of these philosophies and their constellations on all levels are not absolute but rather historically conditional, alterable and transparent. The new ideas frequently emerge on the borders or in the border zones “in-between” of philosophical currents. Each of these philosophies is shining with its own internal light of wisdom and with the reflected light of other philosophies. The possibility of each of them, developing as a part of the multidimensional and dynamic network of interrelations, derives its potential from being ultimately embedded in the all-embracing philosophical culture of humanity.

Latino/a Philosophy: An Original Voice in World Philosophy

The Emergence of Latino/a Philosophy in the United States

Latinos (mainly Mexican, Cuban, and Puerto Ricans) are the largest minority group and the second largest racial/ethnic group, second only to whites in the United States, constituting approximately 50.5 million (16.3 percent) of the total population (Urbina 2014, 7). This rapidly growing group is projected to soon become the majority. Latina/o culture has been a “part of ‘America’ longer than the United States has existed” (ibid., 6). But after the end of the Mexican-American War in 1848, when the United States annexed over half of the Mexi-

can territory (now California, Texas, and New Mexico), Mexican Americans became foreigners in their own land. They experience a similar pattern of neglect and discrimination as other ethnic/racial minorities, and they have seldom been studied in academic research. Essentially removed from the pages of history, “they have been historically manipulated, intimidated, marginalized, oppressed, and silenced” (4).

Latinos/as began to demand a greater role in American society and a greater understanding of who they are. This brought attention to the need to understand their identity, their history, and their thought. This involves broader ideas about ethnicity, race, and cultural diversity, “elevating multiculturalism to a universal level of equality, justice, respect, and human dignity—eventually moving beyond post-racial America” (Urbina 2014,15). Intellectuals aspire to develop a Latino/a philosophy both in search for identity and as a resource to address concerns of their people.

The birth of this philosophy was prepared by the generation of pioneering philosophers who were born in the 1940s and 1950s in Latin American countries and who were educated in the United States and later working there as professors at universities. These include Jorge J. E. Gracia, Linda Martin Alcoff, Ofelia Shutte, Walter Mignolo, María Lugones, and Mario Saenz. They were joined by a younger generation of philosophers, such as Eduardo Mendieta, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and Carlos Sanchez, among others (Mendieta 2009, 519–521).

An outstanding leader of this pioneering generation of Latino/a philosophy is Jorge J. E. Gracia, who was born in Cuba, educated in the United States and Canada, and currently holds the Samuel P. Capen Chair in the Departments of Philosophy and Comparative Literature at the State University of New York at Buffalo. His numerous books are in subjects such as metaphysics, hermeneutics, aesthetics, ethnic and racial issues, medieval philosophy, philosophy of religion, and Latin American philosophy. With his expertise in analytical philosophy and history of philosophy, he was able to provide an original articulation of the place of Latino/a philosophy in the United States and to lay the ground work for its development (see 2000; 2008). On the eve of the twenty-first century, he wrote about the obstacles for recognition of Latino/a philosophers within the United States philosophical establishment, due to culturally biased stereotypes and perception of them as “foreigners.” Because the American philosophical community is “xenophobic,” there are “two ways of disenfranchising philosophers: locating them in a non-European or non-American tradition, or classifying what they do as non-philosophical” (Gracia 2000, 182). Latinos/-Hispanics who show any interest in Hispanic thought or issues are perceived as

foreigners, and “the fragmentation, the genetic and family organization, and the rivalry between these families in American philosophy, all contribute to the exclusion of Hispanics” (186). But this still does not mean that in order to be accepted by the establishment that Latinos/as should surrender their identity and forget their culture and values. He encouraged philosophers to continue on their path and to address the relevant issues. In viewing this situation in perspective, Gracia prophetically wrote, “we are outside of the American philosophical mainstream today, but tomorrow might be different” (187).

Gracia addresses the problem of identity, which is central to the Latin American philosophical tradition, and which obtained new aspects in the context of the United States (2000; 2005). How do Latinos/as think about themselves and their identity? In answering to this question, he goes beyond the traditional dilemmas (essentialism versus eliminativism and generalism versus particularism) and proposes a new way of thinking about Latinos/as based on the familial-historical view of ethnic identities that allows for negotiation, accommodation, and change. This view also “opens the doors to dialogue and understanding, diminishing the possibility of conflict and strife among peoples from different cultures, races, ethne, and nations” (2014, 77).

Gracia proposes an original conception of “Latino philosophy as an ethnic philosophy” (2008, 139). An ethnic philosophy is the philosophy of an ethnos, based on a familial-historical view, and its unity has to do with contextual historical relations: “Latino philosophy is the philosophy the Latino ethnos has developed in the circumstances in which the members of the ethnos have found themselves throughout history” (141). What Latino philosophy is should be examined only in the context of the Latino ethnos, without applying criteria developed by other French, British, Indian philosophy or other ethne. Gracia develops his conception by revising the universalist (or “scientific”), culturalist, and critical views of philosophy. As he writes, “there are philosophers whose standards are set by their ethnic context, and this should not disqualify them from being labeled philosophers, even if they cannot be labeled ‘scientific’ philosophers” (146).

This conception highlights the unity of Latino philosophy, broadly understood as including the work of Latino/a philosophers working both in the United States and in Latin America. It shows their common cultural tradition and relationships, and that the work of most Latino philosophers in the United States has roots in Latin American philosophy. More specifically regarding Latino philosophers living in the United States, Gracia analyses the distinctive characteristics of their works and their relationship to the other philosophical currents in this country. He offers a strong justification for a historiographical, pedago-

gical, and conceptual role of the Latino/a philosophy for the philosophical thought in the United States. He examines the questions concerning philosophical canons and philosophical traditions and how Latino/s philosophy fits into both the American and world canons of philosophy. He suggests several measures that could help improve the standing of Latino/a philosophy in the United States (2008, 174–176).

The themes of cultural identity and Latin American feminist philosophy are explored by Cuban born Ofelia Schutte, Professor Emeritus at the University of South Florida. Her book *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought* (1993) had contributed to the visibility of Latin American philosophy in the United States. It was followed by Schutte's several publications on topics related to Latin American philosophy and Latino/a identity (see 2000; 2011). Schutte was instrumental as one of the co-editors in publication of a collection *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy* (Nuccetelli et al. 2010). This volume promotes the presence of Latin American philosophy and a dialogue with the work of Latinos/as in the United States.

An original approach to the problem of identity is developed by Panamanian born Linda Martin Alcoff, a Professor at Hunter College/CUNY Graduate Center. In her book *Visible Identity* (2006), she grapples with issues of race, gender, and various social identities such as Latinos, African Americans and Asian Americans. She believes that we need new notions of the self that can accommodate its specificity. Alcoff promotes a dialogue of Latino/a philosophers with their African-American philosophical colleagues regarding the hot button issues of race and ethnicity. In commenting on Alcoff's book, Lewis Gordon stressed its relevance to the analysis of the gender and race issues in African existential phenomenology (2008, 144–150). In recent interview to *New York Times*, Alcoff said that all of the great Latin American thinkers were engaged with the question of Latin American cultural, racial and ethnic identities and histories:

Philosophy in Latin America is very diverse, but one can discern a running thread of decolonial self-consciousness and aspiration. Thinkers from Europe and the United States persist even today in dismissing Latin American philosophy, and as a result, Latin American philosophers have had to justify their prerogative, and their ability, to contribute to normative debates over the good, the right and the true. But this has had the beneficial result of making visible the context in which philosophy occurs, and of disabling the usual pretensions of making transcendent abstractions removed from all concrete realities. (Yancy and Alcoff 2015)

Latino/a philosophers collaborate with Latin American philosophers in critical analysis of homogenizing globalization from perspectives of postcoloniality

and interculturalism. Columbian born Eduardo Mendieta, was educated in the United States and Germany, and currently is a Professor at Penn State University. He works on Latin American philosophy, critical philosophy of race, and issues related to religion, globalization, and global justice. In his book *Global Fragments: Globalization, Latinoamericanisms, and Critical Theory* (2008) he provides philosophical explorations of the processes of globalization, particularly in the context of Latin America. He bridges critical social theories from Latin American philosophy, Frankfurt School critical theory, and African American philosophy to put forth a synthetic vision of global ethics from the perspective of the oppressed. He develops a concept of critical and dialogic cosmopolitanism as self-reflexive and also reflexive of the point of view of the others and guided by contextual universalism. He also offers an analysis of what does it mean to be a Latin American and Latino/a in the twenty-first century. Mendieta fosters close collaboration between Latino/a and Latin American philosophers, including through bringing them together in collective volumes edited by him. He translated Enrique Dussel's books in English. He highlights different dimensions of the question of Latino/a philosophy: (1) Who are Latinos in the United States, or to what does the term "Latino" mean; how do they relate to Latin America and the larger Hispanic culture? (2) What is the role of national identities—let us say Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Mexican Americans—within this new forged identity? (3) What can and should be their philosophical canon? (4) What is the role of this unique philosophical perspective within "American" philosophy? and (5) What is the relationship between Latino/a philosophy and African American philosophy?

Argentinean born Walter Mignolo, a Professor at Duke University, shows the preeminence of Latin American thought in developing the philosophical basis for a systematic critique of colonialism and Occidentalization. He proposes a comparative and philological methodology and a pluritopic hermeneutics as an approach for the radical rethinking of cultural differences, of the Other as a subject to be understood, and of the understanding subject itself (2005). In his book *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (2011), published in a critical series "Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations," he pierces the surface of Western epistemic rationality and its geopolitical genesis to reveal its hidden underside, its foundation in the terror-logic of imperial rule. He explores the themes of the geopolitics of knowledge, transmodernity, border thinking, and pluriversality or "diversality." In opposition to hegemonic globalization, Mignolo (2011) offers his concept of "de-colonial cosmopolitanism."

Columbian born Mario Saenz is a Professor at Le Moyne College, in Syracuse, New York. He contributed to Latino/a philosophical thought in the United

States through his works on Leopoldo Zea and Enrique Dussel. He offers the framework through which one can address the question of the identity of Latinos/as within the United States (1999). Sáenz edited a volume *Latin American Perspectives on Globalization* (2002) which bring to an English-reading public important reflections on globalization from the perspective of significant Latino/a and Latin American intellectuals. They explore conditions for building dialogic relationships and propose models of intercultural relations. In his Introduction to the volume, Saenz argues that a theory of globalization with intent in human emancipation must address the process of liberation. He highlights intercultural dimension of liberational thought. Intercultural philosophy is a discursive alternative to the monocultural structures of traditional philosophies. In commenting on Raul Fornet-Betancourt's concept of intercultural philosophy, Saenz writes that being "aware of the cultural limitations inherent in the doing of philosophy, intercultural philosophy grounds itself on relations of solidarity with the philosophical endeavors of other cultures. It is at the places of their encounters that a concrete universality arises" (Saenz 2002, 16; see also Introduction, 1–21).

Nelson Maldonado-Torres was born in Puerto-Rico, educated in the United States, and currently is an Associate Professor at University of California, Berkeley. In his book *Against War* (2008), published in a critical series "Latin America otherwise: languages, empires, nations," he explores ethics and the philosophy of liberation, bringing together the European Jewish, Afro-Caribbean, and Latin American critical thought. Starting with the study of genealogy of the works of Emmanuel Levinas, Franz Fanon, and Enrique Dussel, he moves toward the development of the phenomenology of the racialization. Maldonado-Torres identifies at the heart of western modernity and its war paradigm a "master morality" of domination, which legitimizes racial policies, imperial projects, and wars. As an alternative, he offers a new type of politics and ethics that he calls "de-colonial ethics." He elaborates on the concepts of "decolonial reduction" and a "post-continental" philosophy (2006). He is a co-editor of a volume *Latin@s in the World-System* (Grosfoguel et al. 2005), which examines the diversity of Latino/a origins and cultural-spiritual backgrounds and the impact of Afro-Latinos and Indo-Latinos in the United States.

Some evidence has come to bear on the issue, which indicates that Gracia's prediction regarding the future of Latino/a philosophy was right. The efforts of these Hispanic/Latino philosophers appear to be bearing fruit. Importantly, in recent years, we have seen the emergence of a *Latino/a* philosophy, evident" in events such as, for example, "Latino/a Philosopher: A National Symposium," which was held at State University of New York at Stony Brook, March 15–16,

2014. This was the first event of its kind. It gathered together many philosophers living in the United States, who self-identify as Latin and who believe that their ethnic identity somehow impacts the philosophy they produce. According to Robert Eli Sánchez's report on this event:

What we witness was, in some way, the arrival of *Latino/a* philosophy, . . . the arrival of what Jorge J. E. Gracia called in the first paper of the symposium an “ethnic philosophy”—that is a “philosophy produced by an ethnos and, as such, [one that] reflects the ethnos and whatever may characterize it. (2013, 2)

However, as Gracia argued, the use of the phrase “*Latino/a* philosophy” meaningfully suggests only:

that in certain periods and places, *Latino/a* philosophy has shared certain interests, topics, approaches, or methods that were geared toward the immediate historical context and thus distinguishable from other philosophies or other groups in other places and times. (Ibid.)

One of the main problems addressed by the participants of the symposium was the under-representation of *Latino/a* philosophers. Facing negative stereotypes in academia, they are discouraged from philosophizing as *Latinos/as*—from exploring their own socio-cultural roots through philosophy. This needs to change. At the same time, to conceptualize and defend *Latino/a* identity or a group agenda should not generate internal exclusions in the struggle for recognition. The benefits of the emergence and recognition of *Latino/a* philosophy, or of ethnic philosophies in general, are that they offer an opportunity to enlarge philosophy by representing differences within it and to make visible its new aspects. Increasing diversity is an opportunity for philosophy to avoid epistemic errors and improve its “epistemic reliability” as well as to expand its horizons. As Gracia stated, it is the basis of a truly comparative philosophy, for although “comparative philosophy was born from the desire to see similarities between the great philosophies developed in different parts of the world, . . . as important as the similarities are the differences” (ibid., 3).

The Symposium philosophers viewed the emergence of *Latino/a* philosophy as an opportunity to contextualize philosophy and to include in it relevant issues and concerns of *Latinos/as*. They hope to find in philosophy a resource to address problems such as the marginalization and colonization of philosophy, *Latino/a* identity, interculturality, immigration, etc. At the same time, the participants agreed that the effort to realize an autochthonous *Latino/a* philosophy should not be too ideological and should not compromise the universal aspiration of philosophy (ibid., 4).

The search for answers to these significant questions indicates the themes and perspectives of the research agenda for this new field of philosophy. Pur-

suing Latino/a philosophy is at the focus of conferences and publications. The papers of the first national symposium on the Latino/a philosophy in the United States will be published in the forthcoming anthology by Indiana University Press. The topics of Latino/a philosophy were discussed at a conference at University of San Francisco in April 17, 2015 and at the American Philosophical Association Pacific Division meeting in April 1-4, 2015 in Vancouver, Canada.

All these questions are relevant not only to Latino/a philosophy, but also to African-American, Africana, Asian-American, and any other emerging philosophies in our culturally diverse and interrelated world.

United States Latino/a philosophers have established dialogue and collaboration with their Latin American counterparts. They have joined conferences, conducted research projects, and published in scholarly journals. Being bicultural and bilingual, they have “double citizenship” so to speak, as well as world citizenship as philosophers. They have published anthologies and books about Latin American philosophy in general, as well as philosophies in Argentina, Cuba, Mexico, and other countries of the region. They also contribute their perspective to cross-national discussions among philosophers about the problems of social and cultural identity.

Overall, the emergence in the philosophical landscape of the United States of the original currents of African-American and Latino/s philosophies, and their growing interrelationship with African, African-Caribbean, Africana, and Latin American philosophies show an increasing intercultural and transcontinental philosophical exchange. These are the signs of the emerging birth of the phenomenon of “transamerican philosophy.”

From critical multiculturalism to interculturalidad

During the 1990s, there was a period of rising multiculturalism. However, the neoliberal version of multiculturalism was also criticized for its limitations. Attempts at rethinking and revising it generated a shift toward more critical multiculturalism, which is open to dialogical relationships among cultures and oriented toward interculturalism.

Latino intellectuals, supporting the struggle for cultural identity and the rights of minorities, welcome multiculturalism insofar as it facilitates nondiscrimination and recognition. At the same time, they are critical of the limitations of neoliberal multiculturalism (both as concept and policy), which does not address the root cause of racial and ethnic discrimination, and stops short of securing the rights of minorities and the conditions for pluralistic governance.

Puerto Rican born Juan Flores, Professor at Hunter College, City University of New York, is outspoken with regard to his views of multiculturalism. He is a

strong proponent of minorities studies, and in this regard, stresses the importance of the “particularity” peculiar to each unique culture. Flores points out the one-sidedness of undifferentiated views of multiculturalism in the United States as oriented toward cultural exclusivity and separatism (Canclini 2014). He draws attention to the complexity of neoliberal multiculturalism, and the need to differentiate its limitations from its sound potential aspects. He argues for a critical multiculturalism, which would guide minorities studies, apart from a knowledge of structured separations and exclusions, and aim for equality and recognition. From this perspective, a relational or intersectional approach to the study of cultural identities, as an alternative to essentialist and relativist conceptions, is valuable, but it needs to be accompanied by “a broad theory of geopolitical and social power capable of registering differential kinds and conditions of relationality” (Flores 2006, 62).

Flores sees some ideas for such a theory in Walter Mignolo’s (2000) concept of “decoloniality,” Anibal Quijano’s (2010) concept of “coloniality of power,” and José D. Saldívar’s (2011) concept of “Trans-Americanity.” He further shows that the development of ethnic minority studies programs has enhanced our collective understanding of the relationship of identity to culture and to knowledge, as well as interrelations among cultures.

New accounts of scholarship among our various identities are needed. Flores suggests that the relational approach in Latino Studies should be implemented in three directions: *trans*-national relations between United States Latino diasporas and the national cultures of their respective countries; *cross*-ethnic studies of Latino’s’ relations to non-Latino groups in the United States, including African Americans; and the *intra*-group relations among the various Latino ethnicities, as well as class and racial relations within them (2006, 62).

Progressive intellectuals such as Flores champion cultural diversity and identity politics over the “structural monoculturalism” perspective of such theorist as Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., who objects to bilingual and multicultural education, and claims that “the point of America was not to preserve old cultures, but to produce a new *American* culture” (Schlesinger, 1998, 17). In response, Flores argues for a critical multiculturalism, which presupposes equality and reciprocity (2006, 61).

Maria Lugones, Associate Professor, and Joshua Price, Professor, both at the State University of New York at Binghamton, critically analyze the cognitive practices of structural monoculturalism that foster fundamentalist patriotic unity and hegemony, finding them to be as reductive, impoverishing, and tyrannical (2009, 93). They also criticize neoliberal multiculturalism, which they claim hides the coloniality of power and serves to retain the status quo. They believe that

a plurality of cultures, values, economies necessitate an authentic, structural, not merely ornamental, multiculturalism (ibid., 93). Developing this structural (or “policentric”) multiculturalism leads toward interculturalism (*interculturalidad*), a term that Lugones and Price borrow from Catherine Walsh, who explains it as a proposal from the bottom up that “reflects the need to promote processes of reciprocal translation of knowledges in the plural” (quoted in Lugones and Price, 2009, 97). Interculturalism “represents the construction of new epistemological frameworks that incorporate, negotiate and *interculturalizan* both knowledges” (ibid, p. 137). Countering the social and cultural subalternization, interculturalism opens spaces for the processes of desubalternization and decolonization.

When cultural variety is valued, mutual exchange can influence people’s worldviews and lead to social transformation through the processes of interculturalization. In light of this, Lugones and Price call for an epistemological shift toward a multivoiced solidarity in place of a univocal conformity, a solidarity exemplified by multiple movements whose potential is emergent. As an example, they mentioned the May 1, 2006 pro-immigrants marches. “The potential of the marches rest in part on practices of *interculturalidad* built on reciprocal exchanges” (ibid., 97). The sense of the possibilities lies in the participation of African Americans, Asian Americans, Latino Americans, Native Americans, and other minorities in “an inward multivoiced process of egalitarian challenge to the marriage of global capital and the racial nation-state” (98).

José Luis Gómez-Martínez (1997), Professor Emeritus at the University of Georgia, applies the basic principles of intercultural philosophy to the analysis of intercultural relations, as expressed in Latin American literature. He examines the problems that hinder intercultural dialogue. Intercultural relations frequently take place within a hierarchical structure (superior-inferior, or, what Hegel called “master-slave mentality”) rather within a context of equality. Respect for other cultures should not be an uncritical, blind acceptance and imitation, which implies the status quo. Critical analysis should unmask the hierarchical structures, which subordinate one culture to the other. Based on his concept of the “anthropic discourse” he believes that appealing to the “anthropic” or to human being as praxis would lead toward a liberating intercultural dialogue.

Toward Dialogical Dialogue

World-renowned philosopher, theologian, and mystic Raimundo Panikkar grew up in Spain, the son of an Indian father and a Spanish mother. He spent two decades in the United States as a Professor at Harvard University (1966–1971) and as a Professor and the chair of Comparative Religious Philosophy at the University of California in Santa Barbara (1971–1987). During those years,

Panikkar had published his famous book *The Intra-Religious Dialogue* (first edition in 1978), as well as many other works, which laid the ground for his further major books.

A proponent of inter-religious dialogue, Panikkar's general approach was to view issues in the world through the eyes of two or more traditions. His in-depth knowledge of both the Western and Eastern philosophical and spiritual traditions allowed him to engage in an inter-philosophical and inter-religious dialogue between different traditions and beliefs. He tried to connect religion and philosophy as important to many cultures.

The running thread of Panikkar's works is the idea of relationship, what he terms radical "relationality" or "relativity." He coined the term "cosmotheandric" to refer to his conception of the threefold unity of all reality, meaning God, human beings, and nature are linked in a symbiotic relationship. In culture, "radical relativity" means the primordial interconnection of all human traditions. This implies that persons, despite their "otherness," have the capability, through dialogue, to communicate their experiences and understandings to one another. Since an effective discourse presupposes a common set of beliefs and values (a shared symbol system) within a tradition and across traditions, Panikkar focuses on the symbolic discourse in interfaith encounter or "dialogical dialogue."

Panikkar discusses the relation between dialectical dialogue and "dialogical dialogue," which are "two intertwined moments of the dialogical character of the human being" (1999, 30). The difference is that the first is about objects, while the second is a "dialogue among subjects aiming at being a dialogue about subjects" (29).

The starting point for dialogical dialogue is the *intra*-personal dialogue by which one consciously and critically appropriates one's own tradition. One also needs to be open to others' traditions, without prejudice or premature judgments, and to have a desire to understand them. The *inter*-personal dialogue focuses on the mutual testimonies of those involved in the dialogue. It presupposes a certain trust in the other qua other, "considering the other a true source of understanding and knowledge, the listening attitude toward my partner, the common search for truth" (ibid., 31). Others have their own experiences, which, through dialogue, produce new intellectual productivity. Dialogical dialogue assumes that reality is not given once and for all, but "it is continually creating itself" (ibid.).

In dialogical dialogue, there is always place for diversity of opinions; it leads to recognizing difference but also to what we have in common, producing mutual fecundation. As such, it is not merely an abstract, theoretical dialogue, a dialogue about beliefs, but primarily a "total human encounter" of persons, involving not only minds but also hearts. This relationship of human beings

emerges in the actual praxis of the dialogical dialogue. Ethically, the will to dialogue is incompatible with the will to power, for any intention “to convert, to dominate, or even to know the other for ulterior motives, destroys the dialogical dialogue.” The dialogical dialogue is a deep-reaching human dialogue in which one seeks the collaboration of the other for mutual realization, since wisdom consists in being able to listen and understand the other (ibid.). Dialogue is something absolutely necessary for humanity, and inter-religious dialogue plays an important role. Dialogue challenges many of the commonly accepted foundations of modern culture and brings hope for change. Panikkar argues that “to restore or install the dialogical dialogue in human relations among individuals, families, groups, societies, nations, and cultures may be one of the most urgent things to do in our times threatened by a fragmentation of interests that threatens all life on the planet” (ibid., 32).

Contemporary “intercultural thought” is a broad notion, which includes intercultural theology and philosophy. Orlando O. Espín, Professor of systematic theology at the University of San Diego and Director of the Center for the Study of Latino/a Catholicism, develops intercultural theology in dialogue with intercultural philosophy. He characterizes Raúl Fornet-Betancourt’s concept of intercultural philosophy as “particularly insightful and rich as a dialogue partner for Western Catholic theology” (Espín 2014, 62).

Intercultural approach to theology considers the cultural embeddedness of theological forms. For Espín, “all theologies and all theologians are culturally bound, and there can be no exception” (2007, ix). He explores the breadth of Latino/a culture in dialogue with Catholic tradition, non-Christian religions, and the Afro-Latino heritage. By paying attention to black and Latino/a LGBT groups, he expands the scope of the inclusiveness of Latino/a and black communities and cultures. His approach to an intercultural theology of religion emphasizes the importance of dialogue. Going beyond the traditional dialogue between Christianity and the main non-Christian religions, Espín indicates that dialogue in a Latino/a theology of religions must also take place with non-Christian native or African religions including Lukumí. He insists that an acknowledgement by theologians of the impact of Africanness upon Latino/a identity and culture must also include a heritage of slavery and racism, providing a more complete picture of history and communal identity.

In writing about an intercultural theology of tradition, Espín understands tradition as thoroughly historical and contextualized. As such, it cannot presume to represent truths that may be recognized as universally relevant without multi-level processes of dialogue and self-critique within and between cultures. Through such processes “multiple historical, cultural, human universalities” can

be drawn beyond the particularities of each toward “solidarity with others” (2007, 21).

The first major dialogue between Latina theologians and Latin American feminist theologians took place at The Interamerican Symposium on Feminist Intercultural Theology, which took place in Mexico City, July 5–11, 2004. Prominent feminist social scientists and theologians from North, Central, and South America discussed the epistemological and hermeneutical frameworks for a critical feminist theology that develops in intercultural terms. Based on the presentations at that conference, Maria Pilar Aquino and Maria Jose Rosado-Nunes edited a volume titled *Feminist Intercultural Theology: Latina Explorations for a Just World* (2007).

Discussions on Interculturalism in Canada

The recognition and celebration of cultural diversity was a hallmark of the second half of the twentieth century. “Multiculturalism” became a fashionable term. Frequently, however, merely lip service is given to the development of diverse cultures: in multiculturalism, the other’s “right to exist” may be acknowledged, while still considering one’s own culture or truth to be superior to others or absolute. As I mentioned somewhere, multiculturalism has shown its conceptual failures (Demenchonok 2010, 470-473). It presented the holistic, rather than the dynamic, model of cultures as hermetical and self-sufficient. If cultures are focused mainly on their differences and on maintaining their borders with other cultures, rather than being open to shared values and dialogue, then the result is likely to be warlike relations (“culture wars” inside societies and a global “clash of civilizations”). In contrast, intercultural philosophy argues for an alternative concept of cultural diversity free from determinism and representation.

The influential “White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue” from the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (2008) argues that multiculturalism has failed and interculturalism should be the preferred model for Europe. It asserts, “whilst driven by benign intentions, multiculturalism is now seen by many as having fostered communal segregation and mutual incomprehension,” and “the emerging interculturalist paradigm” incorporates the best of preceding models and “it adds the new element, critical to integration and social cohesion, of dialogue on the basis of equal dignity and shared values” (Council of Europe 2008, 19). In the same vein, the second *UNESCO World Report. Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue* (2009) argues in favor of a new approach to cultural diversity— one that takes account of its dynamic nature, cultural interactions, intercultural competencies, and intercultural and interfaith

dialogue at all levels (UNESCO 2009). However, some philosophers disagree with these views (Meer and Moddod 2012).

The “politics of recognition,” group rights, and individual freedom

Canada has a francophone province of Quebec within its anglophone majority. The differing views of these two groups regarding cultural diversity and integration are conceptualized as the distinction between “multiculturalism” versus “interculturalism.” In Montreal for about five decades there was Intercultural Institute of Montreal (1963–2012), which published journal *INTERculture*.

Charles Taylor, Canadian philosopher and Professor of McGill University in Montreal, in his influential “The politics of recognition” (1994) approached the issue of multiculturalism from a philosophical perspective. He characterized the emergence of a modern politics of identity as premised upon an idea of “recognition.” According to Taylor, the notion of recognition, and its relationship to multiculturalism, has developed out of a move toward a notion of equal dignity as an essential part of democratic culture. The idea of recognition gives rise to a search for “authenticity.” He argues that multiculturalism is dealing with a tension between the recognition of equal dignity of human beings and the recognition of cultural authenticity. People form their identities not “monologically” or without an intrinsic relationship with others. Rather, we are “always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the things our significant others want to see in us” (1994, 33).

Taylor refers to Mikhail Bakhtin’s conceptions of dialogism. He focuses on the relationship between the identity of an individual or a group and its recognition within the society. For him, a sense of socio-cultural self-esteem emerges not only from personal identity, but also in relation to the group in which this identity is developed. (ibid., 25)

This “politics of recognition” has sparked vivid discussions. Kwame Anthony Appiah views it as a part of the accommodationist movement and efforts at balancing a relationship between identities and the state. However, he is concerned that the way much discussion of recognition proceeds and the contemporary talk of identity (in terms of large collective social identities: gender, ethnicity, nationality, “race,” sexuality) seem too far removed from the individual. His main concern is personal autonomy. He distinguishes between the personal and the collective dimensions of individual identities, pointing out that the personal dimensions of identity work differently from collective ones.

From this perspective, Appiah comments on Taylor’s analysis of the Quebec laws in the field of language. The politics of language is a central and difficult issue in the multilingual states. Appiah believes that the aim of Quebecers for

the survival of their culture is understandable, and that their democratic choice of French as the political language is perfectly acceptable in democratic politics. However, he adds, “such aims must be managed within the framework of equal citizenship and a concern for the personal autonomy of citizens, not by notion of compulsory identities” (2007, 103–104). Thus, “where people can gain access to an identity by learning a language and they wish for that access, it is not the state’s business to stop them” (104). He sees two ways to reconcile full citizenship with the interest of the minority in their language: one is to make their language one of the political languages; the other is to teach them the political language, while allowing them to maintain their own.

Appiah is concerned that the civil apparatus and bureaucratic handling of the politics of recognition in their extreme can seem to require that one’s skin color or sexual body should be politically acknowledged, rather than to be treated as personal dimensions of the self. “Because identities are constituted in part by social conceptions and by treatment-as, in the realm of identity there is no bright line between recognition and imposition” (2007, 110).

Appiah distinguishes between “soft pluralism” and “hard pluralism.” The hard pluralists (Gray 2002; Ingram 2000) object to the elevation of personal autonomy over group autonomy and move from the equal standing of individuals to the equal standing of identity groups. This homology between identity groups and persons is the basic assumption of “millet multiculturalism,” which seeks “to honor the sovereignty of the group, and to minimize the outside interference with its affairs, in a way that has sometimes called to mind the millets system of the Ottoman Empire” (Appiah 2007, 74). But the problem is the lack of any “internal restriction on how the members of these communities are to be treated” (75). This would leave groups “free to do just about anything to their members short to physical coercion” (74). To this Appiah opposes “soft pluralism,” which he associates with works of Canadian philosopher Will Kymlicka (2000), who argues that certain “collective rights” of minority cultures are consistent with liberal democratic principles. Soft pluralism is related to liberal multiculturalism, which aim is to balance external rights and internal constraints and combine both group and personal autonomy (Appiah 2007, 78–79).

The potential for conversion of freedom into repression is rooted in the paradox of multiculturalism: individual liberties are restricted in name of securing the collective rights of culture groups. In the relations between individuals, intermediate (ethnocultural) groups, and the state, the groups could be externally autonomous but internally undemocratic and oppressive to the individuals.

A heuristically fruitful approach to the problem of cultural identity and diversity is based on a liberal conception of equality and cultural rights. The uni-

versalistic principle of civic equality, if implemented in a manner based on law, can serve as a safeguard against the restriction of basic individual rights in name of collective rights of culture groups. The right of freedom of association implies the voluntary character of group membership and the right to dissent and exit. Only those group rights are legitimate which can be derived from the cultural rights of the individual group member, and “only the difference-sensitive egalitarian universalism of equal rights can fulfill the individualistic requirement to guarantee equally the vulnerable integrity of individuals with distinctive life histories” (Habermas 2005, 13). The mutual recognition of the equal status of all members also requires a transformation of interpersonal relations through discourse and public debates over identity politics.

In his recent publication, Taylor (2012) explains the rationale behind the shift towards interculturalism and its heuristic advantages. In comparing the concepts of multiculturalism and interculturalism in Canada, he argues that the difference between the two is not so much a matter of the concrete policies dealing with diversity and integration, but concerns rather the “stories” about the situation as viewed from the perspective of anglophone Canada under the rubric “multiculturalism” versus that from the perspective of francophone Quebec referred to as “interculturalism.”

Nevertheless, at the same time, Taylor points out the tension aroused around the semantic distinction between the two terms: within the dual goal of recognizing difference and achieving integration, the prefix “multi-” points to diversity, while “inter-” places a greater emphasis on integration. Interculturalism is preferred in the case of Quebec where integration has to be a more complex goal than in the rest of Canada and it takes place in French rather than English. Interculturalism sees the regaining historical identity as a process in which all citizens have an equal voice and no-one has a privileged status. Viewing immigrants as the dichotomy us/them reflects underlying fears that “they” may change “us.” Quebecers view Canada as a dual country including both a francophone and an anglophone society, each integrating immigrants in their own manner.

Taylor argues that interculturalism also “suits better the situation of many European countries” (2012, p.?). Fears around multiculturalism stoke hostility toward immigrants, which, in turn, fuels their alienation and anger, leading into a dangerous spiral. Taylor sees the only remedy as “successful enactments of the intercultural scenario” (Taylor 2012, p.?). This requires more open and collaborative policies: it means that the members of the majority mainstream seek out leaders and members of the minorities and work together to resolve the conflicts. Such a collaborative relationship requires the elaboration of a more inclusive culture of interaction.

Interculturalism: A View from Quebec

Philosophers from Quebec provide new insights into the negotiation and management of diversity of national minorities in complex democratic contexts. Much debate has been generated recently over the ways for the accommodation and empowerment of minority groups and nations and of the advancement and enrichment of pluralism and intercultural dialogue.

Alain-G. Gagnon, a Professor at Quebec University in Montréal, examines the ways in which minority nations have begun to empower themselves in a global environment that is increasingly hostile to national minorities. In comparing conditions in Quebec, Catalonia, and Scotland, he argues that self-determination for these nations is best achieved through intercultural engagement and negotiation within the federal system, rather than through independence movements. He argues that autonomy need not be seen as closing oneself off to the “Other,” but rather as a voluntary and consensual mechanism of enfranchisement.

Gagnon is focused on francophone cultural heritage in order to maintain the minority culture and to counterbalance the negative impact of “American cultural imperialism and Anglo-homogenization” on minority communities (2014, chap. 2). According to him, current approaches to management of diversity and to national emancipation are limited in scope. He recommends two novel ways of accommodating national minorities in their quest for formal recognition and autonomy: one is the empowerment of individuals and groups to engage in the public life of their nation through active citizenship; the other is expanded forms of intercultural dialogue and cooperation among religiously, culturally, and linguistically diverse citizens. In contrast to the multiculturalism, the intercultural model for managing diversity rejects the notion of juxtaposing groups and instead encourages cross-cultural dialogue and the responsible functioning of the political community. The enshrinement of interculturalism derives from the need of all democratic polities to promote active citizen engagement and political participation (chap. 3). In Quebec, interculturalism in recent years contributed to the promulgation of active citizenship.

Sociologist and historian Gérard Bouchard, Professor at Quebec University in the Chicoutimi, was a co-chair, along with Charles Taylor, of the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences (CCAPRCD), created in February 2007, by the government of Quebec. They co-authored the Commission’s report (2008), which marked a milestone in the international discussion on how a diversified society can become both integrated and egalitarian.

In *Interculturalism: A View from Quebec* (2015), Bouchard offers his general conception of interculturalism in the Quebec context. Its analysis is relevant to

the cases where the cultural majority is also a minority in its outside environment (Catalonia, Scotland, Wales). In some aspects, it is also relevant to the United States and some western European countries that, during recent years, have been dealing with immigration issues. He also defends his conception against its various criticisms.

Bouchard gives the following definition: “Interculturalism, as a form of integrative pluralism, is a model based on a search for balance that attempts to find a middle ground between assimilation and segmentation and that, for this purpose, emphasizes integration, interactions, and promotion of a shared culture with respect for rights and diversity” (ibid., 32). He views interculturalism as one of the models of “management of ethnocultural diversity” (along with multiculturalism, the melting pot, republicanism, assimilationism, etc.). Interculturalism shares some elements with other models, such as recognition, pluralism, and reasonable accommodation, while its own articulation stresses relationships, dialogue, and balance. He relates these models to five major paradigms, which represent different types of societies. According to Bouchard’s typology, these paradigms are: diversity, homogeneity, bi- or multipolarity, *mixité*, and duality (18–20).

Bouchard in his analysis combines both cultural and civic aspects of multiculturalism. He mentions several distinctive components that characterize interculturalism with respect to other models of diversity management. As a global model for social integration, interculturalism takes shape principally within the duality paradigm, in which diversity is conceived and managed as a relationship between a cultural majority (described as “foundational”) and minorities, including immigrants. The duality paradigm does not create this divide, but it rather draws attention to already existing majority/minorities relationships and the tension associated with them. The cultural majority or the “founding culture” can feel anxiety in the face of ethnocultural minorities perceived as hostile to their traditions and values, which fosters resistance to integration. Likewise, minorities fear for their own values and cultures and experience uncertainty about their future. This reflects the intersection of two sets of anxieties, which can fuel reciprocal mistrust and tensions. This model attempts to address these problems and ease the us-them relationship in order to prevent it from lapsing into conflicts and ethnicism.

Interculturalism seeks to care for the future of the majority culture as much as that of minority cultures, and in this sense, it is essentially a search for conciliation. The tension underlying this duality can be corrosive and result in various forms of discrimination from the majority group. On the other hand, the duality paradigm “feeds a critical awareness” by making them more visible and remind-

ding of the need for dialogue and concerted adjustments. (Bouchard 2015, 24, 26).

Furthermore, interculturalism brings to the fore power struggles that underlie intercultural relationships. The duality paradigm “gives high visibility to a fundamental power relationship and consequently focuses attention on its visible abuses” (ibid., 39). Ruling powers may be inclined to exercise their advantage in social-cultural decisions at the expense of minorities. In this asymmetry, “the effectiveness of intercultural dialogue is limited by power relationships, practices of discrimination, exclusionary measures and social inequalities,” thus “a call for social change” (44)

At the heart of interculturalism is integration of diverse coexisting traditions and cultures. Using the term “integration,” which due to the recent controversies in Europe is associated with imposition and assimilation not respectful of diversity, Bouchard stresses that it is devoid of any assimilationist overtone, but rather has voluntary and inclusive meaning in the intercultural model: “In accordance with North American sociological tradition, the concept of integration designates the set of mechanisms and processes of socialization through which social bonds, along with their symbolic and functional foundations, are constituted” (ibid., 41)

These processes engage all citizens, operate on individual and institutional levels, and in economic, social, and cultural dimensions. As Bouchard writes, “the best means to counteract the discomfort that some can feel when faced with a stranger is not to keep their distance, but to come together to destroy false perceptions and to facilitate the stranger’s integration into the host society” (ibid., 43).

In contrast to assimilation, interculturalism advocates a particular type of pluralism defined as “integrative pluralism” (ibid., 5). It pays more attention to the social dimension of integration, addressing the themes of inequalities, power relationships, discrimination, and racism. It also includes the political dimension, necessary for the implementation of a policy for the management of ethno-cultural diversity.

Bouchard laments that current debates on integration do not give the issues of basic social justice and equality the attention they deserve. Interculturalism is concerned with the social and economic inclusion of citizens, particularly those who are underprivileged minorities, which must accompany cultural integration. It encourages fostering the socio-economic integration of immigrants.

In the spirit of interaction and integration, interculturalism favors the idea that beyond ethnocultural diversity, there are elements of a common culture (or a national culture) beginning to take shape. A common culture is made up of

three closely interwoven, ever-changing threads: “the majority culture, the minority cultures, and the shared culture” (ibid., 47).

Interculturalism supports the regime of “inclusive secularism,” emphasizing “respect for ethnocultural (including religious) differences within the limitations of fundamental values, especially equality between men and women” (ibid., 134–135). In summarizing the distinctive components of interculturalism, Bouchard writes:

To sum up, interculturalism is basically characterized by an embrace of pluralism as an ethics of cultural encounter, the vision of ethno-cultural realities as structured by a majority/minorities relationship (cf. the duality paradigm), an emphasis on integrations (through policies of social and economic inclusion and a dynamic of interaction) and a strong concern for the societal level (development of a common culture). (2013, 98)

Bouchard’s view of interculturalism “from Quebec” was made within the context of the francophone province of Canada. He ponders how to preserve the French culture in Quebec, “as a small francophone nation and as a minority culture on the continent,” in the face of the anglophone Canadian culture (2015, 58). He makes several suggestions in this respects, such as the promotion of French as the common, official language, teaching of the francophone past in the history courses, etc.

Bouchard’s claim for the recognition of the majority culture as a founding component may ease the fears of the French-speaking populists, who perceive minorities and migrants in Quebec as a challenge to their traditional culture (ibid., 23). Many majority communities may find this claim reassuring. Ironically, however, such a claim used by the anglophone majority of Canada would be disadvantageous for francophone Quebec as a minority. Dominant cultures are already in an advantageous position over minority cultures. Moreover, the greatness of each culture depends on its achievements and its role within society, and it cannot be decided politically or administratively.

Bouchard acknowledges that this claim may, in a certain light run counter to the principle of formal equality between individuals, groups, and cultures, but expresses skepticism with respect to “the ideal (often professed but achieved nowhere) of the cultural neutrality of the state” (ibid., 50). Some critics think that insistence on a particular language may be seen “as somewhat partial” (Cantle 2012, 154). At the same time, Bouchard warns against abusive extensions of the majority culture. He suggests that in the cultural sphere, immigrants and members of minorities should be made more visible in the media and public institutions. Schools and universities curricula should be designed to promote pluralism, mutual knowledge, and interculturalism. He advocates that efforts be

directed to teach both the official language of the host society and the language of origins of the minorities and immigrants (Bouchard 2015, 34, 79).

Bouchard in his analysis tries to keep the fine line between the interests of the francophone majority in protecting their culture from fragmentation and the interests of minority in preserving their cultural identities from assimilation. Interculturalism is a search for balance, aiming to develop “a third way” between fragmentation and assimilation. In contrast to the polarizing tendencies, “interculturalism is an approach conceived around bridges, relationships, and arbitrations” (ibid., 58). While fostering respect for diversity, interculturalism encourages interactions and exchanges in a spirit of conciliation and reciprocity. Bouchard sees the advantage of interculturalism, in comparison to multiculturalism and other models, in that it is best suited to “the double objective of unity and respect for diversity” and “to learn to live together in a spirit of respect for our differences” (56). The overall goal of interculturalism is “to manage the relationship between the majority and minorities in a way that is in accordance with human rights and pluralism, with a view of promoting dialogue, mutual understanding, and reapproachment” (154).

The issues of language, faith, history, and “core values” addressed by interculturalism represent some fundamental concerns about cultural identity. As Ted Cantle wrote in his analysis of interculturalism, “very similar issues to those described by Bouchard, which again touch upon underlying and more fundamental concerns, could be created in most other Western nations, though the precise nature of issues will vary from country to country” (Cantle 2012, 203).

Toward inter-philosophical and intercultural dialogue

The discussions on cultural diversity and interculturality take place within the context of the social-political processes in the society and in the world. In the United States, the struggle for recognition, within the existing social-economic and political structures, exposes the deeply rooted problems of racial and ethnic discrimination, social inequality, the broadening gap between rich and poor, and the erosion of democracy in a political environment monopolized by two similar parties, both of which are dependent on the real power of big corporations.

The international geopolitical context adds its own controversies. After the end of the Cold War, many hoped that humanity would at last come to its senses and embrace new opportunities for peaceful and collaborative relations among the nations as equals, for the solution of social and global problems. The decade of the 1990s was marked by the rise of the movement for cultural diversity, as expressed in the ideas of multiculturalism and interculturalism.

However, these hopes were soon dashed by the neoconservative “revolution,” the Bush Doctrine and its implementation in a boundless “global war on terror” and a strategy of global hegemony. The military preponderance and hegemonic policy of the world’s sole remaining military superpower is perceived as a threat by nations that do not want to be dominated. This triggers a geopolitical competition and an arms race, increasing the risk of war. But the real alternative will be not *for* the dominating power to change hands, but for a world free *from* any hegemonic domination. This power politics creates a vicious circle of violence with little room for positive programs of social and cultural development.

In a diverse and interrelated world, the utopia (or rather dystopia) of an empire-centered global hegemony is a failed project. Nevertheless, the unilateral policy of pursuing it undermines sovereign equality as a principal of international law and a pluralistic multilateral international system. It also has its negative impact on the society. The permanent state of war that has ensued is used as justification for unlimited governmental power, including the infringement of civil rights and sweeping surveillance violating the privacy of citizens. It creates a fear-aggressive reaction, in which the ideas of plurality and cultural diversity are overshadowed by the reverse tendency toward ethnocentrism and ideological fundamentalism, suspicion of “the others,” and the anti-multicultural and anti-intercultural politics of “integration.” This is accompanied by anti-immigration legislation and excesses of racism and ethnic/religious intolerance.

Critics point out a glaring discrepancy between the declared ends and the means: world stability through the power politics of a global empire and the forcible “spread of democracy”; security through militarization and global electronic mass surveillance; domestic social stability through targeting racial and ethnic minorities and anti-immigration policies; “integration” through the homogenizing “mass culture” and brainwashing mass communication media. In this atmosphere, the themes of peace, equality, and intercultural dialogue have almost disappeared from public discourse.

The asymmetry of political-economic power, domination, and a homogenizing effect of globalization in its hegemonic version create conditions conducive neither to the preservation of the unique cultures of nations and minority groups nor to a dialogue of cultures as equals. Traditional policies have failed: they have not removed the root causes of the problems, but have made them even worse while also generating new problems. Thus, new approaches and policies are needed.

Where, then, does the future lie? The situation of humanity at a crossroads is a call to turn our eyes to philosophy: *Quo vadis, Philosophie?* Philosophy, with

its commitment to open-ended and critical thinking, must contribute to an in-depth analysis of the world problems and their possible solutions. In order to realize its transformative potential in a conflicted world and to respond constructively to internal theoretical and external social-cultural challenges, philosophy itself needs to undergo a self-transformation. Interculturality is one of the aspects of this transformation.

The call for positive changes invokes a different philosophy, at the center of which is human freedom and the vital interests of humanity. It promotes an ethics of nonviolence and planetary co-responsibility, aiming for peace and cooperation among the nations, democratic equality, realization of human rights, dialogical relationships, conditions for the harmonious development of individuals, and the flourishing of diverse cultures. It asserts that morally good ends can be achieved only through morally good means.

Philosophy is committed to an a priori respect for all human beings as potential participants in intersubjective and intercultural dialogue. Intercultural dialogue should have inter-philosophical global dialogue as its epistemological and ontological foundation. Intercultural dialogue is a condition and an indispensable means for progression toward coexistence and mutually beneficial relationships between different cultures. In its normative role, dialogism can serve as the standard for the evaluation and critique of existing relationships within a socially-culturally diverse world. It can also serve as a regulative principle in the ennoblement of human relationships. Dialogism should become the norm for ways of thinking and for relationships on all levels—intersubjective, social, cultural, and international.

A dialogue that is beginning to take place among the various world philosophies contributes theoretically and practically to fostering intercultural dialogue, which, in turn, may serve as a model for constructive political interactions, thus promoting a more just and collaborative world, and aiming for a gradual realization of the ideal of a cosmopolitan order of law and peace.

References

Alcoff, Linda Martin. 2006. *Visible Identity: Race, Gender, and the Self*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Appiah, Anthony K. 1992. *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.

———. 1997. "African-American Philosophy?" In *African-American Perspectives and Philosophical Traditions*, edited and with an introduction by John P. Pittman, 11–34. New York, Routledge.

———, 2007. *The Ethics of Identity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Aquino, Maria Pilar, and Maria Jose Rosado-Nunes, eds. 2007. *Feminist Intercultural Theology: Latina Explorations for a Just World*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

Bouchard, Gérard G. 2013. "Interculturalism: What Makes It Distinctive?" In *Interculturalism and Multiculturalism: Similarities and Differences*, edited by Martin Barrett, 93–110. Strassburg Cedex: Council of Europe Publishing.

———. 2015. *Interculturalism: A View from Quebec*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

———, and Charles Taylor. 2008. *Building the Future: A Time for Reconciliation*. Report of the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences. Quebec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2008.

Canclini, Néstor García. 2014. *Imagined Globalization*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Cantle, Ted. 2012. *Interculturalism: The New Era of Cohesion and Diversity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Chumakonon, Jonathan. ed. 2015. *Atuolu Omalu: Some Unanswered Questions of Contemporary African Philosophy*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Council of Europe Ministers of Foreign Affairs. 2008. White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. "Living Together as Equals in Dignity."

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/intercultural/Source/Pub_White_Paper/White%20Paper_final_revised_EN.pdf.

Demenchonok, Edward. 2010. "Rethinking Cultural Diversity: Intercultural Discourse and Transculture." In *Philosophy After Hiroshima*, 447-476. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

—. 2014. "Bakhtin's Dialogism and Current Discussions on the Double-Voiced Word and Transculture." In *Intercultural Dialogue: In Search of Har-*

mony in Diversity, edited by Edward Demenchonok, 81-138. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Espín, Orlando O. 2007. *Grace and Humanness: Theological Reflections Because of Culture*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

———. 2014. *Idol and Grace: On Traditioning and Subversive Hope*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.

Flores, Juan. 2006. "Reclaiming Left Baggage: Some Early Sources for Minority Studies." In *Identity Politics Reconsidered*, edited by Linda Martín Alcoff et al., 53–68. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gagnon, Alain-G. 2014. *Minority Nations in the Age of Uncertainty: National Emancipation and Empowerment*. Toronto, Uni. of Toronto Press.

Gómez-Martínez, José Luis. 1997. "La cultura 'indígena' como realidad intercultural." *Cuadernos Americanos*, nueva época 9(4): 65–103.

<http://www.ensayistas.org/critica/teoria/gomez/gomez2.htm>.

Gordon, Lewis R. 2000. *Existencia Africana: Understanding Africana Existential Thought*. New York and London: Routledge.

———. 2008. *An Introduction to Africana Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

———. 2010. "Theory in Black: Teleological Suspensions in Philosophy of Culture." *Qui Parle: Critical Humanities and Social Sciences* 18 (Spring/Summer): 193–214.

Gracia, Jorge J. E. 2000. *Hispanic/Latino Identity: A Philosophical Perspective*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

———. 2005. *Surviving Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality: A Challenge for the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

———. 2008. *Latinos in America: Philosophy and Social Identity*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

———. 2014. "Social Identities: Conflict and Resolution." In *Intercultural Dialogue: In Search of Harmony in Diversity*, edited by Edward Demenchonok, 57–80. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Gray, John. 2002. *Two Faces of Liberalism*. New York: New Press.

Grosfoguel, Ramón, Nelson Maldonado-Torres, and José David Saldívar, eds. 2005. *Latin@s in the World-System: Decolonization Struggles in the 21st Century U.S. Empire*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

Habermas, Jürgen. 2008. *Between Naturalism and Religion: Philosophical Essays*, Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Henry, Paget. 2000. *Caliban's Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy*. New York: Routledge.

———. 2003. “African-American Philosophy: A Caribbean Perspective.” In *A Companion to African-American Philosophy*, edited by Tommy L. Lott and John P. Pittman, 48–66. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Ingram, David. 2000. *Group Rights: Reconciling Equality and Difference*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Kymlicka, Will. 2000. *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lugones, Maria, and Joshua M. Price. 2009. “Faith in Unity: The Nationalist Erasure of Multiplicity.” In *Constructing the Nation: A Race and Nationalism Reader*, edited by Mariana Ortega and Linda Martin Alcoff, 91–102. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. 2006. “Toward a Critique of Continental Reason: Africana Studies and the Decolonization of Imperial Cartographies in the Americas.” In *Not Only the Master’s Tool: African-American Studies in Theory and Practice*, edited by Lewis Gordon and Jane Gordon, 51–84. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

———. 2008. *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Masolo, D. A. 2010. *Self and Community in a Changing World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Meer, Nasar, and Tariq Modood. 2012. “How does Interculturalism Contrast with Multiculturalism?” *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, Volume 33, Issue 2:175-196.

Mendieta, Eduardo. 2008. *Global Fragments: Globalization, LatinoAmericanisms, and Critical Theory*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

———. 2009. “La filosofía de los ‘latinos’ en Estados Unidos” [Latino’s philosophy in United States]. In *El pensamiento filosófico latinoamericano, del Caribe y latino (1300–2000)*, [Latin American, Caribbean, and latino philosophical thought (1300–2000)], edited by Enrique Dussel, Eduardo Mendieta, and Carmen Bohórquez, 518–522. Mexico: Siglo XXI Editores.

Mignolo, W.. 2000. *Local Histories/Global Designs: Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledge, and Border Thinking*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

———. 2005. *The Idea of Latin America*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

———. 2011. *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options, Latin America Otherwise*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Mudimbe, V. Y., and Kwame Anthony Appiah. 1993. “The Impact of African Studies on Philosophy.” In *Africa and the Disciplines: The Contribution of Research in Africa to the Social Sciences and Humanities*, edited by Robert

H. Bates, V. Y Mudimbe, and Jean O'Barr, 113–138. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Nuccetelli, Susana, Ofelia Schutte, and Otávio Bueno, eds. 2010. *A Companion to Latin American Philosophy*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Publishers.

Outlaw, Lucius, Jr. 1996. *On Race and Philosophy*. New York: Routledge.

———. 2004. "Africana Philosophy: Origins and Prospects." In *A Companion to African Philosophy*, edited by K. Wiredu, 90–98. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Panikkar, Raimon. (1978) 1999. *The Intra-Religious Dialogue*, rev. ed. New York: Paulist Press.

Quijano, Anibal. 2010. "Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality." In *Globalization and the Decolonial Option*, edited by Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar, 22–32. London & New York: Routledge.

Saenz, Mario. 1999. *The Identity of Liberation and Latin American Thought: Latin American Historicism and the Phenomenology of Leopoldo Zea*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

———, ed. 2002. *Latin American Perspectives on Globalization: Ethics, Politics, and Alternative Visions*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Saldívar, José David. 2011. *Trans-Americanities: Subaltern Modernities, Global Coloniality, and the Cultures of Greater Mexico*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Sánchez, Robert Eli, Jr. 2013. "The Process of Defining Latino/a Philosophy," *APA Newsletter on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy* 13(1): 1–4.

Schlesinger, Arthur. 1998. *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Schutte, Ofelia. 1993. *Cultural Identity and Social Liberation in Latin American Thought*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

———. 2000. "Negotiating Latina Identities." In *Hispanics/Latinos in the United States: Ethnicity, Race, and Rights*, edited by Jorge Gracia and Pablo De Greiff, 61–75. New York: Routledge.

———. 2011. "Undoing 'Race': Martí's Historical Predicament." In *Forging People: Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in Hispanic American and Latino/a Thought*, edited by Jorge Gracia, 99–123. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Taylor, Charles. 1994. "The Politics of Recognition." In *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition*; edited by Charles Taylor and Amy Gutmann, 25–74. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

———.2012. “Interculturalism or multiculturalism?” *Philosophy & Social Criticism* 38 (May/June): 413–423.

UNESCO. 2009. *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue*. UNESCO World Report, vol. 2.

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/resources/report/the-unesco-world-report-on-cultural-diversity/>.

Urbina, Martin Guevara. 2014. “It’s a New World: The Changing Dynamics of Multiculturalism.” In *Twenty-First Century Dynamics of Multiculturalism: Beyond Post-Racial America*, edited by Martin Guevara Urbina, 3–26. Springfield IL:Charles C. Thomas Publisher.

Vest, Jennifer L. 2005. “The Promise of Caribbean Philosophy: How It Can Contribute to a ‘New Dialogic’ in Philosophy.” *Caribbean Studies* 33 (July-December): 3–34.

West, Cornel. 2006. “Philosophy and Afro-America Experience.” In *A Companion to African-American Philosophy*, edited by Tommy Lee Lott and John P. Pittman, 7–32. Malden MA: Blackwell.

———. 2011. *Hope on a Tightrope: Words and Wisdom*. Carlsbad, CA: SmileyBooks.

Wiredu, Kwasi. 1980. *Philosophy and an African Culture*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

———.1995. *Conceptual Decolonization in African Philosophy. Four Essays*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Hope Publication.

———.1996. *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

———. 2004. “Introduction: African Philosophy in Our Time.” In *A Companion to African Philosophy*, edited by Kwasi Wiredu, 1-27. Malden MA: Blackwell.

Yancy, George, and Linda Martin Alcoff. 2015. “Philosophy’s Lost Body and Soul.” *New York Times*. Opinionator. February 4, accessed March 1, 2015, <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/02/04/philosophys-lost-body-and-soul/#more-155717>.

Vincent Gabriel Furtado (Bangalore, India)

THE CONCEPT OF POWER IN HINDUISM

Power is defined as “capacity to effect change”¹, “the ability to move reality”², and “being actualizing itself over against the threat of non-being”³. Power can be compared to the concept we have of energy – boundless and dynamic – but with the difference that in our case power becomes ‘human’ as it exists in human beings and integral to human act. It becomes an observable phenomenon only when some one makes uses of it. It is intimately related to human decision making process which gives direction to power, nay, the power is exercised and made effective through the human decisions. It is also directly involved with means as well as with goals⁴ of human activity.

Power in its very essence comprises of a process of dialectic interaction between the one who possesses it and the one on whom it is exercised upon. Exercise of power, seen from one perspective, means an interaction between one who dominates and one who is dominated. It can be used to oppress others and to exercise domination over others; but it can also be used to serve others, to work for their welfare and thus can have positive effects in its exercise. But power invests one with authority to take decisions and to execute them. Exercise of power means action and dynamism.

We can conceive of political power, economic power, intellectual power, moral power, spiritual power and the like. But in all these, some aspect of ‘politics’ is present. The basic principle of politics being an interaction between people and policies through the medium of power, the presence of political elements in the exercise of power is inevitable. Exercise of any power means dealing with people and policies of action and politics is the science of governance concomitant with the exercise of power based on certain principles and norms. This explains the interaction between the exercise of power and the politics of any sort.

Regarding the question of religion and the politics of power, in principle, one can speak of ‘secularism’ and a politics divested of all religious implications, namely, of an ideal situation where politics has nothing to do with religion and neutral regarding any religion and the government insulating itself from any influence from any religion. But such a situation is hardly evidenced anywhere

¹ H. Cox, “Power”, *Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, p. 265.

² R. Guardini, *Power and Responsibility*, (Chicago, 1961), p. 2.

³ P. Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice*, New York, 1960, p. 47

⁴ Thomas McMahon, “The Moral Aspects of Power,” *Concilium*, 1973, pp. 51-65

in the world at any period of history. Coming to Hinduism, one can evidently prove that it is not an exception to the general rule. A study of the concept of power in Hinduism bring to the fore the fact how desire for power is intermingled with religious observances from the very beginning. Subtle political motives too are tacitly present, in the sense of manipulating religion to acquire power.

The study of the concept of power in Hinduism is certainly a complex affair as it involves going back into its history of more than three millennia. The earliest Vedic literature available to us depicts more of the religious dimension of Hinduism and very little of cultural and socio-political aspects of Hindu society. But the analysis of Vedic literature gives us some clues regarding the power structures active in the Vedic society. We analyse below the power structures during the Vedic period and see how these power structures influence the contemporary political scene in India.

1. The Vedic Priest and His Power

When one reads Rigvedic hymns⁵ what strikes immediately is the sense of devotion of the vedic man towards innumerable gods, most prominent being Indra, Agni, Soma and the like⁶. When one critically investigates the hymns with hermeneutical tools with the intention of seeking what underlies the devotional literature, one can without difficulty draw certain conclusions without doing any violence to the poetic genre. The gods are considered to be powerful due to their capacity to control natural phenomena. But from where do they derive this power? The vedic priest with his own hermeneutic ingenuity gives an answer, namely, from the sacrifices. But it is actually the priest who controls the sacrifices and thus the gods are made to depend on the priest for the offerings and oblations. It is said of Indra, that he goes about hungry pleading for sacrifices and rejoices over the cake and other offerings offered as oblation when he actually receives them⁷. As the time passed, what became more important for the priest is to make the sacrifices effective so that what is asked for is obtained invariably and the praise and glory of the gods through oblations and hymns was relegated to secondary position. Priest is there primarily at the service of the humans to fulfill their needs and only secondarily to give bring glory to gods. Nay, gods are to become gradually insignificant before the power of the priest.

⁵ *Rigveda Samhita*, tr., by Satya Prakash Saraswati and Satyakam Vidyalkankar, 13 Vols., 1977-86.; *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, tr., by R. T. H. Griffith, ed., by J. L. Shastri, Delhi, Varanasi, Patna, Madras, 1973, (R. 1986).

⁶ Cf. Hermann Oldenburg, *The Religion of the Veda*, trans. Shridhar B. Shrotri. Delhi. 1988. (first print: Dharmastadt 1894).

⁷ RV XIV 6.8.

Hence the question, what makes sacrifices fruitful? The power to make the sacrifice effective cannot be something that is external to it. It should be something that is very integral to itself. What is an integral part of the sacrifice is the *mantra*, known as ‘*Bràhman*’ meaning ‘prayer’, (with accent on the base, *bràh* -, which constitutes an action known with neuter gender). But who is the one that actually utters this ‘*Bràhman*’? Certainly, it is the *Brahmàn*, the priest (with accent on the prefix - *màn*, which constitutes an agent noun with masculine gender.), the member of the first class in the society. The power of the sacrifices thus came to be concentrated in the “priest”, which he can manipulate as he wants and thus remain supreme in the society. All in the society, including the kings and nobles are at his control, as it is he who grants them what they want through the sacrifices over which, again, only he has supreme control.

An important feature of the Vedic period was the division of priests into two main groups, the sacrificial priests⁸ (*Ritvij*) and the household priest (*purohita*), consequent rise of the latter to prominence. The *purohita* was called the administrator of the sacrifices as he has to supervise the performance of the rites by the *Ritvij* priests and judge their validity. But then he became an adviser to the sacrificer (*yajamāna*), namely, one who orders the sacrifice and those who order the sacrifice being the kings and lords, he took over the function of ‘adviser’ to the kings. The custom became gradually an obligation; accordingly every king ‘had to’ appoint a ‘*purohita*’ as his adviser and counsellor for “gods do not eat the food of a king, who has no *purohita*. If a king has to sacrifice, he should appoint a *Brāhmana* as so that the god can eat his food.”⁹ So we see a subtle dialectic of power working here. Gods owned the powers and the kings participated in these powers and depended on their help and protection. The gods can be gracious only if sacrifices are offered to them— and to offer sacrifice Brahmins are necessary – because it is Brahmins who composed the scriptures and laid down that gods do not eat the food offered by others. So the Brahmins became indispensable. By degrees the *purohita* became actually more powerful than the king himself as he controlled the king himself. So much so the relationship between the king and the *purohita* is compared to a marriage. In the appointment of *purohita*, the same *mantra* prescribed with which the bridegroom holds the hands of the bride, and says: “I am that you are, you are that I am; I the heaven, you the earth; I the melody of the song, you the word of the song. So let us make the journey together.”¹⁰ In the old manual of statecraft,

⁸ Ritvij priest fulfilled a definite priestly role prescribed for every sacrifice. Purohita did not play any actual role in the Sacrifices. He was just a supervisor. Cf. Oldenberg, 209

⁹ Aitareya Brahmana VIII 24; Satapatha Br. IV 1, 4, 5, 6.

¹⁰ Aitareya Brahmana VIII. 27.

called *Kautilya Shāstra*, we read, “He (the king) should follow him, as the pupil the teacher, the son the father, the servant the master”¹¹ Thus the *purohita* stands close to the king in glory and riches. He is well versed in law and administration and at the helm of all affairs of the state. All royal sacrifices and other cultic and magical acts begin with him.¹²

The *purohita* being a Brahmin and as per the scriptures (*shāstras*) only a birth within certain families alone qualifies one to supervise the cultic/ cultural affairs, the Brahmin class became most powerful and came to control every aspect of life during the *Brāhmana* and *Atharva* Veda period. The “caste laws were laws of spiritual eugenics, designed to promote the evolution of a higher race. That the priests, once placed in the peculiar position of the guardians of the holy treasure, and now armed with the power which their mastery over the mystic charms and incantations gave them, should have arrogated to themselves more and more of the same power is what was to be expected. In the later Veda the apotheosis of priesthood had just commenced: its real bloom was in the subsequent period.”¹³

2. The Priest and the Magical Power

Another element that consolidated ‘power’ into the hands of the priests was the magical understanding of prayer and the sacrifice. In this case the priest fulfilled more often the role of a magician than a priest. The word “*Brāhman*” also meant a spell and magically empowered formula, hypostatized as ‘power’ itself. It is hardly difficult to distinguish real prayer and the spells in the Vedas. When the aristocratic society offered sacrifices, the ordinary *hoi polloi* were merged in magical rites and a priest was available to both, provided he received his fees.

The art of Magic was a way of coercing the gods to get what the priest wanted. It consisted in producing through one’s own strength a concatenation of causes and effects corresponding to the laws of magic. The priest claimed ‘power’ over gods and made them powerless, by making himself powerful through magic.¹⁴ He acquired the magic prayer to create rain, and used it in a

¹¹ Kautilya Shastra, I. 5.

¹² We also see that when gods do badly in their battle against the demons they turn to Purohita . God Brahaspati says: “Find out for us a sacrificial act, by which we can get victory over the demons” (Oldenberg, 211).

¹³ Belvalkar and Ranade . 13-14;

¹⁴ The priest captivated the gods through a sort of a magic coercion and subjugated them to the sacrifice. Cf. RV VIII 2, 6; According to Geldner vedic sacrifice is like a ensnaring net in which the priest catches the gods. Cf. Shatapatha Br. II.2.2.6.

sacrifice. Earlier gods had to give rains in mercy. Now the priest began pouring it himself by the magic power of his sacrificial act.¹⁵

The vedic rites depict complete patterns of diverse kinds of magic going back to remote antiquity. Magic was not something that was objectionable and superstitious, but as effective as the sacrifices and whoever could use magic, actually made use of it. What is important for us to note is that use of magic too made Brahmins powerful in the society as he could control people and affairs of the society through magic.

3. The Conception of Hierarchy in the Vedas

Another dimension of Vedic thought is the conception of hierarchy of reality, a conception that has pervaded presently every aspect of Hindu society. In its inchoate form the conception was applied to gods in an attempt to grade them as per their power, greatness and glory. The so called 'henotheism' is an intermediary stage in the vedic man's attempt to grade the gods.

The habit of grading divine realities in a pyramidal structure of hierarchy was applied gradually to human realities. We see very often in the Upanishads the custom of enumeration of psychic principles as per their superiority:

*Higher than the senses are the objects of senses.
Higher than the objects of sense is the mind
And higher than the mind is the intellect
Higher than the intellect is the Great Self (ātman)*¹⁶

The thinking gave rise to conceive man too hierarchically and the application of it at the sociological level resulted in the origin of caste system. The rise of Brahmin class as the most powerful among all people made the procedure simple and came to be grounded on a firm tradition. The Brahmins gave a theological basis to the class or caste system so that it becomes a 'religious' belief and surpasses all human queries. Thus we have the revealed text in *Purusha Sukta* X.90. Verses 11 and 12 which reads:

*When they divided up the man
His mouth became the Brāhmin, his arms
Became the warrior – prince, his legs
The common man who plies his trade.
The lowly serf was born from his feet.*

¹⁵ RV. X.98

¹⁶ Katha Up. 3.10 f; Cf. also Chandogya. Up. 1.6-15; Shvetashvatara. Up. 3. 7-10; 6. 5-6.

Thus hierarchy of society is theologically established with Brahmin at the top of the ladder and made the supremacy of Brahmin unquestionable. Another important aspect of the dynamics of power is that it invariably yields to the phenomenon of inequality. What differentiates the powerful from the powerless is the inequality that exists between them. The foundation of hierarchy itself is the concept of inequality of power, manifested in a historical context by holding some office that gives status and authority or by acquisition of wealth and temporal assets. Thus greater the status and higher a person climbs in the society, greater will be the inequality between him and the others, and greater will be his capacity to yield power.

The more one becomes powerful, greater will be his attempt to stabilize it through laws, customs and conventions and religious beliefs. That is what we see in the historical growth of Hinduism in India.

4. Conception of Power in the Laws of Manu

The understanding of supremacy of the priest is transferred later on from Revelation (*shruti*) to tradition (*smriti*). In the Law Book of Manu (*Mānava-dharma-shāstra*, DS)¹⁷ we have several instances where the supremacy of Brāhmins upheld and their authority is divinized; they have been presented almost as demigods, supra-normal humans and all powerful.

The very birth of the Brāhmana is an eternal incarnation of the sacred law; for he is born to (fulfill) the sacred law, and becomes one with Brahman (DS 1.98)

As the Brāhmana sprang from (Brahman's) mouth, as he was the first – born, and as he possesses the Veda, he is to be rightly the Lord of this whole creation. (DS. 1.93)

But in order to protect the universe He, the most resplendent one, assigned separate (duties and) occupations to those who sprang from his mouth, arms , thighs and feet. (DS. 1.87)

To Brahmana - teaching and study of Vedas as well as offering of sacrifices;

Kshatriyas: to protect people, bestow gifts, offer sacrifices, and study Vedas (DS. 1.88);

¹⁷ G.Buehler (Trans), *The Law of Manu, The Sacred Books of the East, Ed. By Max Mueller*, Vol. XXV, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi: 1970. Abbr. DS.

Vaishyas to attend cattle, to bestow gifts, to offer sacrifice, to study Vedas, to trade, to lend money, and to cultivate land (DS. 1.90).

One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Shudra, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes. (DS. 1.91)

The sacrificial string of a Brahmin shall be made of cotton (shall be twisted to the right (and consists) of three threads, that of a Kshatriya of hempen threads, (and) that of a Vaishya of woolen threads. (DS. 2.44)

Know that a Brāhmana of ten years (of age) and Kshatriya of a hundred years stand to each other in the relation of father and son; but between those two the Brāhmana is the father (DS. 2.135).

Even Soteriology too is determined as per caste, namely, a belief was formed that only a Brāhmin will be saved:

Having studied the Vedas, in accordance with the rule, having begat sons according to the sacred age, and having offered sacrifices according to his ability , he may direct his mind (to the attainment of) final liberation (DS. 6.36).

A twice born man who seeks final liberation, without having studied the Vedas, without having begotten sons, and without having offered sacrifices sinks downwards. (DS. 6,37)

On the other hand the Shudras are considered not even worthy of practicing any virtues (DS. 4. 79).

5. Power and Oppression

As we said the power can both be used for the welfare of ones neighbour as well as for his oppression. The history of Hinduism is a history of oppression of Shudras by the Brahmins and other higher classes. They have been bestowed the right of oppression by religious law:

The service of Brāhmanas alone is declared (to be) an excellent occupation for a Shudra; for whatever else besides this he may perform will bear him no fruit (DS. 10.123).

No accumulation of wealth must be made by a Shudra, even though he be able (to do it); for a Shudra who has acquired wealth, gives pain to Brāhmanas. (DS. 10.129)

Thus in Hinduism the divinely ordained, sociologically sanctioned and legally permitted oppressive structure of caste system empowered the higher caste

Brahmins with all the powers, religious as well as political, to perpetuate the unjust system without prick of conscience and with perfect moral justification.

6. The Conception of power in Artha-shāstras

The Brahmin lobby lasted through the centuries in India never permitting the *Kshatriyas* to become an autonomous entity. Even the *Artha-shāstra* by Kautilya (known also as Cānakya or Vishnugupta), which delineates the statecraft in India, was a document composed by a Brahmin.

One can hold the view that Kautilya gave supreme value to the state and the welfare of the people.¹⁸ But he not only made King to follow the *Dharma-shāstras* but also made it obligatory to appoint a *purohita* and consult him daily¹⁹ and to pay the highest salary.

Thus even the greatest of Hindu emperors were guided, and controlled by the Brahmins. It shows that the Ruler in India never had total autonomy of power which fact may be a reason why India could not resist the invasions by the Muslims at the beginning of second millennium and that of Europeans during the latter part of it.

7. Resurgence of Power Consciousness in Hinduism

The twentieth century saw the awakening of new power consciousness among the learned Brāhmins. This was an offshoot of modern nationalism emerged in the Western Europe in the second half of eighteenth century realized in India at the basic level in the political and administrative unification, and also in socio-religious reform movements. The Brāhmanic nationalism with religious overtones represents a reaction to the Romantists' interpretation of oriental thought in the 18th and 19th centuries by the western scholars²⁰:

“In the romanticist view, India was an object of fascination, a locus of spirituality, of imagination and mysticism as displayed in ancient Indian philosophy. Most attractive was the spiritual holism which, according to the German idealists philosopher and linguist Schlegel was the defining characteristic of

¹⁸ Arthashastra I.7. 6-7. (Abbr. AS)

¹⁹ AS I.19.31-32. Cf. Agugustine Thottakkara, “Religion and Politics in Ancient India: Kautilya’s Arthasastra: Its Relevance Today” in *Religion and Politics in Asia Today*, Bangalore: 2001, 17- 42.

²⁰ Cf. David Ludden, “Orientalist Empiricism: Transformations of Colonial Knowledge” in *Orientalism and the Post colonial Predicament*, ed. By Carol Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, Philadelphia: 1993, 250 – 78; Ronald Inden, *Imagining India*, Oxford: 1990, 90 – 96.

*Indian culture.*²¹ Holism entailed collapsing the spiritual and material world into oneness, and eradicating the cleavage between the objective world and individual consciousness through incorporation into an all pervasive Spirit.

Hegel endorsed the view that India was essentially Hindu, understood as pure spirit, but spirit of the imaginative (soft, feminine) sort, thus of a lower logical order than the rational (masculine) spirit of the West. To Hegel this predominance of imagination precluded the emergence of reason, which explained the feeble socio-political structure of the Indian states. In the absence of reason, India could only produce dispersed communities and people, never a viable state.”²²

The visionaries of Religious Nationalism reacted to this view tooth and nail and proposed the ideal of Hindutva representing Brāhmanic power consciousness symbolized in the male characteristics of rationality, physical strength and a strong nation founded on racial, cultural and geographical unity. The first visionary of this movement was Dayananda Saraswathi (1824-1883) who founded an organization in 1875 called *Ārya Samāj* (Society of the Aryans) in order to bring about social and religious reforms based on ancient Hindu scriptures, the ‘Vedas’, and gave a clarion call to all Hindus to go “back to the Vedas” which would give a position of supreme power again to Brahmins.

8. Hindutva ideology and the concentration of power

Savarkar, being inspired by the ideal of a unitary state from the writings of Giuseppe Mazzani²³ and Golwalkar, the great admirer of “the German Race-spirit, has proposed the ideal of “*Hindutva*” whose principles can be elucidated as follows:

(i) *Hindutva* aims at recapturing power to the Brahmins by replacing qualities of imagination which are feminine in character by those of reason, which are masculine in nature. Power denotes strength. The first priority of *Hindutva* should be to get invincible physical strength. The Hindus are to be so

²¹ Sheldon Pollock, “Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power beyond the Raj”, *Orientalism and Post Colonial Predicament*, p. 76- 133.

²² Thomas Blom Hansen, *The Saffron Wave*, Oxford: 1999, 67 f. ; Cf. also J.W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, Trans. By J. Sibree. Now York: 1956, 160 f.

²³ Mazzani had tremendous influence on Indian political leaders like Bipin Chandra Pal, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Bal Gangadhar Tilak, His works have been translated into several Indian languages. Cf. E. Fasana, “From Hindutva to Hindu Rashtra: The Social and Political Thought of Vinayak Damodar Savarkar”, *The 13th Modern Conference of Modern South Asian Studies*, Toulouse: 1994.

strong that no one in the whole world will be able to overawe and subdue them.²⁴

(ii) Hindutva aims at geographical unity, racial unity, religious unity, cultural unity and linguistic unity. In this world -view the Muslims and Christians “deserve no privileges, far less any preferential treatment – not even citizen rights.”²⁵ The Hindus should feel that they are a “jāti, a race, bound together by the dearest ties of blood and therefore it must be so.”²⁶

(iii) For the sole purpose of organizing all Hindus they founded an organization known as RSS (*Rashtriya Swyam-sevak Sangh* : Association of National Volunteers) in 1925.²⁷ There are 34 well knit affiliated groups under RSS to cater to different strata of people: teenagers, youth, university students, women, professionals (like advocates, scientists, professors, social workers, farmers, labourers, etc. etc.). Besides RSS, now there is the *Vishwa Hindu Parishat* with its militant affiliate *Bajrang Dal* which are radically communal and violent in their strategies.

(iv) RSS aims at dissemination of Hindutva ideology and Hindu Nationalism through the use of media: print, audio and video aids.

(v) The Political wing of RSS, the BJP (*Bhāratiya Janata Party*) acquired power at the centre which has shown explicit bias towards RSS cadres and very particularly to the Brahmins in its governance.

9. Concluding Remarks

(i) The above narration brings to the fore one important point, namely, that the Brahmins always were at the top of the ladder of the hierarchy in Hinduism possessing greatest clout of power. Though they were politically at low ebb during the second millennium when the Muslims and British ruled India, nevertheless, due to the new self -understanding on their part they are emerging as a committed group bent upon consolidating power in their hands.

(ii) Prior to Muslim Invasion for a period of nearly two millennia, the number of powerful kings who ruled Indian subcontinent is very low, compared to any other civilizations of the world for the same length of time. May be, the

²⁴ Golwalkar, *Bunch of Thoughts*, Bangalore:1966, 65

²⁵ Golwalkar, *We, our Nationhood Defined*, Nagpur: 1947,52 – 56.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 89.

²⁷ Founded by Dr. Keshav Baliram Hedgewar in 1925. Cf. Anderson W.K. and S.D. Damle, *The Brotherhood in Saffron, The Rashtriya Swyamsevak Sangh and Hindu Revivalism*, New Delhi: 1987; Thomas Bloom Hansen, “RSS and the Popularization of Hindutva.” *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28 (16 October 1993), 2270-72; Tapan, Basu and others. *Khaki Shorts Saffron Flags*, Hyderabad: 1993; Richard D. Lambert, “Hindu Communal Groups In Indian Politics”, in Richard L. Park and Irene Tinker, (eds), *Leadership and Political Institutions in India*, Princeton: 1959.

priestly class all the time dominating over the rulers and controlling them might have resulted in such state of affairs.

(iii) The present strategy to consolidate power by the Brahmins in general and Hindus in particular due to the new awareness of their identity is though commendable in itself, some of their ideological principles are irrelevant and not suited to times. It is well known however that fundamentalism and fanaticism are the offshoots of globalisation all over the world due to the new awareness of ethnic identities; the appropriation of these components by RSS affiliates is to be regretted. It appears that they are trying to repeat or resuscitate the European power structures of the Middle Ages in India at present. Most of the societies all over the world are becoming multicultural with intercultural interactions being on the increase. In this sense the *Hindutva* ideal appears as an attempt to swim against the current.

(iv) What is actually wrong in the *Hindutva* ideal? Is it wrong to affirm and propagate one's own cultural and religious values? In so far the *Hindutva* stands to affirm and propagate Hindu religious values and cultural ideals no one can find fault with them. But along with that they are negating even Indian citizenship to minorities. This is a clear instance of the violation of the human rights and unethical use of power as it promotes injustice.

(v) We need to note that the Aryan race throughout the history of its existence all over the world has amassed power to exploit others. As the Aryans can no more exploit Dalits, they need 'substitutes' for exploitation. May be the minorities are new kind of 'Dalits' against whom they can invoke the Law of Manu (DS 123, 129).

(vi) The dialectic of the power is such that no human rights can be claimed and asserted without the power. In South Africa 'apartheid' existed for so many centuries because the exploited were powerless. For three millennia the Brahmins exploited the Dalits because the latter were powerless. The minorities in India will become the objects of exploitation by the majority as long as they fail to unite themselves and consolidate enough power to resist exploitation. The unethical principle, "might is right" cannot be fought without power and equivalent might. It is already high time for the minorities in India to unite and make themselves powerful to assert their rights and resist exploitation.

(vii) India claims itself to be the largest democracy of the world. It has withstood all the crises and the ballots have always manifested as more powerful than the bullets. We need to reassert the democratic principles and traditions. Without sound ethical principles no democracy can survive anywhere. We need ethical principles that respect the rights of the 'other' and permit everyone to live and let live in freedom and peace.

(viii) Herewith, we can propose a hermeneutic of power for its right and just use, called the analogical hermeneutics. It can be delineated by highlighting the four dimensions of the right use of power²⁸: 1. My self-consciousness of the power that I possess and the rights that I have. 2. My consciousness and interpretation of the power possessed by the 'other' and the rights of the other. 3. Other's self-consciousness of the power possessed by him and the rights that he has. 4. Other's interpretation and consciousness of my possession of power and my rights.

All these four are to be set in constant dialogue that sincerely seeks not only to be understood by the other but also attempts to understand the other. A mutual understanding can break the barriers of misunderstanding and conflicts. Human beings, being what they are, conflicts at personal, cultural and political level are only to be expected. But reason should be made to prevail in order to commence a critical discussion of human relationships at all levels by means of dialogue. "Dialogue has its life in the many contradictions which permeate human relationships and therefore implies the recognition of both our differences and our common ground."²⁹

(ix) Still another conceptual alternative to the resolution of the problem of the asymmetry of power is to undertake what Betancourt³⁰ calls the de-culturalization of culture understood as deconstruction of the definition of culture itself. One cannot approach a multicultural and multi-religious situation from the stereotype definition of culture which tends to fix the patterns of a culture, often manipulated by the dominant, hegemonist social group. This way of defining culture again tends to consecrate certain traditions as "one's own" while excluding the others as "inauthentic". In other words de-culturalisation means liberating a culture of its dominating "image" calling attention to the asymmetry that it reflects. It also takes steps to overcome the tendency to make culture the space where certain traditions are worshipped and while others are hated. No more there can be one definition of culture which is applied to every people and every epoch.

De-culturalisation works with the hypothesis that it is not necessary to search for interaction as the interchange between "culture blocks," separated by the diversity of their fixed traditions. On the contrary it calls for concrete dialogue between individuals, groups and sectors, institutions and so forth that are

²⁸ Ram Adhar Mall, *Intercultural Philosophy*, New York, Oxford, 2002. pp. 3, 13-24.

²⁹ Tobias J.G. Louw, "Democracy in an Ethical Community", in: *Philosophy and Democracy in Intercultural Perspective*, Ed. By Heinz Kimmerle and Franz M. Wimmer, Amsterdam, 1997. p. 212.

³⁰ Raul Fornet-Betancourt, "Philosophy as Intercultural", *Vijnanadipti*, Vol.4 No.2, (2002), pp. 137-151.

recognized as live “representatives” of their respective cultures and religions. These can transmit their cultural differences in all their ambivalence and historicity. “Understood this way, the interaction between cultures could be the best method to understand and experience cultural differences as variable qualities and not as static properties.”³¹

(x) Finally, some questions should disturb us: How is it that well motivated and even educated and learned people can so easily be brainwashed and manipulated into acting violently, hurting and even killing people, acts which condemned by humanity as evil?³² Is this not a method of amassing power in an immoral way, through *a-dharma*?

We can surmise that it is possible to revert by forming a counter movement in order to enlighten the violently motivated people by making them understand that no religion can be authentic if it becomes intolerant and to prove to them that a strong nation can be built only by uniting all people of all cultures, religions and languages and thus a strong nation should be multicultural, multi-religious and multi-lingual. This is a herculean task, but it has to be undertaken in order to keep the world united in interreligious and intercultural harmony. Can we the philosophers become the effective agents of this counter force that will unite all people of good will in the world?

³¹ Ibid. p. 147.

³² Cf. Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in North India*, New Delhi: 1990; K. N. Panikkar, *Communalism in India: History, Politics and Culture*, Delhi: 1991; Lise McKean, *Divine Enterprises. Gurus and the Hindu Nationalist Movement*, Chicago: 1996.

Vincent G. Furtado (Bangalore)

**SOUTH-SOUTH INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE
FROM INDIAN PERSPECTIVE ***

1. Asymmetry of cultures and the need for South-South dialogue

The subject of the paper needs clarification regarding two points: what do we mean by South-South reality and what is the need and urgency for a South-South dialogue. As we know, that to understand others and to be understood by the others constitute the basic principle of all human phenomenon of communication. Why do human beings understand each other? What is the basis of human communication? Ancient Indian sages had an interesting answer. Human communication is possible because there is a 'thread' that binds together all of them. Hence the master questions his pupil, "Do you know that *thread* by which this world and the other world and all things are tied together?"¹ This thread constitutes the ground of all human communication and understanding. But we can ask, 'what is this thread?', the answer of the sages will be, "that One"² (*tad ekam*). But this One is 'unborn' and hence pre-conceptual; in other words he remains eternally an object of human seeking and inquiry:

"I, unknowing, ignorant, here
Ask the wise sages for the sake of knowledge;
What was That One, in the form of the unborn,
Who established these six worlds?"³

The One is the object of transcendental consciousness to be intuitively experienced and realized, characterized as pre-conceptual and pre-reflective awareness.

* The paper was originally read at the XXI. World Congress of Philosophy, Istanbul (August 10-17, 2003).

¹ Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 3.7.1; for an answer to the question cf. 3.7.23 and 3.8.11. Cf. The Thirteen Principal Upanishads, tr., R. E. Hume, London 1931 (R. 1977).

² Rig Veda I. 164. 6, 46; III. 54. 8-9; III. 56.2ab; VIII. 58, 2; Atharva Veda XIII. 4. 12-21. Cf. Raymundo Panikkar, *Vedic Experience*, New Delhi 2001) p. 660. Cf. also *Rigveda Samhita*, tr., by Satya Prakash Saraswati and Satyakam Vidyalankar, 13 Vols., 1977-86; *The Hymns of the Rgveda*, tr., by R. T. H. Griffith, ed. by J. L. Shastri, Delhi 1973; *Hymns of the Atharvaveda* (2 Vols) by R. T. H. Griffith, New Delhi, 1985.

³ Rig Veda I. 164. 6.

What is the object of actual and conceptual understanding then? What do we understand and what is it that can be understood? The object of our understanding is the temporal, historical world, in other words, according to the sages it is the world of ‘names’: “That which is One, the sages name differently.”⁴ This historical temporal world, named differently, is according to the sages, constitutes multiplicity and plurality and the object of all human perception and knowledge and hence subject to conceptualization and becomes the realm of human communication and sharing.

What is the dynamic that underlies human communication and sharing in this temporal world? The answer could be different depending on the ‘standpoint’ one takes. In the Vedic tradition the temporal world is maintained by the sacrifices (*yajña*), and sacrifices become effective through the sacred formula, known as ‘*Bràman*’, which is conceived to be impregnated with divine power. We can conclude from this that it is the ‘power’, invested in the sacred formula (*mantra*) that maintains the temporal order. But the word ‘power’, expressed through the word *Bràman* came to be ‘transcendental’ through further theological reflection and corresponding to that on the temporal side there came to be the priest, *Brahmàn* (stress on the second syllable), who represented power on earth, with which he could control the cult as well as the effect of sacrifices.⁵ Thus the One from transcendental point of view is the *Bràman*, the Ultimate Reality and from

⁴ Rig Veda I. 164, 46.

⁵ This is due to the evolution of the meaning of the Sacrifice. What makes sacrifices fruitful? The power to make the sacrifice effective cannot be something that is external to it. It should be something that is very integral to itself and this integral part of the sacrifice is the mantra, known as ‘*Bràman*’ meaning ‘prayer’ (with accent on the base, *bràh* -, which constitutes an action known with neuter gender). But who is the one that actually utters this ‘*Bràman*’? Certainly, it is the *Brahmàn*, the priest (with accent on the prefix - *màn*, which constitutes an agent noun with masculine gender) the member of the first class in the society. The power of the sacrifices thus came to be concentrated in the “priest”, which he can manipulate as he wants and thus remain supreme in the society. Cf. H. Oldenberg, *Zur Geschichte des Wortes bràhman*, Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen., Berlin, 1916, 715-744. Paul Deussen, *The Philosophy of Upanishads*, New York, 1966, 126f.; cf. Belvalkar and Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy, Creative Period*, S.K. Belvalkar and R.D. Ranade, *History of Indian Philosophy, The Creative Period*, New Delhi, 1927 (reprint 1974). Oldenberg, Hermann, *The Religion of the Veda*, trans. Shridhar B. Shrotri. Delhi 1988, pp. 181 ff, 207 ff.; Keith, Arthur Berriedale. 1925. *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, *Harvard Oriental Series*, Ed. Charles Rockwell Lanman, Vo. 32. London 1925, pp. 442 ff.

temporal point of view is the Brahmàn, the member of the priestly class, both being invested with divine and temporal powers respectively.

The priestly class being invested with so much power, sought relentlessly to consolidate it and stabilize it by making it unquestionable. This they did by founding it firmly on theological foundation and making it integral part of religious belief and the moral code. Thus in the creation of the world through the sacrifice of Cosmic Man (*purusha*) we have the following narration:

When they divided up the man . . .
His mouth became the Brahmàn, his arms
Became the warrior – prince, his legs
The common man who plies his trade.
The lowly serf was born from his feet.⁶

Supremacy of priestly class was willed by the Creator himself by producing him from his mouth and no creature can deign to refute it. The dialectic of power is such that it always consolidates and the powerful become unquestionable and irrefutable by the powerless.

In the moral code of Manu, the priestly class (later on came to be known as Brāhmanas) is divinised and considered to be worthy of union with the Absolute:

The very birth of the Brāhmana is an eternal incarnation of the sacred law; for he is born to (fulfill) the sacred law, and becomes one with Brāhman.⁷

Simultaneously there is the degradation of the lowest class the Shudras (presently known as Dalits) who have no other role but be at the beck and call of the higher castes:

The service of Brāhmanas alone is declared (to be) an excellent occupation for a shudra; for whatever else besides this he may perform will bear him no fruit.⁸

⁶ Rig Veda (*Purusha Sukta*) X. 90. verse 11 and 12. We are not trying to delineate a theory for the emergence of the complex phenomenon of Caste system (or Varna theory) from a historical point of view. Our aim is only to give a philosophical background for the problem of inequality – which is the basis of North-South dichotomy – in Indian cultural tradition. Cf. Gail Omvedt, *Dalits and the Demographic Revolution*, New Delhi 1994, pp. 21-58; Tripathy Rebatī Ballav, *Dalits: A sub-human society*, New Delhi 1994, pp. 3-64.

⁷ The Law of Manu (*Mānava-dharma-shāstra*) 1. 98. Cf. G. Buehler (Trans), *The Law of Manu, The Sacred Books of the East*, Ed. By Max Mueller, Vol. XXV, Delhi 1970.

⁸ Ibid. 10.123.

One occupation only the lord prescribed to the Shudra, to serve meekly even these (other) three castes.⁹

No accumulation of wealth must be made by a Shudra, even though he be able (to do it); for a shudra who has acquired wealth, gives pain to Brāhmanas.¹⁰

The importance of Caste dichotomy lies in the fact that it has been assiduously nurtured throughout the past three millennia and presently penetrates every cultural aspect of contemporary Indian society and presents a paradigm for social asymmetry in the Indian cultural history. What is important for us here to note is that it is the conception of ‘power’ that has sustained it throughout the history. The polarity between the powerful and the powerless finds historical expression in India and presents a paradigm to understand the reality of North-South Dichotomy. The South-South reality can be comprehended only when it is contrasted with the North and the dynamics that sustains the two is the polarity between the powerful and the powerless.

The caste dichotomy brings to light an important aspect of the dynamics of power¹¹ that it invariably yields to the phenomenon of inequality. Exercise of power willy-nilly enhances asymmetry and injustice, even if it is not consciously intended. To envisage a situation of total equality is chimerical and that of perfect justice is utopian; but power is an ingredient that can actually be used to establish justice and equality among cultures and societies, but nevertheless, it has hardly been the case in the history; on the other hand human history is a history of consolidation of power and hegemonisation by hook or crook resulting in the aggrandizement of human inequali-

⁹ Ibid. 1.91.

¹⁰ Ibid. 10.129; cf. Jhingran S., *Aspects of Hindu Morality*, Delhi 1971; McKenzie J., *Hindu Ethics - A Historical And Critical Essay*, New Delhi 1971

¹¹ Power is defined as “capacity to effect change”, “the ability to move reality”, and “being actualizing itself over against the threat of non-being”. Power can be compared to the concept we have of energy – boundless and dynamic – but with the difference that power becomes ‘human’ as it exists in human beings and integral to human act. It becomes an observable phenomenon only when some one makes uses of it. It is intimately related to human decision making process which give direction to power, nay, the power is exercised and made effective through the human decisions. It is also determines the means and goals of human activity. Cf. H. Cox, “Power”, *Dictionary of Christian Ethics*, p. 265; R. Guardini, *Power and Responsibility*, Chicago, 1961, p. 2; P. Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice*, New York, 1960, p. 47; Thomas McMahon, “The Moral Aspects of Power,” *Concilium*, 1973, pp. 51-65.

ties. What differentiates the powerful from the powerless is the inequality that exists between them. India recognized and sought for a transcendental unity but never could conceive such unity at the anthropological level of its culture due to the fact that the hierarchy of social structure founded on the asymmetry of power was very stable and firm. As a result there was no effective dialogue worth the name in India between the Dalits and high caste people. Last three millennia the high Caste Indians always sought to be understood by the Dalits and never took care to understand them.¹² What India needs therefore is a deculturalisation¹³ of the higher castes and an intracultural dialogue among Dalits with the aim to make themselves strong. Strength begets strength, power begets power. No rights can be claimed without equal strength. Dialogue without this moral strength will never bear fruits between unequal partners. In South Africa Apartheid existed for so many centuries and for three millennia the high caste Indians exploited the Dalits because the latter were powerless. The weaker ones make themselves the object of exploitation by the powerful, unless they unite themselves and consolidate enough power to resist exploitation. The unethical principle, "Might is right" cannot be fought without power and equivalent might.

The same is entirely true with regard to the North-South Dialogue which represent the powerful and powerless polarities respectively and unless this polarity is eliminated, no effective interaction and collaboration can be expected between the two. There is no other way to abolish the polarity except the powerless South empowers itself by South-South collaboration. This explains the existential urgency for a dialogue that bears concrete fruits. The dialogue can create atmosphere of sharing at all levels among its constituents which can give impetus to a new cultural and anthropological unity among them.

¹² During the last two centuries leaders like Babasaheb Ambedkar (1891-1956), Jotirao Phule (1826-1890) and E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker (1879-1973) etc., tried to lead an intra-cultural dialogue among the Dalits themselves in order to empower them. As a result we have the Indian Constitutions with good number of privileges to the Dalits but these have not yet reached to the grass root level. Gail Omvedt, *Cultural revolt in a colonial Society: The Non-Brahmin Movement in Western India 1873 to 1930*, Pune, 1976; Vasant Moon, *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*. Vol 4. Bombay, 1987. M.S. Gore, *The Social Context of an Ideology. Ambedkar's Political and Social Thought*, New Delhi, 1993. A.M. Rajasekhariah, *B.R. Ambedkar: The Politics of Emancipation*. Bombay, 1971.

¹³ Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, *Philosophy as Intercultural*, *Vijnanadipeti* 4 (2000) 145 ff.

The collapse of colonialism during the 20th century resulted in the breakdown of East-West dichotomy, impelling the powerful to play the new game of domination and hegemonisation. The rise of USA as a superpower and collapse of Soviet Republic shifted the axis of power centers giving rise to North-South dichotomy characterized by a neo-colonialism. The phenomenon called Globalization with new ingredients of scientific rationality, technological formations and global market dynamics provided powerful North opportunities to establish new structures for the universalisation of its particularities and to dictate terms to the powerless South and exercise power over it. The North remains now at the center, with power and capacity to dominate and to dictate terms to South. The South, being pushed to the periphery remains marginalized, helpless and powerless. Hence South-South dialogue is a question of survival for the South and an opportunity to empower itself. But no dialogue is possible if there is total incommensurability between the proposed dialogue partners. This means that there should be some commensurability between them that brings them together and impels them to initiate dialogue. What is it that should bring together the entire 'South'? In other words, what is the 'thread' that binds together all the nations of South. The answer is simple: it is the consciousness of its own reality of powerlessness. The South has been pushed to the periphery because it is powerless. The purpose of the dialogue for the 'South' is to 'empower' itself and become strong. Effective dialogue should bring all southern nations together, giving rise to mutual sharing of ingredients that make one powerful with the sole aim of establishing a strong unity through the consolidation of all their energies which would enable them to initiate renewed dialogue with the North as equal partners.¹⁴

2. Interculturality and South-South dialogue

The constituents of the 'South' are so diverse in their perspectives and historical conditions, only a dialogue from intercultural perspective can be an enriching and empowering experience to all the participants of the dialogue. What do we mean by interculturality?¹⁵ Interculturality is basically

¹⁴ Gerd-Rüdiger Hoffmann, "Balance of Power: African and Western Philosophies" *Vijnanadipti* 5 (2000) 47-75.; Dina V. Picotti, "Dialogue and Power", *Vijnanadipti* 5 (2000) 35-46.

¹⁵ Raúl Fonet-Betancourt, "Philosophische Voraussetzungen des interkulturellen Dialogs", *Unterwegs zur interkulturellen Philosophie*, ed. by Raúl Fonet-Betancourt,

an attitude which while affirming individuality and particularity of each culture, takes care that no particularity is universalized and absolutised through the process of hegemonisation. Only universal principle that pervades intercultural dialogue is the right of every culture “to understand the other and to be understood by the other” which constitute the two faces of the same hermeneutical coin. The following dialogue between a Buddhist monk Philosopher Nagasena and the King Milinda delineates a healthy atmosphere for effective intercultural dialogue:

Then the king said, “Venerable sir, will you discuss with me again.”

“If your majesty will discuss as a scholar, yes; but if you will discuss as a king, no.”

“How is it then that scholars discuss?”

“When scholars discuss there is summing up, unraveling one or other is shown to be in error and he admits his mistake and yet is not thereby angered.”

And how is it that kings discuss?”

When a king discusses a matter and he advances a point of view, if anyone differs from him on that point he is apt to punish him.”

“Very well then, it is as a scholar that I will discuss. Let your reverence talk without fear.”¹⁶

Nagasena while proposing conditions for honest dialogue, demands that the dialogue must be ethically founded and it should remain not merely as a way of communication but also a way of life. Dialogue as critical discussion of human relationships should help people how to reason and also how to solve differences in a rational manner.

The intercultural dialogue while denouncing the dynamics of big fish eating small fish, creates on the contrary proper atmosphere for the small fish to grow and realize its potentialities. Concretely it means no particular culture aims at metaphysical hyostatisation, on the other hand, all unitedly seek moral grounds for common action. While respecting all perspectives,

Frankfurt/M., 1998, pp. 148-166; Franz Martin Wimmer, “Ansätze einer interkulturellen Philosophie”, *Philosophische Grundlagen der Interkulturalität*, hrsg. von R.A. Mall/D. Lohmar, Amsterdam, 1993, pp. 29-40; Ram Adhar Mall, “Intercultural Thinking - Asian Perspective”, *Kulturen der Philosophie*, ed. by Raúl Fonet-Betancourt, *Concordia* 19 (1996) 67-82. Vincent Gabriel Furtado, Asian Perspectives for the Development of Intercultural Thought, *Concordia* 9 (1996) 83-100.

¹⁶ B. Pesala, *The Debate of King Milinda* (Delhi 1991) 4-5.

no dialogue partner attempts to reduce or absorb the other into his own perspective. Such a dialogue can promote pluralistic norm of live and let live, believe and let believe. The dialogue partners meet to differ and differ to meet. It is a dialogue based on non-reductive, open, creative and tolerant hermeneutics¹⁷ that remains open to analogous structural patterns¹⁸ and overcomes all centrisms. When cultures meet in the spirit of interculturality, they promote the cause of collaboration and communication among them. In China the three religions Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism constituted of three different world-views have succeeded to integrate all the three with the perspective “three teachings, one family”.

Intercultural attitude brings the dialogue partners together around one table as members of one family to plan and to act in a corporate manner, to share and grow unitedly with a strong will to become powerful as a single body without any intention by any one culture to establish hegemony over the other culture in any aspect of cultural life, specially political and economic. The dialogue should also help its constituents to organize corporate action against the internal and external forces that militate against mutual accommodation and assimilation and dissuade them from ways of importunate detrimental action.

3. South-South dialogue, mutual sharing and common unity

The dialogue between South-South will be futile if it does not lead to mutual sharing. Sharing can be at different levels: lowest level of sharing is between the master and his slave which does not in any way contribute to the growth of the personality of the slave. Here the master not only dominates but also proposes all conditions of sharing and the receiver has only the obligations to fulfill the conditions, which by degrees only demoralizes him. Sharing between equal partners promotes the growth and development of both, as both mutually agree upon the conditions of sharing and take upon themselves the moral responsibility of mutual welfare. Most important ingredient that the South-South can share is the knowledge, knowing well that knowledge is power. Sharing of knowledge at all levels, scientific, technological and philosophical can not only promote the wel-

¹⁷ Ram Adhar Mall, *Intercultural Philosophy*, New York, 2000, 52-58

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15 f.

fare of both the donor and the receiver and help them to grow equitably but also build up their power capacities in an aggregate manner.

Sharing should be complementary and mutual, encompassing both giving and receiving, if not, the receiver will always be receiving converting himself into a victim and the donor *mutatis mutandis* into an oppressor and manipulator. Sharing, if genuine, should go to unwrap the power potentialities of both resulting in enrichment, development and growth.

South-South dialogue and sharing need to be oriented towards an historical unity¹⁹ that does not ignore the diversity and multiplicity of participating constituents but holds them together with a powerful goal of united action and self empowerment. Such a unity cannot be inductively derived from the actual historicity of individual constituents that go to make South, nor is it an abstract universal that cohesively integrates all similarities between races and cultures of the South. But it is a unity founded on a moral demand for justice and equality and the result of a conscious will to empower oneself. It is a unity to be worked out despite plurality of cultures, languages, races and world-views, all of which find their respective place and value in the total unity based on a higher ideology to be realized historically. Again, it is a unity to be actualized from the grass-root level rising up to the supreme political authority in all the constituents of the South. It is a unity meticulously planned and systematically oriented towards the concrete objective of fighting against any marginalisation or oppression by external forces on the one hand and taking up corporate projects that strengthen self empowerment on the other.

The south-south unity should entail both quality and quantity as the former, though very significant in itself, will be too 'ideal' without the latter. When both are integrated, the unity becomes historical, visible, recognizable, and action oriented. Without such a unity the South will only maintain its *status quo* forever, but if it succeeds to realize corporate unity, it will be transformed into an equal partner with North. And this will bound to usher in North-South unity, nay, unity of humanity itself. When South makes itself so powerful that it can qualify itself to sit in dialogue with the North on equal

¹⁹ Georgia Warnke, "Communicative rationality and cultural values", *The Cambridge Companion to HABERMAS*, ed. by Stephen K. White, Cambridge, pp. 129-140; Tobias J.G. Louw (Fort Hare), "Democracy in an Ethical Community" *Philosophy and Democracy in Intercultural Perspective*, ed. by Heinz Kimmerle/Franz M. Wimmer, Amsterdam 1994, pp. 203-220; R.A. Mall, *Intercultural Philosophy*, 45-58.

terms, the North is coerced to share its power with it in view of its own welfare and stability. That will be the first step in establishing a human community founded on justice and equality. Only then can the humanity seek for a transcendental unity envisaged by the sages in the conception of *tad ekam*, 'that One'. If that too is realized, there will be a new heaven and a new earth, where no one will be left hungry and thirsty, no one will be oppressed, and all will seek the welfare of all beings.

Jorge J.E. Gracia (New York)

INTERPRETATION, TEXTS, AND INTER-CULTURAL STUDIES

An Interview *¹

1. How and when did the problem of textual interpretation originally emerge in the West?

In the West, the issues involved in textual interpretation have two primary sources: one is Greek, the other Hebrew. Both have to do with texts regarded as having religious significance. For the Greeks, these were Homer's epic poems, the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; for the Hebrews, it was the texts that Christians regard as belonging to the Old Testament and which the ancient Hebrews considered as containing God's revelation to them. In Greece, philosophers like Plato got involved in the issue of interpretation and extended it to non-religious texts. Plato, in particular, refers to this issue in several of his Dialogues. The Hebrew concern with textual interpretation was picked up by the early Fathers of the Christian Church. Biblical commentators and theologians, like Origen and Jerome, had much to say about the various senses of a revealed text and how it should be interpreted. At the same time, the views of Greek philosophers on this topic filtered into Roman thought. By the time of Augustine, in the fourth century AD, much hermeneutical theory had been elaborated. Augustine, of course, was one of the great contributors to hermeneutics. Indeed, he raised one of the most important issues, in both secular and non-secular contexts. His dialogue *On the Teacher* is an important landmark in the history of hermeneutics because it raises an important dimension of what has come to be called "the Hermeneutic Circle," that is, of how communication is possible through texts.

The decline of the Roman empire, the invasion of the Gothic barbarians, and the breakdown in education put a stop to the development of hermeneutics after the sixth century, but already in the eleventh century we find important discussions of it in both secular and non-secular contexts. John of Salisbury complains bitterly in the *Monologion* about the way in which interpreters torture texts, distorting the intended meanings of authors. And Peter Abelard points out in a controversial work, entitled *Yes and No*, that the blatant contradictions in the Sacred Scriptures and the commentaries on

* By Prof. Ouyang Kang, Huazhong University of Science and Technology Wubei, Wuhan, China.

them by well-regarded authorities call out for the development of principles of textual interpretation. From this time on, there has been a constant stream of works on topics of this sort.

2. *What is the recent history and situation of these hermeneutical issues?*

The source of much recent theory goes back to Schleiermacher, a nineteenth-century German philosopher who again was interested in the interpretation of religious texts. The discussion becomes heated in the United States in the forties in the context of literary theory in particular.

An important landmark is an article by Wimsatt and Beardsley, entitled “The Intentional Fallacy,” in which they claim the autonomy of the text over the author. The idea here is that the text is an independent entity that contains all that an interpreter needs for its understanding. The author and his views do not matter; it is the text itself that speaks to us. This view goes against the traditional position in which the author is the final arbiter of a text’s meaning and, therefore, that it is the author’s understanding, or intended understanding, that the interpreter needs to grasp and reproduce. The attack on authorial intention by Wimsatt and Beardsley has been reinforced more recently by the work of Barthes, who in “The Death of the Author” argues that the author is dead and his thought completely irrelevant in interpretation. Michel Foucault then went one step further and questioned the very origin of the notion of author, arguing in “What is an Author?” that the figure of the author and its proprietary rights over the meaning of texts is a creation of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century.

These views did not go unchallenged. E. D. Hirsch, in two books, *The Aims of Interpretation* and *Validity in Interpretation*, and a number of articles has tried to reestablish the figure of the author. He argues among other things, that the author’s intended understanding of a text is the only pertinent cognitive criterion of a valid interpretation. If we do not appeal to it, we have nothing to appeal to, in that a text, contrary to what others argue, has no way of conveying meaning. Meaning is always given by the author. This argument did not convince those who wanted to do away with the figure of the author to make room for the freedom of interpreters, but it did undermine the view of those who followed Wimsatt and Beardsley. So, where do we turn for the meaning of a text?

One answer is provided by the likes of Jacques Derrida and other deconstructionists. These argue that this question is misleading, for texts do not have meanings at all. To think in terms of meaning is already to fall into an improper objectification and to curtail the freedom of interpreters.

Texts do not have fixed meanings because words are polysemic; they have an infinite range of ways in which they can be understood. Interpreters, then, are free even if, in dealing with the particular languages and particular terms of those languages in which the texts are rendered, they are under certain constraints. But the constraints are only found in the texts, not in a meaning outside of them.

This position has been deemed unacceptable by many who argue that it opens the doors to complete chaos—there are not limits to the interpretation of texts! But in order to reject this position, we need to find the source of, using the title of one of Umberto Eco's books, "the limits of interpretation." So where can these be found?

One view is that they are located in interpretive communities. This is the position of Stanley Fish in *Is There a Text in This Class?* For him, these communities have unwritten rules of interpretation and legitimacy, but of course it is the communities that develop and apply them, so the rules change at the communities' wills.

Another view is the one I have proposed in *A Theory of Textuality* (1995). I argue that the cultural function of a text determines the rules of legitimate interpretation. A culture is a complex system that is developed by societies but which cannot be easily changed. Moreover, it is not a subgroup of a society that, as an interpretive community, holds the reins of interpretation, but rather the culture that has been developed by the society. The function that a text has in a society, be it religious, legal, or scientific, determines how the text is to be treated, and the criteria to judge the value of its interpretations.

At present, then, there are four main camps in the theory of interpretation: those who adopt an authorial view, whose foremost representative is Hirsch; those who adopt a deconstructive view, whose main representative is Derrida; those who adopt a communitarian view, whose main representative is Fish; and those who adopt a cultural view, of whom I am a representative.

3. How do the different recent traditions in the West pose the issues of interpretation?

Contemporary Western philosophy is roughly divided into two major camps, generally called Analytic and Continental. The first takes its name from a group of philosophers at the beginning of the last century who favored the use of analysis as a preeminent philosophical method. Their general idea is that advance in philosophy can be achieved only by breaking

down complexes into more simples. Some members of the group considered language to be the object of analysis, but others thought in terms of concepts or even entities. The roots of this kind of philosophy are found in the work of some Austrians, such as Wittgenstein and the members of the Vienna Circle, and some British philosophers, such as G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell. But the center of activity was England.

The origin and center of Continental philosophy has been the European continent and its main exponents have been German (Heidegger, Gadamer, and Habermas, not to mention earlier figures like Husserl) and French (Merleau Ponty and Derrida). Unlike analytic philosophers, the work of Continental philosophers generally proceeds through a non-historical analysis of certain historical texts. Of course, there are historians in both camps, but I am here speaking only of philosophical rather than historical investigations.

Apart from differences in origin and method, there are also topical differences between these two philosophical currents. Analysts are fundamentally concerned with issues in logic, the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of language, and the philosophy of science. Continental philosophers, on the other hand, are fundamentally concerned with issues involved in historical understanding. For these reasons, the issues of textual interpretation have been mostly the province of Continental philosophers. But in fact, there is much in Analytic philosophy of language that overlaps and is pertinent for hermeneutics. Indeed, Quine's claims about the non-existence of meanings, the theory-laden nature of language, and the impossibility of translation are all very pertinent to it. However, the terms of the discussion used by Analysts and Continentals are very different. Whereas Analysts are usually concerned with language, meaning, proper and common names, and reference, Continental philosophers talk about texts and significance.

Now, the questions that both Analytic and Continental philosophers raise span several philosophical disciplines, even though this is not often recognized. One thing is to ask about the identity of textual meaning for example, and another to ask about the criteria through which we can identify it. The first is a metaphysical issue, but the second is epistemic. Likewise, one thing is to talk about how people use language (descriptive linguistics) and another about how they should use it (prescriptive linguistics). This is why often discussions pertinent to hermeneutics develop separately. This is unfortunate because cross-fertilization would be most helpful and fruitful. Still, some of this core fertilization has happened and it is possible that it will increase in the future.

If we take into account pertinent developments in both Analytic and Continental philosophy, it is clear that issues of interpretation occupy a major portion of philosophical speculation today. In Continental philosophy, of course, it is probably the most important set of issues, and it is certainly important in Analytic philosophy as well.

As noted, there are many areas of philosophy in which hermeneutical questions arise. For example, in the philosophy of religion insofar as it is always pertinent to raise the question of interpretation of texts regarded as revealed by certain communities. In literary theory and aesthetics is fundamental because of the need to deal with the interpretation of literary and artistic works. In philosophical historiography because the source of all history of philosophy are texts that require decoding. In the philosophy of language also for obvious reasons. Even in metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics insofar as these are conducted in language, a theory of interpretation is pertinent.

4. What is the difference between epistemology and hermeneutics?

Hermeneutics, like the philosophy of mind, is a mixed enterprise in that it is concerned with one object, the interpretation of texts, but that object may be approached in various ways. One may approach it metaphysically if what is wanted is to categorize these texts in accordance with the most general categories available in particular categorial schemes. (I discuss the nature of metaphysics extensively in *Metaphysics and Its Task: The Search for the Categorial Foundation of Knowledge*, 1999). But one may also approach it ethically, politically, and of course epistemically. Ethically one would be concerned with moral issues raised by the interpretation of texts, such as whether it is moral or not to interpret texts in a certain way. Politically, one would be concerned with questions dealing with the political repercussions, that is the consequences for the polis, of certain textual interpretations, and so on. But epistemically, the questions have to do with issues related to knowledge. For example, one may ask the following question: Can one properly speak of textual interpretations as providing a kind of knowledge? What is the proper procedure that should be followed in the interpretation of texts? Are there criteria of proper textual interpretation? Should all texts be interpreted in the same way? And so on.

From this it is clear that hermeneutics is a disciplinary enterprise concerned with everything that relates to the interpretation of texts and, therefore, it includes a certain branch of epistemology which deals with issues of interpretation. But, by the same token, it is also clear that hermeneutics is diffe-

rent from epistemology both because it includes only a limited number of epistemological issues – namely, those concerned with textual interpretation – and it excludes epistemological issues dealing with other matters – such as the criteria for knowledge in general, matters related to scientific knowledge, and so on.

5. *What is an interpretation and how does it differ from a description, an evaluation, and an explanation?*

One of the main issues in the philosophy of interpretation is precisely the development of an appropriate concept of interpretation. The difficulty here lies in the many uses of this term both in ordinary discourse and in technical philosophical discussions. Of these many uses there are two that are both important and that must be kept separate. One is that of interpretation as understanding in relation to a text. In this sense an interpretation is an act or acts of understanding one has in relation to a text. When I read a passage from Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*, for example, I understand something, and this is frequently called an interpretation. In another sense, an interpretation is a text an interpreter composes in order to produce an understanding of another text in an audience. In this sense, Averroes' *Commentary on Aristotle's "Metaphysics"* is an interpretation.

In neither case are we dealing with a description, an evaluation, or an explanation. It is not a description because the interpretation, either as an understanding or as a text, is not intended as description of the text being interpreted, but rather as an understanding of the meaning of the text or as a text which causes an understanding of such a meaning. A description of a text would involve saying something about the signs of which the text is composed, say that it contains certain words, and so on. But an interpretation is not this at all.

It is not an explanation because an explanation tries to tell us the why of something. But the understanding of a text or a text that should cause such an understanding does not necessarily aim to explain why there is a text or why the text means what it does. Of course, it could do that if the kind of understanding that is pursued is an explanatory kind. But not all interpretations are of this sort. For example, if in interpreting a text one wishes to understand what its author understood, this has nothing to do with explanation.

Again, an interpretation does not necessarily involve evaluation, even if in fact it can do so. The example given earlier, in which the interpretation consists of the understanding of what the author of the text understood by it

does not involve an evaluation of the author's understanding, but rather a reproduction of similar acts of understanding in the interpreter or a text that will produce such similar acts in a particular audience. But evaluative interpretations are possible of course.

6. *What is the structure of interpretation?*

An interpretation always involves at least six elements: *interpretandum*, *interpretans*, interpreter, audience, author, and context. The *interpretandum* is the object that is under interpretation; in textual interpretations, this is a text. The *interpretans* consists in acts of understanding on the part of the interpreter in the case of interpretations that are understandings, and in the case of interpretations that are texts, it consists of texts that are intended to cause understanding. There is also the interpreter. In interpretations as understandings, the interpreter is the person who has the acts of understanding. And in the case of interpretations that are texts, the interpreter is the person who has an interpretation of the first kind and composes a text in order to cause a similar understanding of the *interpretandum* in an audience. In addition, there is the audience which, in the first case of interpretation, is the same as the interpreter and, in the second, consists of one or more persons for whom the interpreter produces the interpretation. In the background, there is also the contested figure of the author. Both the author and the audience can be understood in various ways and there has been considerable debate about both in the literature. Finally, there is always a context. Interpretations always occur in a historical setting, and this can have an important bearing on them.

7. *What are the different kinds of interpretations?*

Whether we take an interpretation of a text as an understanding of it or as a text whose purpose is to cause an understanding of it, one can divide interpretations into two general kinds in terms of their aim. The first has as aim an understanding of the meaning of a text, whereas the second has for aim an understanding of the relation of the text, or its meaning, to something else the interpreter brings into play. The first kind is in turn divided into as many kinds as one can take the meanings of texts to be. Let me point out four in particular: The meaning taken as what the author understood or intended to be understood, as what any particular audience understood or understands, as considered independently of what the author or any particular audience understood, or understands, and as any of these but including its implications. These may be called respectively: authorial, audiencial, independent, and implicative.

The other kind of interpretation, which I like to call relational for obvious reasons, can be of many different kinds, depending on what the interpreter brings into play. There can thus be Freudian, feminist, psychological, historical, theological, personal, Lutheran, sociological, and Marxist interpretations. In a Marxist interpretation, for example, the interpreter seeks to understand, or cause an understanding of, a text in relation to an *interpre-tandum*. The idea is to see the text, or its meaning, in terms of Marxist theory and categories. And something similar would apply to the other kinds mentioned.

8. *What is textuality?*

‘Textuality’ is an abstract noun that expresses the character or property of being a text, just as ‘animality’ expresses the character or property of being an animal. I do not know who first used the term, but its use became widespread in philosophy in the seventies. A common variation of the term is ‘intertextuality.’ This is used to refer to what is found between texts, such as hidden assumptions, spaces, and so on. Naturally, since there are widely different views about what a text is, there are correspondingly widely different views about textuality. Of all these, five stand out. Consider a text such as Augustine’s *On the Teacher*. According to one view, the text of this work consists of the type marks that are put down on the paper when the work is transcribed. A second position holds that the text is the meaning of those marks. A third view maintains that the text is the marks considered as meaningful but with no meaning in particular. A fourth identifies the text with the speech acts in which the author or the interpreter engages when they write or say the text. And a fifth view identifies the text as the marks on a page, or the sounds uttered but considered in relation to a particular meaning.

The controversy about the notion of textuality is not about whether such a notion is possible or whether we need one; rather, it is about how exactly to conceive it. From the various views mentioned of what a text is, corresponding views about textuality result. Textuality can be, then, for example, the character that certain entities acquire when they are used as tokens, or certain meanings, or marks considered as meaningful, and so on. These are supposed to tell us what textuality is and whether it has to do primarily with meaning, or with the usage of certain entities to convey meaning, and so on. In my view, textuality is the character that entities acquire when they are selected, arranged, and used by authors as signs with the intention to convey specific meanings to audiences in determinate contexts.

9. *What are the main theses of your books on this topic?*

I have written four books dealing with issues related to interpretation. Here are summaries of their main theses.

Philosophy and Its History: Issues in Philosophical Historiography (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. xxii, 387.

This book is a systematic and comprehensive treatment of issues involved in philosophical historiography. It deals with such topics as the relation of philosophy to its history, the role of value judgments in historical accounts, the value of the history of philosophy for philosophy, the nature and role of texts and their interpretation in the history of philosophy, historiographical method, and the stages of development of philosophical progress.

The book defends two main theses. The first is that the history of philosophy must be done philosophically, that is, it must include philosophical judgments. The second is that one way to bring about a rapprochement between Analytic and Continental philosophy is through the study of the history of philosophy and its historiography.

A Theory of Textuality: The Logic and Epistemology (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. xxviii, 309.

The book presents the first comprehensive and systematic theory of textuality ever attempted, taking into account the views of both Analytic and Continental philosophers and the pertinent positions developed in the history of philosophy by a variety of major figures. It shows that most confusions surrounding textuality are the result of three factors: a too-narrow understanding of the category; a lack of a proper distinction among logical, epistemological, and metaphysical issues; and a lack of a proper grounding of epistemological and metaphysical questions on logical analyses.

The book begins with a logical analysis of the notion of a text resulting in a definition that serves as the basis for the distinctions subsequently drawn between texts on the one hand and works, language, artifacts, and art objects on the other; and for the classification of texts according to their modality and function. The second part of the book uses the conclusions of the first part to solve various epistemological issues which have been raised about texts and their interpretation by philosophers of language, semioticians, hermeneuticists, literary critics, semanticists, aestheticians, and historiographers. The main conclusion is that textual interpretation is a matter of textual function understood in a cultural context.

Texts: Ontological Status, Identity, Author, Audience (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1996), pp. x, 215.

The main tenets of the view presented in this book are that texts are ontolo-

gically complex and constituted by entities considered to have a mental relation to meaning. The entities in question can be individual or universal, physical or mental, and substances or features of substances. But texts can be constituted only by substances considered as characterized by features or by the features of substances. Moreover, texts are always aggregates with meanings but, like their meanings, they can be individual or universal. Individual texts have the existence and location proper to the individuals in question. In contrast, universal texts are neutral with respect to existence and location, and their historicity is the historicity of their instances.

The identity conditions of texts—whether we are speaking of achronic, synchronic, or diachronic identity—include the identity conditions of the entities of which they are constituted and their meaning. Accordingly, the identification and re-identification of texts require knowledge of those conditions in most cases.

The notion of author is not univocal. One can distinguish among several authors of a text and therefore several functions as well, although the historical author is generally regarded as paradigmatic. Historical authors are responsible for the elements of novelty in a text; they create texts and therefore are necessary to them. The often discussed repressive character of an author is not always so and never applies to the historical author. When repression occurs, it is exercised by the view an audience has of the historical author; that is, by the pseudo-historical author.

The notion of audience also is not univocal and neither are its functions. The audience contemporaneous with the historical author is paradigmatic, and its function is to understand the text. Texts are never without audiences for the author includes the function of audience. Audiences, like authors, can act repressively, and they can be subversive when they distort the meaning of texts.

How Can We Know What God Means? The Interpretation of Revelation (New York: Palgrave, of St. Martin's Press, 2001), pp. xiv, 229.

To ask about how we can know what God means is in fact to ask about the meaning of what a community of believers believes is a divine text, for a divine text is what I call revelation, or revealed text. And to ask how we can know what this divine text means is to ask how we can understand it. What are, then, the conditions under which this understanding is possible? This is the question the book asks and attempts to answer from a strictly philosophical standpoint.

The answer is that these kinds of texts require a theological interpretation, that is, an interpretation from the articulated point of view of the religious

beliefs of the community that holds them to be divine. The importance of other interpretations depends on the theological parameters held by the community. This means that we can only legitimately judge the interpretation of these texts from within a theological tradition, and not from outside it. However, this does not mean that the theological tradition cannot itself be judged. But the judgment about it has to be made based on the most general epistemic principles of understanding, and therefore falls outside hermeneutics, being part of the province of epistemology.

10. What are the implications of your theory of textuality for inter-cultural studies?

First of all, what it holds about the interpretation of texts does not imply cultural relativism insofar as the theory tries to take into account all kinds of interpretations, including cultural ones. I may, of course, have missed some, but I think that my theory should be able to accommodate them.

Now, there are two points that are particularly pertinent with respect to this issue. One is that texts come from different cultures. The locus of Confucius's *Analects* and Aristotle's *Metaphysics* are certainly different cultures. And one might say that these cultures are the matrixes that gave them rise. The second point that needs to be made is that texts can be subjected to interpretations within and without the cultures that produced them.

My theory accommodates these facts in various ways. First, the meaning of these texts is determined by their cultural function, but their cultural function can change, depending on the cultural context. It is obvious that Confucius' *Analects* had a certain cultural function within the China that produced it and therefore had a certain meaning at the time. But as its cultural function changed, so could its meaning. Moreover, if this text has a cultural function outside China, say in Western culture, then also here it will have meaning that may differ from its meaning in China today or at the time of its composition. This entails that an interpretation that seeks to develop an understanding of its meaning will have to do with these different functions. Now, these functions may prescribe, for example, that the meaning is in fact audiencial, authorial, independent, or implicative; and it may even prescribe that the meaning is actually the result of a relational interpretation – say theological, Freudian, feminist, or Marxist.

This raises the question of relativism, for from what I have said, it looks as if it is possible to have conflicting legitimate interpretations. And this is right, in that the legitimacy of an interpretation is internal to its kind, and ultimately determined by the cultural function of the text. On the other

hand, this does not entail that interpretations are relativistic in the sense in which there are no rules for their development or the judgment of their value. In fact there are, for cultures often have very clear and strict interpretative rules derived from the cultural function that the texts in question are supposed to have.

But is it possible to judge the value of different kinds of interpretations, say that Freudian interpretations are better than Marxist, or vice versa? Well, of course, yes. But this is not a question of hermeneutics but of epistemology. The issue, then, is about the ultimate value of different schemes to know. So to determine this would lead us to the most central question of epistemology, a clear confirmation that hermeneutics is an applied branch of this philosophical discipline.

11. Could you please try to predict the future of philosophy according to your theory?

Hegel said some time ago that the owl of Minerva flies only at dusk. And I fundamentally agree with him. Philosophers are not in the business of predicting the future, whether of philosophy or anything else. The job of philosophers is to develop conceptual frameworks that take into account as many aspects of human experience as possible with the aim of trying to understand it. Our thinking, then, is to this extent a reflection on the past rather than the future. When it comes to prediction, we have to move into the fields of particular sciences, and especially of history.

The historian of philosophy, however, may construct hypotheses about the future course of philosophy, so, as a historian, I may ask myself: Where is philosophy going? The last century has been extraordinary in its complexity and productivity. And it has been dominated by a linguistic turn. This has been helpful because it has made philosophers understand the importance of language for our field. But some philosophers have gone too far in that they have tried to see philosophy merely as a linguistic enterprise, either descriptive – as happened with the Oxford Ordinary Language school – or prescriptive – as proposed by the Logical Positivists who earlier in the century were exclusively engaged in trying to develop an ideal logical language that could be the instrument of philosophical discourse. In their zeal, both of these groups forgot important areas of philosophy, such as metaphysics. Fortunately, the pendulum is swinging back now and a recognition of the key importance of metaphysics for philosophy is more frequent. Indeed, I think this is one road that philosophy will be taking in the near future.

Another area that will certainly develop further is the exploration of issues that have to do with race, ethnicity, and nationality. Clearly, if the world is to survive, these areas of human experience must be explored in greater detail. We have already seen that some inroads have been made in these directions, but much more is needed and I have no doubt it is forthcoming. Indeed, I am engaged in a systematic exploration of the relation between race, ethnicity, and nationality, that I expect will be concluded within the next few months and published next year, and I am not alone in my concern with these topics. But this is just one of the areas that I think will expand and flourish. I expect there will be many others.

12. One final question: What do you want to say to Chinese readers when this interview is published in Chinese in China?

To Chinese readers in particular, whether philosophers or not, my message is that I hope the interview has been helpful to them for the understanding of both the value of philosophy and the need for the Chinese to become more actively engaged in its pursuit. Philosophy is indispensable, for no other discipline of learning aims to develop the kind of comprehensive and critical view of the world and human experience that philosophy does. And the contemporary Chinese have so far been a bit timid about appropriating it. There is a long and rich tradition of philosophical speculation in China, so there is no reason why this tradition cannot serve as the foundation for a new Renaissance of Chinese philosophical thought. China is surely one of the most important countries in the world, and Chinese civilization is without a doubt one of the greatest civilizations that human beings have developed. Philosophy, then, would be incomplete if the Chinese did not participate fully in the development of the field.

But I should issue a warning. Do not approach philosophy ideologically, that is, with a preestablished agenda. And do not become slaves of foreign ideas. Develop your thought from within, that is, from an appreciation of the needs that you think are important. Take into account western ideas and discoveries, but do not enslave yourselves to them. The value of Chinese philosophy will not be in how well it mirrors Western thought, but in how well it responds to the intellectual needs that the Chinese recognize. That is how the Chinese will more effectively contribute to world philosophy.

Rainier A. Ibane (Manila)

HYBRIDITY AS A TRANSVERSAL VIRTUE

Introduction

The notion of Transversality has recently captured the philosophical imagination as an intermediary arena of discourse that elevates the relative world views of cultural circles beyond the abstract claims of universality.¹ As a result of the cross-fertilization of ideas, organisms and cultures, hybrids mediate dominant global trends and the multicultural customs and practices of indigenous traditions. Hybridity became notable during the advent of modern transportation technologies as a consequence of the exchange of ideas, peoples and commodities. It is now being accelerated today, moreover, by information and communication systems that instantaneously access and transfer bytes of information among those who have access to these technologies.

This paper will show that the production of hybrid languages, national heroes and local communities that emerged from modern cultural encounters must be highlighted and even celebrated for their generation of more resilient ways of being in the world that can survive and address the challenges of our contemporary civilizations.

Transversality

Transversality is not a new phenomenon. Ancient philosophers have problematized the ambiguity of the human condition that straddles between the cultural and the natural worlds and the inherent tension between humanity's spiritual aspirations and the limitations imposed by earthly existence. Not unlike Plato's conception of Eros in the Symposium, transversal entities are both poor and rich, living in want and in plenty, and always aspiring towards perfection in the midst of life's contingencies.

According to Jung, the notion of transversality was derived from geometry.² It refers to the vertical line that bisects two parallel horizontal lines: the one above represents the dominant discourse of human kind, and the second one below portrays the immersion of human beings to the particularities of their historicity and sociality. The line that cuts across these representations is called the line of transversality. Its dynamism can be illustrated by the pre-hispanic

¹ Hwa Yol Jung, "Transversality and Comparative Political Philosophy", *Prajna Vijara* Vol 9 No. 1 (January-June 2008), p. 145.

² *Ibid.* p. 150.

Philippine script, the Baybayin KA/ , that depicts wave-like boundaries that sandwich the resilient identity of individuals that uphold the dynamic dialectic of the history of ideas that lie above them while being rooted to the variability of cultural practices below.

Transversality, moreover, has many dimensions. It cuts across other horizons that include not only the historical and social spheres but also the spiritual world of ideas from various times and places. Transversal thinkers appropriate the received ideas from the so-called canonical texts in so far as they address the concrete contexts that circumscribe the concerns of their daily lives.

Hybridity

The term “hybridity” was initially used in the field of animal husbandry where experiments were conducted in the breeding of animals, pigs in particular, in order to improve the genetic constitution of the offspring of “a wild boar and a tame sow.”³ The biological metaphors of wilderness and temerity captures the antipodal categories of multiculturalism and universalism as the former refers to the variety of cultural formations in history while the latter reduces the former in terms of fundamental categories. Their mixture breed new and distinctive identities derived from their progenitors.

The notion of hybridity is applied today, however, to not only genetic and organic contexts but also to technological and social innovations that have proven themselves to be more resilient in addressing the pressure of market forces and political uncertainties. Information technology gadgets whose spare parts have been outsourced and preselected to combine the best features of their different parts, for example, can interact and access a variety of gadgets in comparison to branded products that can interface only with their own brands.

Hybrid organizations, such as social entrepreneurships and civil society organizations that combine profitability and social concern have succeeded in penetrating a larger market share among the less privileged sectors of society since they constitute the broadest market base within developing countries. Social entrepreneurs and civil society actors succeed in their endeavours in so far as they try to respond to the needs of the marginalized sectors of society while meeting the strict quality standards of the global market.

By gathering and weaving the various strands of intellectual and material resources to produce unique innovations that respond to their various stakeholders, hybrid actors are able to pass forward innovative cultural products that subsume and transcend their predecessors. This is evident even in the most lofty discipline of Philosophy where intellectual breakthroughs have been brought

³ <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/hybrid> (accessed on October 20, 2012)

about by putting together such diverse ideas as Platonism and Aristoteleanism in Aquinas, Rationalism and empiricism in Kant, and Marxism and Christianity in Liberation Theology.

The development of philosophical languages likewise demonstrates the dynamism of hybridity as new meanings and new terminologies are assimilated in order to comprehend new realities that were previously unavailable from the native culture. Translations from one language to another reveal the genius of a culture while at the same time concealing other aspects of reality that are not accessible from the perspective of the receiving culture. *Merón*, a Filipino word that can be roughly translated to represent the notion of being, also means having.

Using the word “meron” to refer to the scholastic notion of *esse* would therefore require further qualifications although it can capture the existential aspect of entities that that which are really there. A teacher may then enrich the vocabulary of students by simply introducing the word “esse” when doing scholastic philosophy but one may also extend the understanding of one’s own cultural sensibilities by elaborating on the word *meron* in order to emphasize the existential dimension of “esse.”

The Tagalog prefix *KA*, another significant Filipino philosophical concept, adds to the understanding of the inherently social dimension of experience whatsoever by merely affixing this prefix to root-words than include almost every entity and activity. *Ka-table*, for example, means to share a table, *ka-chat* refers to chat partners in the virtual world of the internet and it can also be appended as titular designations for human beings who have proven themselves to be sympathetic to the cause of the marginalized sectors of society.

This process of grafting a syllable to people, ideas and entities reveals a highly sociable world view that must be complemented with a warning about the importance of taking personal and individual responsibility for personal deeds or misdeeds in the realm of morality. Such linguistic hybridities, nevertheless could very well spell out the distinctive cultural identity of a people.

KA and the Philippine Revolution against colonial Spain

The Prefix *KA*, moreover, is not only significant in understanding the propensity for sociality of Philippine cultural practices. It also played a critical role in the emancipatory project of nation-building as the Filipino people aspired for independence against colonial Spain at the turn of the 20th century. The Prefix *KA*, derived from the pre-hispanic baybayin script  , was used as a symbol of the first revolutionary flag that served as the rallying point of revolutionaries in asserting their rights for freedom and equality. It symbolized the Filipino

political project of asserting their identity against colonial masters by retrieving an idealized pre-colonial literary state in order to bridge the gap between the experience of colonization and the promise of an emancipated future.

This symbolism is a testimony to the Filipino's revolutionary belief that the right to speak one's native language is the primary analogate in arguing for an independent government. They proclaimed, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the Philippine revolution: "Before the whole universe that we have a right to our own government, our own motherland, in the same manner that we have our own language."⁴

This declaration was announced not only as a particular act of transgression against the Spanish colonial government but also proclaimed "before the whole universe;" a universal statement that transcend the particularities of their revolutionary conditions. They naively believed that the enjoyment of freedom was the initial condition of their motherland and were convinced that other countries such as America and Japan likewise were blessed with such liberties and egalitarian conditions.⁵

The right to use one's own language therefore served as the lynch pin to assert the dignity of being human. They reminded their members, through their code of conduct, that: "Pure and truly highly esteemed, beloved and noble is the person even if he or she was raised in the forest and speaks nothing but his or her own language."⁶

The hybrid identities of the leaders of the Philippine revolution

A cursory evaluation of the leaders of the Philippine revolution against colonial Spain shows that they also had hybrid identities. Emilio Jacinto, the intellectual leader of the revolution and author of the Revolutionaries' *Code of Conduct*, was initially more proficient in the Spanish language and had to learn his native tongue during the course of the revolution. As scribe and propagandist of the revolution, he served as Secretary to Andres Bonifacio, the Founder and Supreme Leader of the revolutionary movement.

Andres Bonifacio himself read the Annals of the French Revolution, the biographies of the *Presidents of the United States*, Philippine penal and civil codes, and novels such as Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Eugène Sue's *Le Juif errant* and José Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*. Aside from Tagalog and Spanish, he could speak a little English. His father served as

⁴ Virgilio Almario, *Ang Panitikan ng Rebolusyon*(g 1896), (Diliman: UP Press, 1997), p. 185.

⁵ Ibid. pp. 160-161.

⁶ Ibid. p. 158.

tenyente mayor of Tondo, Manila while his mother was a mestiza born of a Spanish father and a Filipino-Chinese mother who worked at a cigarette factory. He therefore had a hybrid progeny despite of his humble social background.

Emilio Aguinaldo, the avowed first President of the Philippine Republic when the Philippines was ceded by Spain to the United States government by virtue of the Treaty of Paris in 1898, had parents who were of Chinese and Filipino descent, had the privilege of finishing a college education and was serving as his hometown's municipal captain when the Philippine revolution erupted against Spain.

These revolutionary leaders, along with the so-called ilustrados, the educated Filipino elite, served as catalysts in the uprising against Spain that led to the formation of the Filipino nation. Their thoughts and ideals served as pivotal axes that led to the self-consciousness of a distinctive Filipino identity at the turn of the century. Their philosophical musings and writings are a rich resource of insights and ideas that could be further developed systematically as a profound and distinctive world view.

Their ideas show that they were heavily influenced by scholastic philosophy as well as French and American revolutionary principles. Their metaphors, however, were imbued with their daily experiences such as sailing the seas, watching the sunrise, and seeking refuge in mountains and forests during times of desolation. Their writings reveal universal aspirations from within the concrete context of their cultural and natural environments.

It is a worthwhile project, therefore, to document and articulate the positive aspects of their unfinished emancipatory project and social justice platforms that were undertaken by the intellectual leaders of what is considered to be the first anti-colonial socio-political movement in Asia. We can even compare the various aspirations of these revolutionary leaders from other anti-colonial political movements in order to formulate a broader base line for a more comprehensive vision of social transformation.

The leadership role of the middle classes in social transformation has been recognized among contemporary political thinkers in the Philippines as exemplified by the case of the two people power uprisings against a dictatorship and an abusive President. We have even recently impeached and convicted the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court as part of our political process that was highlighted through the mass media which are largely controlled by an articulate civil society. Even in the fields of business and economics, broadening the base of the middle classes had been acknowledged as a key component of social development.

Hybridity as a Native (katutubo) Virtue

The mediating powers of hybrid individuals, however, can be abused to serve such extrinsic ends as the accumulation of profits and abuse of power when not tempered with the more noble aspirations of social development. When the Filipino revolutionary leaders initially tried to distinguish themselves from their colonial masters, they identified themselves as the “katutubo,” which can be roughly translated as “natives.”

This English translation must be made more nuanced, however, in order to explicate its innate meaning in terms of “those with whom they grew up with”. Katutubo is composed of three words: the prefix “Ka:” which means to be with, the infix “tu,” a repetition of the first syllable of the rootword which indicates an intentional movement “towards,” and the root word “tubo” which means to “grow.” Unlike the English word “native” which is derived from the Latin word *natus* or *nasci*, to be born, the notion of “katutubo” does not discriminate against other people’s, genetic origins but provides for a more inclusive concept that embraces even those who have been migrated, enculturated and flourished on the native soil. The soil can even refer to the Earth in order to accommodate the broader issues of ecology and global climate change. The revolutionary leaders actually took pains to note that their political movement embraces “everyone who were born in these islands.”⁷

Hybrid personalities can contribute to social development even if they are migrants and were not originally borne in their adopted motherland for as long as they work for the common good. Indebtedness and a sense of gratitude to the host country oblige hybrids to contribute to the enhancement of the collective well-being of the national community.

Native populations, nevertheless, are not mere passive recipients of foreign influences. They can adapt new and even produce more resilient ways of living in the world with others as a result of their reaction to global fashion and trends. This adaptation is illustrated by the facade of the Miag-ao Church in the island of Iloilo where animist beliefs are etched to the facade of a Catholic Church. Cultural practices also evolve such as the case of the feast day of the town of Lukban, Quezon province where the fruits of the land are used to decorate houses that are to be blessed by the parish priest because the church offerings by the parishioners could no longer be accommodated inside the Church and its premises.

This inter-weaving of new cultural traditions by the combination of foreign and cultural practices demonstrates the critical role of hybridity in social transformation. So-called foreign influences, after all, are perhaps also hybrid

⁷ Ibid. p. 156.

products and we could very well question whether pure ideas really exist except as regulative principles constructed by the mind in order to comprehend the complexity of reality itself. The political danger that lies ahead and behind these abstractions is the tendency of colonizers to unilaterally impose preconceived delusions against the complex grandeur of human civilizations.

Transversal identities

The capacity to put together the various materials and ideas into a distinctive tapestry is performed by concrete and unique individuals that are distinct from their social milieu the way water is formed from the distinct particles of oxygen and two particles of hydrogen. The same can kind of social transcendence can be applied to transversal identities that emerged out of the mixture of different cultural influences. The act of combining various elements from the environment bespeaks of an actor who makes these combinations and the manner by which these combinations are made reveals the characteristic style or personality of the actor himself or herself.

The distinction between the individuals who constitute a collectivity and the collectivity itself is significant in order to handle corporate actors that can be held responsible for their deeds or misdeeds. Artificial collective persons are created by legal fiction in order to identify agents who can sue and be sued for acts done in the name of collective persons. The personalities of these artificial persons can even be identified based on their mission and vision statements that align the activities of their individual members with the collective personality of the group itself.

Collective persons vary according to the kind of social bonds that bind their members and the kind of relationships that they cultivate with respect to others. Modern societies, for example are characterized by contractual obligations that presuppose adversarial dispositions while pre-modern societies are bound by kinship or ceremonial and shared experiences.

These collective personalities transcend the totality of their individual members, as an integrated whole is more than the summation of its parts. The identity of this social whole can never be reduced in terms of percentages or numbers but has its own distinctive individuality aside from the individuality of its members. One is therefore not fifty percent Australian and 50 percent Filipino: personal identities are distinct from the percentages of genetic constitutions.

The virtue of hybridity comes to the picture when the individual or collective person is able to weave and blend the different strands of relationships into a harmonious whole that marks a personality that can be characterized by aesthetic norms instead of quantitative proportions. Not unlike artists who can

be identified for their distinctive style of combining the available materials such as colours and shapes in their works, individual and collective personalities can likewise be identified by the manner wherein they put themselves in before and in the manner by which they deal with the world at large.

A home, a room, a city, just to cite a few examples, can be identified with the personality of its dwellers in the same manner that a whole nation can be characterized by their style of dealing with their citizens, other nations, foreigners and the natural environment. Such identities are better recognized by external observers than their members since the latter lives its ambiance, the way fish lives in the water.

The identity of individual and cultural persons can be marked by their style of handling the world and other persons in the same manner that art critics can identify artists in the way the latter express their ideas through the material world. This requires an aesthetic type of judgement that can perceive in and through the solidity of matter the ideal forms that lie beyond its particular manifestations. Hybrids are in a distinctive position to reveal universal ideas to its particular instantiations because its domain lies in between the realm of universals and the world of particulars.

Conclusion

Trasversality transcends the limitations imposed by their cultural matrix when the material factors of existence are transformed according to the image of ideal universal principles. Not unlike Plato's notion of the demiurge that shapes the primordial material stuff that constitutes the cosmos according to the likeness of the world of ideals, hybrids are in a privileged position to combine the cultural elements that constitute their environment into a distinctive world that can be shared with others in accordance with the shared ideals of the human community.

The universal aspirations of indigenous languages, national and local communities, therefore, can be revealed in and through the concrete and distinctive standpoints of hybrid personalities.

J. Obi Oguejiofor (Enugu, Nigeria)

**SELF IMAGE AND DEVELOPMENT IN
CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY**

Introduction

Apart from the question of the existence and nature of African philosophy, one question that has very much occupied African philosophic workers is the question of development.¹ What is the link between philosophy and development, what role can the philosophic enterprise as such play in advancing economic development in Africa? Such are constant questions which form the themes of discussion in symposia, articles and books. At first look, the preponderance of this question is easy to understand under the background of the dismal condition of the continent as a whole. It is not only that the dire economic, social, and political conditions are bad, but it is more the reality that in many respects they appear to be getting worse. In such conditions, to engage in the so-called armchair philosophising appears to be an idle luxury which most of Africa can ill afford. African philosophy workers are therefore very intent on making their work relevant to the present condition of their continent. It is an explicable but most often unconscious self-questioning and self-affirmation at the same time.

This fact is a proof that philosophy must inevitably take due consideration of its environment. Philosophising is a contextual activity. One constant feature of every possible definition of philosophy is the role of human reason in it. Sometimes this is presented in such a way that one would believe that it is the work of the unconditioned reason. Quite contrary to this conception however, the context of philosophising impinges on the outcome of the work. It is in this regard that all philosophy is hermeneutics. In our view, it is not a one directional hermeneutics, or one that must follow the three stages outlined by Paul Ricœur. Its outcome, its direction or its

¹ Examples are the following Pauline Hountodji, "Que Peut la philosophie," in A. Diemer (ed.), *Philosophy in the Present Situation in Africa*, Franz Steiner, Wiesbaden, 1981; O. Oladipo, *The Idea of African Philosophy*, Molecular Press, Ibadan, 1992; O. Yai, "Theory and Practice in African Philosophy: The Poverty of Speculative Philosophy," *Second Order* 2 (1977); B. O. Eboh, *Philosophy in the Growth of Nigerian*, Ikot Ekpene, 1980; G. Sogolo, "Philosophy and Its Relevance Within the African Context," *Journal of Humanities* 2 (1988), pp. 97-111; Joseph Njino, "The Relevance of the Study of Philosophy in Kenya," *Journal of African Religion and Philosophy* 2, 2 (1993), pp. 173-179.

method is never predetermined in advance. That is why it is possible that different philosophers living in the same context become advocates of different and most often contradictory systems of thought. When we talk of contextual predetermination of philosophic thought therefore, we mean that the human thinker carries with him all the paraphenelia of his society. He is born and bred in a certain context. In a way, his very thought is prejudice, *pre-judicium* because, contrary to Immanuel Kant, there can be no pure reason. This condition is obtainable even within the operation of the apparently most abstract concerns of the human reason.

It is partly on account of this that African philosophers are often engaged in questioning the relevance and the role of their discipline in development, a theme which is significantly absent in philosophic discourse in industrially advanced countries. Our effort here is to scrutinise this concern for development. We will argue first that in their quest for development, African philosophers have surreptitiously taken Western conception of philosophy as standard; that this quest and the conception of philosophy that goes with it is a result of battered self-image which is a legacy of Africa's past and recent history; and that the over-all concern for development and the understanding of this development is unwittingly lending support to a paradigm in the name of which the African was dehumanised in the first place.

Origin of the Quest for Development in Philosophy

Western tradition of philosophy has always had a view of the philosophy as a discipline that holds all the answers to some of man's most pressing, and most important problems. This stance is not just a claim whose realisation is limited to the theoretical. The conceived benefit of philosophy extends as well to the practical aspects of human life. Plato's philosopher king was thus foisted as the only answer to turmoil in the Athenian political landscape.² Aristotle coming from another end of the philosophical spectrum idealised the possessor of the universal knowledge as the one worthy to command.³ One would think that this honorific conception is merely a result of the fact that philosophy was at a point in history a clearing house for all organised knowledge. However, the separation of the disciplines into different areas independent of philosophy did not bring this perception to any end. Thus the claim to better rationality, or better understanding and

² *Letters*, VII, 326b.

³ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk 1. ch.1.

better insight in the face of other disciplines seems to have remained constant till date. If philosophy prides itself as the quintessence of all intellectual pursuits, it goes without saying that within the situation of underdevelopment as is the case throughout Africa it must also be ready with answers.

A second fact in this quest is the co-opting of philosophy to answer questions arising from historic deprivation of dignity. F. Eboussi Boulaga describes this agenda as ‘*désir d’attester une humanité contestée.*’⁴ This contested humanity of the Africans is perhaps the most fatal legacy of the history of slavery, imperialism and colonialism. The combined experience of these portent historic realities gave the African an undignified image which has not been too fast to disappear. The experience of the trans-Saharan slave trade, for instance, helped to brand the African as inferior during the time when this trade made massive contact with Europe and the new world possible. That the African went to the new world in chains was not unnoticed by those for whose benefit his chains were fabricated. In Western philosophy, the brutality of this transaction engendered a discourse at self justification in which the victim was denied humanity. It is notable that this discourse arrived at the same conclusion whether it was undertaken from the point of view of absolute idealism (Hegel), transcendental idealism (Kant), or radical empiricism (Hume). The logic of the discourse is that the act of dehumanisation was justified either because the victims were not human at all or that they were less human than the ideal humanity then represented by the European. Charles de Montesquieu was among the rare thinkers who declared clearly that the Africans were not human. His reason? “Allowing them to be men a suspicion will follow that we ourselves are not Christians.”⁵ The cumulative effect of all these is aptly captured by G. B. N. Ayittey as follows: “The people of Africa have been brutally traumatised. Europeans coloniser denigrated them for centuries as “subhuman” and denied them recognition of any meaningful intellectual, cultural, and historical accomplishments or experience. ... Allegedly (African) people had no history, no culture, no civilisation and nothing of value to contribute to the creation of human beings.”⁶

It is notable that on the level of philosophy, its honorific conception makes it all the more difficult to even imagine the capability of a human being so created of doing philosophy. It is in this respect that Tempels’

⁴ F. Eboussi Boulaga, *La Crise du Muntu*, Présence Africaine, Paris, 1977, p. 7.

⁵ Charles de Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws*, William Benton, Chicago, 1952, p. 110.

⁶ George B. N. Ayittey, *Africa Betrayed*, St Martin’s Press, New York, 1992, p. 4

publication of *La philosophie bantoue* was a ground-breaking attempt to challenge this conception even while upholding the inferiority of the African and his philosophy which he (Tempels) had made courageous effort to present to the world. The impossibility of the non-human to accede to the level of philosophy determined the hostile reception of Tempels' opusculum among his colonial and missionary colleagues. As Mudimbe says Tempels' book would have been less provocative if he had called it any other thing than "philosophy."⁷ Tempels' project of "humanisation" of the African through philosophy has been an enduring influence in the philosophical outcome of contemporary African philosophers irrespective of the current in which they are working. This influence is strengthened by the effect on the African psyche of these centuries of indignity. Ayittey, for example, speaks of the image of inferiority which slavery engendered and adds that: "It was probably this, rather than the physical and economic damage of the slave trade, that wrenched the heart from the inner psyche of blacks and assailed the very cultural soul of their existence."⁸

Joseph Nyasanyi substantially agrees with Ayittey in the following statement: "Colonialism and its attendant practices of maximum exploitation, humiliation, subjugation, vilification and utter contempt for human equality and dignity, has gradually and progressively brought about a sad process of mental, spiritual and social degeneration of the colonised African. It has rendered him totally naked, alienated and a shadow of his original self."⁹

Nyasanyi further says that the colonised African continually finds himself in a state of conflict between his truly native values and the received values of his colonisers. For him, this African is neither loyal to nor conversant with the one nor the other which makes him an "ambivalent impostor" with regard to them both.

The conflict that Nyasanyi alludes to is a reality of the existence of present day African. There is on the one hand the proclamation of cultural authenticity, seen for instance in Negritude, in ethnophilosophy, as well as the numerous cultural revival movements in the whole of Africa. On the other hand however, there is also a determined effort to be like the colonial master even in the aspects of life the erosion of which entails the effective

⁷ V. Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1988, pp. 141.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁹ J. M. Nyasanyi, "The Antithetical Sequel in the African Personality," H. Odera Oruka (ed), *Philosophy, Humanity and Ecology*, The African Academy of Sciences, Nairobi, 1994, p. 183.

demise of the traditional cultural world. Still despite this festering conflict, it can arguably be said that the ideals of the colonial oppressor has also become, to a greater or lesser degree, the ideal of the victims of oppression. It means that in the final analysis the project of dehumanisation was almost a complete success. The standard of humanity in the mind of the colonised and the oppressed virtually became the standards of the coloniser and the oppressor. For O. Owomoyela, this change is what is peculiar with the African experience: “Africans have not been the only people overrun by rampaging Europeans but Africans are unique in their belief that their future lies in becoming, in thought, speech and habit, like their erstwhile colonisers.”¹⁰

This attitude is reflected, among other areas, in the image of the white man as seen in the practice of naming in many African ethnic languages. After the experience of massive contact with colonisers the flexibility of naming in African culture assured that their perception of Europeans as superior is made visible in their names. Thus the preponderance of such names as *Oyibo*, *Mbakara*, *Bature* all meaning whiteman in Igbo, Efik and Hausa, and all indicating the wish of the parents for the child to be a successful human being, a superior one which is now exemplified in the European. This practice is also laden with conflict. One person is named Igboka (Igbo is greater), another is named Oyiboka (Oyibo, whiteman is greater!)

Another important indicator of the superior/inferior is the perception of foreign colonial languages in most of Africa. We do not need to go into any detailed consideration of the implications of or the reasons behind the reality that most parts of Africa stock to imposed colonial languages as official languages even after colonialism. It is important to note that one important factor that explains the enormity is the fact that by independence foreign languages had become an unofficial tag of the elite whose *raison d'être* traces back to colonialism and imperialism. Fluency in any language is, of course, a useful acquisition. But in most of Africa, fluency in English or French or Portuguese is taken to be a much superior acquisition than fluency in Swahili, Igbo, Hausa, Wolof, Bambara or Umbundu, even by those whose first language's are the later. This is not just on account of the vaunted advantages or facilities bequeathed by the acquisition of these colonial languages, but because the new acquisition is taken to place one in a special superior class. An extreme instance of this phenomenon is the in-

¹⁰ O. Owomoyela, *The African Difference: Discourse on Africanity and the Relativity of Culture*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt a. M., 1996, p. 37.

creasing case of children born and bred in the metropolis of Africa who are incapable of expressing themselves in any African language. In many cases this is taken as a sign of superiority.¹¹ This quest for superiority results from an inferiority complex before the culture taken uncritically as the new standard of human excellence. It is an extension of the superior/inferior axis which first exists in relation of the African with the European colonisers, and which is then replicated by the same Africans elite in their efforts to present themselves as superior to their kins because of their supposed thorough breeding in foreign cultures. Again Nyasanyi writes: “This varying degree of perception of colonial suppression also created a novel dimension of contradiction in the Africans themselves – their general conduct, comportment, discipline and their total *Weltanschauung*. The colonial acts of indignities perpetrated against the African were themselves bewildering and astute enough to pander to the African’s belief that he was indeed inferior, superior only to his own kin. Thus in almost the same degree, the colonial master pooh-poohed the African for his backwardness; the Africans themselves poured scorn on each other and in effect created haloes and auras of superiority in inferiority around themselves according to colonial experiences and locale of oppression.”¹²

Conception of Development and the Role of Philosophy

The complex engendered by the residue of oppression has its effect in the understanding of development in contemporary African philosophic discourses. In all, development is understood clearly as material, economic, sciento-technical improvement. Development becomes “the goal of higher living standards achieved through sustained economic growth, and the policies and programs intended to achieve that goal.”¹³ Samir Amin remarks that this quest was backed by the ideology of modernisation starting from the times of the movements for colonial liberation. This ideology gave impetus and direction to the overthrow of colonialism. After colonialism, it was retained, and aimed at bringing the economico-social institutions of capitalism including the wage relationship, business management, urbanisation, stratified education, a sense of national citizenship.” While defen-

¹¹ For a presentation and a critique of this phenomena, see Jean-Pierre Fogui, *Plaidoyer pour notre culture*, Edition de la Renaissance, Youndé, 1995, pp. 7-13.

¹² J. M. Nyasanyi, pp. 186-187.

¹³ Susanne Friedberg, “Development,” in *Africana: An Encyclopaedia of the African and Afro-American Experience*, ed., K. A. Appiah and H. L. Gates Jr., (eds.), Basic Civitas Books, N. Y., 1999, p 592.

ding this ideology, African leaders failed to adopt other important features of advanced capitalism like democracy.¹⁴

It is our view that the latent reason for this ambivalence is not unrelated to the superior/inferior legacy of colonialism. The leaders who saw themselves on the superior side of the divide have apparently no compelling reason to introduce democracy that is based on a certain measure of egalitarianism, just as the colonial masters had no reason to introduce the same among African populations considered inferior. Thus for the new elite foisted by colonialism, development was a means of joining a higher level of superiority seen in their former masters, and before whom they also craved to retain a certain measure of respectability achieved through personal material well-being even in the midst of poverty and deprivation.

This behaviour which is strongly rooted on battered self-image could also explain the reason why there is a dearth of critique of the very concept of development in contemporary African philosophy. To all intent and purposes, development in the sense explained above is a *desideratum*, and the only important question is how to accede to that state and specifically what role philosophy has to play in quickening that accession. The answers given to that question are divergent even if they have common underlying characteristics.

To summarise these answers, one role reserved to philosophy is improving the rationality of Africans. This position views philosophy as a training in rationality, and the global African problem as due to failing in rational thinking. It is then from this improvement from rationality that the philosopher king of Plato's *Republic* should emerge who would be able, armed with vision acquired from philosophy, to lead the people to their El Dorado.¹⁵ The second role allotted to philosophy is its moral influence on the individual citizens of the society. Again, this view is anchored on the presupposition of the susceptibility of philosophy to bring a higher standard of morality to those engage in it, and also on the view that problem of Africa with regard to development is due at least partly to moral failings. "No economy, for instance, can hope to advance where the citizens have no sense of duty, the right attitude to work, and a feeling of moral responsibility towards society. Morality and society must therefore go hand in hand, and morality is the soul of the society."¹⁶

¹⁴ Samir Amin, "Development in Africa: An Interpretation," in *Africana*, p. 596.

¹⁵ For this view see B. O. Eboh, *Philosophy in the Growth of Nigeria*, Ikot Ekpene, 1980.

¹⁶ Joseph Omeregbe, *Knowing philosophy*, Joja, Lagos, 1990, p. 194-195.

The third view is that the problem of Africa is that of political ideology, and that therefore the philosopher should engage in a sort of critique of the various ideologies of socio-politico-economic organisation. While some would see this function from a neutral point of view in which any philosophy would serve the same purpose,¹⁷ P. Hountodji sees this critique as the one that only Marxist philosophy is suited to perform.¹⁸ This position if correct would still leave other philosophic persuasions in search of their role in development. Philosophy should also engage in culture criticism. There is still a strong influence of traditional cultures on the present day African, and it is the role of the philosopher to engage in the type of analysis that will bring to the fore the negative and the positive dimensions of this culture, and thus liberating the African mind from ignorance and endowing it with the type of knowledge that will facilitate a genuine choice between available alternatives.¹⁹

It is remarkable in all these points that, as we have said, development is viewed just from one perspective. There is hardly any serious consideration of the cultural underpinnings of the question of development. When this is done, the direction of thought, as often seen in the views of C. B. Okolo and P. Bodunrin, is that philosophy should serve as a critique of African cultural influences to determine which one is positive and negative in the way of the desired development. There is also the instance of Kwasi Wiredu who considers the philosophic function of reviewing the side-effects of development to see whether what Africa wants is the complete package represented by Western technological and scientific advancement.²⁰ However, in spite of these, it is obvious that the preponderance of views point to the quest for an outlet from the present situation, and the imitation or accession to a model which is most correctly represented by the ideals of former colonial masters.

Another remarkable feature of the view of development prevalent in contemporary African philosophy and the role of philosophy in achieving it is that it is seen only from the inside. The problem of development in Africa is seen squarely as a problem that is internal to the African condition, and therefore only internal changes will facilitate movement towards the

¹⁷ Olusegun Oladipo, *The Idea of African Philosophy*, Molecular Press, Ibadan, 1992, especially chapter 3.

¹⁸ Pauline Hountodji, "Que Peux la philosophie?" p. 53.

¹⁹ C. B. Okolo, *Philosophy: Introductory Questions*, 1978, pp. 32-38.

²⁰ Kwasi Wiredu, "On Defining African Philosophy," in C. Neugebauer, *Philosophie, Ideologie und Gesellschaft in Afrika: Wien 1989*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt a.M., 1991, pp. 161-162.

goal. There is practically no serious consideration of the implication of the world-economic and political order in which development can be pursued, of the phenomenon of dependence and control, not even of the historical background of underdevelopment. Our view is that the visible neglect of these factors is a function of self-image. That is why the role of philosophy is centred on its influence in reforming the subject – improving leadership, producing a more morally conscious subject, and criticising political and cultural ideologies which would in turn be of service to African leadership. This slant amounts to saying that in effect the problem of underdevelopment in Africa is the responsibility of the African alone. This position which filters through much of contemporary African philosophy is the anti-thesis of many analyses, political, economic and historical which also lays the blames for the present situation of the African continent to internal as well as to external factors. In contemporary African philosophy therefore, we see an unwitting support of the way in which Western thinkers saw the African and his problem in the past. Thus in their outline of the path towards development contemporary African philosophy lends support to the fundamental presuppositions of the oppression and denigration of the African.

Supporting the Paradigm of Oppression

In this regard it is first important that most contemporary African thinkers bought without the benefit of an argument the honorific conception of philosophy as a measure of the human as such. Such understanding of philosophy is itself based on its conception as the excellence that can only be pursued if the necessities of life are assured in the best tradition of Aristotle.²¹ It means that there is a connection between the quest for African philosophy and the concern with development. For it is the apparent absence of the type of development under discussion that formed the bases of the view of the enlightenment thinkers and others of their generation that the African was an inferior human being. David Hume declared that there has never been any invention, not any sign of civilisation, no any person of ingenuity among Africans, that therefore inferior to the white race.²² In the same way, Hegel's racism against Africans is based on what he took as the standard of humanity which is, again, visible material artefacts. In his *Phi-*

²¹ See Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Bk 1, ch. 1.

²² See H. Immerwahr and M. Burke, "Race and the Modern Philosophy Course," *Teaching Philosophy* 16 (1993), p. 23.

losophy of History, he speaks of “the African in the uniform, underdeveloped oneness of his existence” The logic that flows from here is thus deedly perceptible: philosophy is the highest expression of human capacity, it comes from a level of material sufficiency, this sufficiency is not present among Africans, they are incapable of philosophy, they must be subhuman.

The latent and mostly unconscious acceptance of these paradigms in contemporary African philosophy is seen both among the professionals as well as among the ethnophilosophy. Tsenay Serequeberhan illustrates this point both with regard to Senghor and Nkrumah as representatives of the two camps. According to him, Senghor’ doctrine of Africanite and the effort to present the difference he sees in the African as essential to his being is like supporting the doctrine of Lucien Levy Bruhl from the backdoor. It is like sanctioning the idea of the radically other in the name of which rampaging Europeans enslaved and colonised in the past. This silent backing is made even more evident in Senghor’s support of “discursive reason” as the first indication of the humanity of the human. Senghor first distinguishes between discursive reason (*ratio*) and intuitive reason (*logos*), reason by analysis and reason by embrace.²³ Following the discovery of human fossils by Richard Leaky in 1962, Senghor asserted that the first sign of the emergence of humanity from animality was the stage in which human ancestors were about to make tools. *Homo habilis* becomes the earlier sign of the emergence of the *Homo faber*. The critical point is that in supporting the African origin of *Homo habilis* as the basis of humanity, he appears to sanction what he has called discursive reason which in his own terms is the specific characteristic of the European in contradistinction with the African. “The question becomes: On what kind of reason or rationality is such a utilitarian and pragmatic orientation based? Is it discursive or intuitive? The import of this question lies in the fact that, for Senghor, Leakey’s discovery established the initial originative point of emergence of humanity proper out of the realm of “animality.” This furthermore, was provoked and called forth by the act of “making” grounded on a technical and instrumental orientation to the natural environment, i.e., on discursive reason.”²⁴

It is our conviction that Senghor was not thinking about the type of rationality he was enthringing by his comment. He was unwittingly positioning himself and the African for whom he was an advocate on an advanta-

²³ See L. S. Senghor, *Prose and Poetry*, Heinemann, London, 1965, p. 33.

²⁴ Tsenay Serequeberhan, *The Hermeneutics of African Philosophy: Horizon and Discourse*, Routledge, London, 1994, p. 50.

geous position vis-à-vis a paradigm in the name of which slavery, colonialism, imperialism and exploitation were carried out in the past. Senghor's position is not much different from that of the numerous African thinkers who advocated socialism, or its specific type, Marxist socialism as the most fitting ideology for Africa. Among these would be counted many figures in the nationalist ideological current of African philosophy, including Kwame Nkrumah, and Julius Nyerere as well as Pauline Hountondji. All these were intent on the ideological underpinnings of African liberation from political, economic and social backwardness. In advocating socialism, especially Marxist socialism. they were in fact universalising the experience of their former colonial masters, and thus making it also applicable to Africa in general.

Conclusion

It means that the quest for the role of philosophy in development in contemporary African philosophy arrives from a self-image which was foisted on the African and which hangs as an albatross on his shoulders. It is a major failure that contemporary African philosophy virtually accepted the view of philosophy as the measure of the humanity of the human as such "without even the benefit of an argument."²⁵ It is a failure to see that this view of philosophy is ultimately axed on the connection between philosophy and material well-being. With this apparent oversight, the quest for development, also uncritically conceived becomes a surreptitious support for the reason why Africans were denigrated in the past. It is the duty of a philosophy that is worth its salt to subject some of these basic assumptions into critical review. It is by doing so, and consequently exposing the hollowness of these assumptions that contemporary African philosophy will do a better service for the image of the African, while waiting for the time when Africa will join its former colonial masters in the club of the developed and industrialised.²⁶

²⁵ Serequeberhan, p. 3.

²⁶ This is the text of a paper delivered at the Biennial conference of the African Studies Association in Germany (VAD) in Hamburg from 18th to 21st May, 2002. It was written during a research fellowship granted me by the Alexander von Humboldt foundation, Bonn from 2001 – 2002. I am grateful to my hosts, the Institute of African Studies at the University of Cologne, especially Prof. H. Behrend and B. Heine.

J. Obi Oguejiofor (Awka, Nigeria)

**JUST WAR THEORY VERSUS HUMAN RIGHTS:
AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ¹**

1. Introduction

Many decades ago, the philosopher Hannah Arendt confidently predicted the end of wars in the world. The reason for this confidence was that recent wars had tended to devour those who waged them, and thus it was becoming impossible for any government to survive the loss of a war. In the absence of wars Arendt predicted the ascendancy of revolution, new beginning, as the means of choice for bringing about desired change in the polity. Experience has nevertheless shown that this prediction is far from being correct.² Within the passage of almost fifty years since the publication of this idea, one can say that the world has witnessed even more wars: in the Middle East, in many regions of Africa, Vietnam, Iran, in the former Yugoslavia, Ireland, Afghanistan, Spain, former Soviet Union etc. Many of these would appear to be wars in small scales, but in more recent times there has been massive deployment of armed forces in distant countries by the most powerful armies, in Afghanistan and two times in Iraq. Contrary to the prediction of Arendt, war appears to be gaining currency in becoming once again a real option in international affairs. One reason for this is the disappearance of the balance of power between East and West after the collapse of the Soviet Union and communism. With war becoming once more an option, the medieval just war theory is finding fresh employment all over again, as nations debate the appropriateness of their action by recourse to the theory. The basic agreement of a vast majority in all cases appears to be that a modern war can be just.

At the same time, since the end of the cold war, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights is becoming one strong measure of good and bad

¹ This is a modified version of a paper read at the 12th annual conference of the International Society for African Philosophy and Studies (ISAPS), held at the University of Leicester, England, April, 2006. I am grateful for critical comments on the original version of the paper.

² Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, Middlesex, 1963, pp. 11-20.

governments. Governments which are judged to observe these rights gain more respect in international circles. On the other hand, those who seriously abuse them are condemned by all. Today the United Nation High Commission on Human Rights has acquired increased profile in the international circle due to rising concern for human rights. This paper argues that there is an irreconcilable contradiction in demanding respect for human rights, while maintaining the rights of nations with highly advanced weapons to engage in destructive modern wars. It is our point of view that taken seriously, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights should also imply a prohibition of modern wars. This view is supported by African understanding of life, which views it as the most fundamental human possession and inclination. Serious consideration of this view of life will put an end to all wars or at least all attempts to justify them.

2. Just War: Theory and Practice

The just war theory has a peculiar history which indicates how changes in fortune also bring about changes in conviction concerning important matters of life. The theory was started by Christian thinkers in justifying participation of Christians in war. For almost two centuries after Christ, Christianity held strongly to non-violence and pacifism. In the name of these beliefs, the Christian Church strictly forbade its members to join in any organized shedding of blood for any reason. They could not serve in national armies. With the emperor Constantine, however, Christianity gravitated to the society's mainstream, and with the menace of the conquering Barbarians and fear of losing their society to crude foreigners there arose a round turn to defend participation in wars by grouping them into just and unjust.³ But the theory has strong foundation in classical traditions and writings. It is hinted in Cicero, taken up by St. Ambrose and elaborated by Augustine and Aquinas in the medieval times. In spite of the turn about in Christian defense of war, it is notable that the approval of Christian participation in war was inspired by the defense of the weak and the innocent, and that the restriction imposed by just war theory on the conduct of war was mainly due to the same reasons. This fact underlies the ambivalence of

³ Thomas J. Massaro and Thomas A. Shannon, *Catholic Perspectives on Peace and War*, Sheed and Ward, New York, 2003, pp. 8-9.

the just war theory, given the supremacy of the command of love in Christianity:

Love for neighbors threatened by violence, by aggression, or tyranny, provided the grounds for admitting the legitimacy of the use of military force. Love for neighbors at the same time required that such force should be limited.⁴

By the thirteenth century and with St. Thomas Aquinas, the main outline of the just war theory became fossilized. A just war requires among other things the support of a legitimate authority, just cause, good intention, proportionality in the evil wrought by war and the good to be achieved, the assurance of victory, respect of the immunity of non-combatants, etc.⁵

It is important first to underline that an awareness of the context of the evolution of the just war theory, accentuates its anachronism. Legitimate authority was in the medieval time hereditary, and thus not conferred by election. This fact alone injects a whole lot of difference, for elected leaders are beholden to the populace for assumption of office and continuity in office. Very often such politicians are in the business of counting numbers and consulting opinion polls before taking important decisions. Thus the importance laid on the legitimacy of the one declaring war, and the supposition that his decision would be more balanced because of his position of responsibility does not have much sense in today's world. Of course, the Government can, even in a democracy, take decisions over and against the opinion of its public. The past conservative government of Spain sent troops in Iraq in 2003 despite the overwhelming objection of the Spanish electorate. But it is now clear how that decision has rubbed off on subsequent political development in that country, and one wonders how far future governments in Spain can take such unpopular decisions.

As for just cause, it goes without saying that the justice of a cause is a very problematic one. The evidence for this is that in most wars, each of

⁴ Paul Ramsey, *The Just War: Peace and Political Responsibility*, Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham, 2002, pp. 144-145.

⁵ The demands of the just war theory has been amplified with time, and thus "there is no normative list" of the requirements. For a list which is gathered from many sources and contains most of the requirements, see John Howard Yoder, *When War is Unjust: Being Honest in Just-War Thinking*, Wipf and Stock, Eugene, 2001, pp. 147-161.

the warring communities believes its cause is just. In the Nigerian civil war for instance, the Biafran side had an unflinching assurance of the justice of its position, given the oppression and insecurity of Biafrans within the Nigerian nation. But the Nigerians equally believed that “to keep Nigeria one is a task that must be done.” The Biafran secession from the Nigerian nation must therefore be reversed, even at the cost of a million lives. Each of such positions is taken from one perspective of the issue at stake, and *nemo iudex in sua causa*. But then there is no international body, sufficiently free and impartial to be a credible judge in such grave matters. In the end, justice becomes the decision of the one declaring war.

The factor of intention is perhaps the most uncertain aspect of the criteria for just war. Intentions are almost incurably subjective, and to say that another person has just intention amount to no more than reposing trust on his actions and declarations. The ever-present possibility of deception makes such criteria impracticable in public affairs. No one goes to war proclaiming to do so for intentions that would be objectionable. In modern times, political leaders have to present rosy intentions to their electorate whose support they need. But they are also ever ready to change their declared intention and they often succeed in drumming this into the consciousness of their unsuspecting people with the help of modern means of communication. The United States for instance started the second gulf war for the declared intention of ridding the world of the weapons of mass destruction which Saddam Hussien was supposed to have amassed. This intention has since mutated to removing a murderous dictator, protecting human rights of the Iraqi people, building a democratic nation and thus making Iraq a model of democracy in the Arab world.

If right intention is difficult to ascertain, chances of success in war can almost always not be calculated in advance. This makes this criterion of just war almost simplistic. No one declares a war without being certain of victory. In fact the hope of victory is the major impetus in the involvement of nations in war. War fever sets in at moments of quarrels; bravery becomes the highest value, defeating the enemy or inflicting deadly blows earns medals of Honor. In anticipation of the glory of victory, the chances of success are overestimated. Confidence in war grows from the assumption of weakness of the enemy and overestimation of one’s strength. But the reality is often far from the way it is imagined. This is seen easily from the experience of the Vietnam War, the Biafran War, the war in former

Yugoslavia and the present gulf war. Moreover, mere victory over the enemy is not enough to speak of success in war. The achievement of the grand aim of a war is often more difficult than immediate victory:

War almost never ends with a true peace: it always leaves behind a remnant of hatred and a thirst for revenge, which will explode as soon as the opportunity offers itself. That is why the human story has been a series of unending wars. War initiates a spiral of hatred and violence, which is extremely difficult to stop. War is therefore useless, since it solves no problems, and damaging because it aggravates problems and makes them insoluble.⁶

Just war theory also enjoins proper proportion of damage that could be caused in war. It must be such that it balances off fairly with the end to be achieved. "The damage must not be greater than the damage prevented or the offense being avenged."⁷ In reality most wars inflict so much damage that one ends up not being able to really say whether the destruction could ever be in proportional to the end that is intended. But again, how can one measure the value of lost lives and square these up with the end being achieved. In almost every conceivable way, this can only be done from the point of view of survivors of war. The first gulf war, aimed at driving out Iraqi forces from Kuwait was waged at the cost of over 300,000 lives.⁸ How does one measure these losses with the gains achieved by the war? And when this consideration is done from the point of view of the dead, it becomes clear that the demand of proportion in destruction is really not calculable. The big gain from the Second World War is the defeat of Germany which stopped Adolf Hitler from putting into practice the grand

⁶ From *La civiltà cattolica*, quoted in John Dear, *The God of Peace: Towards a Theology of Nonviolence*, Wipf and Stock, Eugene, 1994, p. 129.

⁷ John Howard Yoder, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

⁸ This war was in fact a good example of the difficulty in the application of the just war theory. Mandelbaum writes about it as follows: "The crippling of Iraq's nuclear programme was a byproduct of the war. The official purpose was to evict Iraq from Kuwait. Restoring Kuwait's sovereignty was, in fact, a less important American interest than keeping Saddam Hussien from controlling a large part of the Persian Gulf's oil reserves. A sovereign Kuwait was also less important than a nuclear Iraq. But because it constituted an unambiguous violation of international law, the invasion and occupation of Kuwait provided the basis for the political support the war attracted." Quoted in M. B. Ramose, "Wisdom in War and Peace", in C. W. du Toit and G. J. Lubbe, *After September 11: Globalisation, War and Peace*, Research Institute for Theology and Religion, UNISA, 2002, p. 158.

designs of Nazism. This no doubt is a wholesome end. Still it is a difficult question how far the achievement of this end is worth the loss of twenty million Russian lives, and the destruction of whole cities in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, among other evils.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki bring up another snag in the practice of the provisions of the just war theory: the immunity of the innocent. It goes without saying that the loss of innocent lives is always morally evil “just or limited warfare must be forces-counter-forces warfare, and ... people-counter-people warfare is wholly unjust”.⁹ But can modern wars be really forces-counter-forces? With progress in technology, warfare could be carried out with very limited contact between armies. Precision weapons, fighter planes and drones have almost replaced the ancient lines of battle where combatants are easily identifiable. Even without zeroing in on the implications of a nuclear war, modern wars have virtually become total wars. War is no longer what happens between princes and princes; kings and other kings, but between nations as a whole. Even if the immunity of non-combatants could be respected, there are other fall-outs of war which affect every citizen of a state. The economy takes a heavy blow, and “wars are won less by position, which can depend on a decisive battle, and more by attrition, which depends on the total strength of the enemy’s economy”.¹⁰

More gravely, with modern and very destructive weapons, it has become inconceivable to think of a real war where civilians will not lose their lives. The blighting of and the loss of innocent lives is the ultimate argument against the theory of just war in our time. The point however is that initial calculations in *jus ad bellum* are almost always contradicted in *jus in bellum*, the actual outcome of going to war. Just war theory is therefore impracticable and has been made more so in modern times by sheer technical advancement and socio-political changes. When we think of a nuclear war, these points become all the more graphic, but this is made all the more so if we take the Universal Declaration of Human Rights seriously by considering implications of some of its proclamations.

⁹ Paul Ramsey, op. cit., p. 146

¹⁰ John Howard Joder, op. cit., p. 25.

3. Implications of the Right to Life

In 1948, fresh from the harrowing experience of the Second World War, and the wanton destruction to life, to property and civilization wrought by that single war, the United Nations' General Assembly unanimously proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration opens with the end it wants to achieve: freedom, justice and peace in the world. These must be protected as precaution against rebellion as last resort. This precaution implies justification of rebellion. In article three the UDHR states: "everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person".¹¹ Articles one and two elucidate the reason for and the extent of application of the UDHR. Thus the first expression of positive right is in fact the right to life. This is recognition that life is fundamental. The rest of the declaration can rightly be seen as intended to protect life, and lend it dignity and respect. That is why the next articles prohibit practices like slavery, torture, cruelty, and degrading punishments. That is why they also enjoin equality before the law, freedom of movement, of expression, right to nationality, etc. All these are of course dependent on the fact of life, at least from the point of view of the individual. Thus human life is the receptacle of all other rights which the UDHR expresses, and is truly transcendental in the sense that it must be present to realize other rights.

Without life there would be no universal rights. The right to life implies that the human person is autonomous vis-à-vis any other human being. He does not owe his life to any other person or any authority at whose mercy or favor he is allowed to live. This entails that his life cannot be tampered with arbitrarily, and thus even capital punishment would appear questionable in view of the basic right to life. The right to life is in consonance with the most basic tendency in human beings, the instinct of self preservation or in Baruch de Spinoza's terms: *conatus sui esse preservendi* which enables them to gravitate even without reflection towards self-preservation. The recognition of the value of life appears to contradict the tacit recognition of rebellion by the UDHR in its preamble. This is because in rebellion, massive use of force is very akin to war and terrorism which most often involves loss of life.

¹¹ Universal Declaration of Human Right, General Assembly Resolution 217 (III) of 10 December, 1949, article 3.

4. Fundamentality of Life in African World View

African societies and cultures bear testimony to the centrality of life in every aspect of human endeavour. Like all human beings, Africans are deeply aware that human life is at the foundation of all other activities. For Laurenti Magesa, life is the foundation of morality:

The foundation and purpose of the ethical perspective of African religion is life, life in its fullness. Everything is perceived with reference to this. It is no wonder, then, Africans quickly draw ethical conclusions about thoughts, words and actions of human beings, or even of “natural” cosmological events, by asking questions such as: Does the particular happening promote life? If so, it is good, just, ethical, desirable, divine. Or, does it diminish life in any way? Then it is wrong, bad, unethical, unjust, detestable.¹²

Martin Nkafu Nkemnkia distinguishes life from being in his theory of African vitology. Life for him is a manifestation of being. Life is the stream, the raw material from which specific beings emanate. Metaphysically reality is life, potentiality is specific being, evolving being:

We can say that Life is superior to entity or to Being, as a notion and in order of time. Life is superior to the entity by notion: every entity is a determination of that which exists in some way or which has the possibility of existing and of living. In the same way that the word is the expression of man, the Being is the expression of life. Life remains identical in everything, it is the very first possession, while Being evolves and is composed. Life is measured in quantity. Life which is in human beings has neither age, colour, nor size; the same adjectives can be applied to all the attributes.¹³

The idea of priority of life over all other things in nature is manifest in every aspect of African culture. Let us use the Igbo (Nigeria) culture as a show piece. As Eugene Uzukwu writes, “Life stands out for the Igbo as a value around which other values find their meaning.”¹⁴ The centrality of

¹² Laurenti Magesa, *African Religion: Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*, Pauline Publications Africa, Nairobi, 1998, p. 77.

¹³ Martin Nkafu Nkemnkia, *African Vitology: A Step Forward in African Thinking*, Pauline Publication Africa, Nairobi, 1999, p. 169.

¹⁴ E. Elochukwu Uzukwu, “Igbo World and Ultimate Reality and Meaning”, *Lucerna* 4 (1998), p. 9.

life (ndu) is chanted in Igbo proper names: *Ndukaku/Ndukife* (life is more important than wealth), *Ndubisi* (life is primary), *Ndukaji* (life is more important than yam). The positive attitude towards life is accompanied by negative conception of death (onwu) which is also prominent in Igbo names: *Egwuonwu* (fear of death), *Onwuzulike* (let death rest), *Onwughalu* (let death stay away), *Onwugbenu* (may death not respond to the call).¹⁵

Igbo traditional popular sayings accentuate this conception of life: *Kama iga anwu anwu, fue efue* (instead of dying, it is better you get lost).¹⁶ Even when life is no longer very comfortable or dignified, it is still better than death: *nkpomkpo ndu ka mkpomkpo onwu mma* (a despicable life is better than a despicable death). Given that life defines all values, morality and meaning, the Igbo do not place any positive value on tragic death, including death in war. They of course value heroism, but someone who ends in tragic death is not really a hero since the loss of life implies that he is the ultimate loser. Thus the traditional Igbo cast aspersion at what some other culture may honour as heroic death. A fearful person who survives danger is better than a brave person who loses his life in the process of exercising his bravery. Hence, *onye uja nalu* (it is the coward who survives). Again, they say, it is in the house of the coward that one stands to point at the house of a courageous warrior dead and gone (*obu na uno onye ujo ka ana ano welu natu aka na uno dike nwulu anwu*).

The life that is meant in the above statements is not generic life but life of the concrete human being, or in an extended manner the life of the family or clan. It is within the lineage that this life is realized or fulfilled. Thus life means terrestrial life, life of the individual or life of the earthly community. This is why in Igbo world-view the world with all its difficulties has the status of *summum bonum*.¹⁷ There is no eternal life in which the

¹⁵ See J. Obi Oguejiofor, *The Influence of Igbo Traditional Religion on the Socio-political Character of the Igbo*, Fulladu, Nsukka, 1996, p. 49.

¹⁶ My attention has been drawn to a Yoruba proverb which states just the contrary: the death of my child is better than his disappearance. Such counter examples exist in proverbs of all cultures. The preference for someone getting lost to his death is based on the finality of death. One who gets missing can per chance find his way back to his home. Death on the other hand is definitive and irreversible.

¹⁷ See J. Obi Oguejiofor, "The World as Summum Bonum: Impact of African Idea of Ultimate Reality on Christian Spirituality", in MarySylvia Nwachukwu and Augustine Oburota (eds.), *Theological Perspectives on Spirituality and Piety in Nigeria*, Victor Jo Productions, Enugu, 2006, pp. 93-110.

deprivations of this earth will be made good. Ultimate fulfillment is for the individual to continue to further this life by procreation; by living a worthy life, dieing a dignified death marked with age (which is thus fullness of life), reincarnating and beginning to live all over again. To cut off an individual from this cycle of life is the ultimate catastrophe: “The greatest evil is to be thrown out of the life cycle through denial of reincarnation.”¹⁸ Part of the conditions for reincarnation is that one must not die a tragic death, like death in war. Thus death in war brings “the greatest evil” on the human being.

Given that life is the basis of ultimate meaning in Igbo conception there is a strong anthropocentrism in their world-view. The earth, the animals, the deities are all there for the benefit of man, which in fact means the furtherance of his life. Sacrifice and all other religious acts are meant to obtain favour from the divine in view of enriching and preserving man’s life.

Given that tragic death of all kinds cut the individual off from the cycle of life, and given the transcendental position of life in the human person, the hero in traditional Igbo is the one who at the end of all conceivable exploits remains alive to tell his story. It would be meaningless if one performs courageous acts, and at the end meets with death; premature or tragic death. Thus such phenomenon as suicide bombing or the Japanese Harakiri or even martyrdom in Christianity would be completely pointless from the traditional Igbo point of view. The endurance of some of these types of death in some cultures and religions is encouraged either by adulation by the living or by a promise of greater reward in extra-terrestrial life. Igbo cosmology does not however include a blissful existence hereafter, a paradise after death where every lack will be provided for and every taste assuaged. Highest fulfillment in life is to die and go to the land of the ancestors, where one remains dependent on the mercy of the living relatives for sustenance¹⁹, and where one waits to reincarnate again into this earth to live yet another cycle of this earthly life in the company of beloved offspring. The ability to keep on in this cycle, earned by long and good moral life, an honorable death accompanied by worthy burial is the highest fulfillment of the person in Igbo world-view.

¹⁸ E. I. Metuh, *God and Man in African Religion*, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 1981, p. 154.

¹⁹ J. Obi Oguejiofor, *The Influence of Igbo Traditional Religion on the Socio-political Character of the Igbo*, p. 82.

5. Right to Life and the Injustice of War

The value placed by Africans, and other races; the value expressed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights makes war intrinsically unjust. If medieval warfare where combatants are easily distinguishable from non-combatants is by any consideration made an exception in this injustice, it appears impossible to see how any modern wars with their enormous weaponry could be just. The right to life implies that it is always wrong to kill an innocent person. The fact of modern war is that there is almost complete certainty that no matter how careful one is in respecting the immunity of non-combatants, many of them will end up losing their lives once a war is waged. Given the above considerations, to declare war, with the full knowledge that many innocent lives will be lost is completely immoral. Such losses of life are often euphemistically called collateral damages. They are viewed as necessary evil in the pursuance of a just cause. The just war theory permits war in case of necessity. It must in fact be the last resort. But whether any war is actually the last resort is decided only by the belligerent or the one with the power of declaring war. Again possible options are never completely attempted before most nations march into war. In any case the issue of how many options are still open and are workable depends very much on one's philosophical conviction which is very open to divergence of views.

But even if war were to be the last resort, the loss of innocent lives, the collateral damages, incur very fundamental losses to the victims. The injustice of taking innocent life is also not to be judged from the point of view of the number of such lives that are affected. On the natural level, life is a supreme value for an individual since it is on it that all other values inhere and from it they acquire their relevance. Thus here the principle of just proportion becomes inapplicable, since there is no value that can rationally substitute for his life – since it is life that gives all other values their foundation. It means that the assertion of human rights is contradicted by the assertion of the justice of any modern war. Modern wars cannot be just because one cannot think of them without zeroing in the killing of the innocent, even when this killing is inadvertent.

6. Just War under the Veil of Ignorance

Still, it remains a constant fact of history that nations go to war against nations. More so, such wars are almost always begun with war fever or war mania. This sentiment is based on expectation of success which is in turn based on underrating the opponent. The reality however is that the results of wars are not calculable in advance, and where such calculations are made, there is hardly any assurance that things would turn out the way they were conceived. Most importantly, it is not possible to know before the commencement of a war how many lives would be lost during the course of it. Almost in all cases such consideration as these are attenuated by the hope that as few of one's soldiers as possible would be lost; and conversely as many as possible of the enemy soldiers' lives to ensure victory for one's side. Here we can apply John Rawls' idea of the veil of ignorance to see how people would judge the necessity of a war if they were victims of it. John Rawls used the veil of ignorance to arrive at the principles of justice which people would choose if they were unaware of their relative advantages or disadvantages in real life. The veil of ignorance is thus hypothetically imposed on people in original position where no one has any memory of one's natural or conferred advantages or disadvantages in actual life. With this presupposition, Rawls concludes that such individual would choose principles that would be advantageous to the weak; and which confers advantages on positions open to all under condition of equal opportunity.

What would propel the choice is that no one would know whether he would be the most disadvantaged in the real society, and so self-preservation would nudge each one to back principles that would favor him if he happens to be one of the weakest and less endowed members of his society. In the same way we can imagine a hypothetical veil of ignorance which supposes that if war is started, lives would be lost, but no one knows who the victim would be. Better still, it could be supposed that the subjects of the veil of ignorance would lose their lives in the particular war, no matter its outcome. Supposing, taking this experiment further, that all the members of a particular society are led to believe by some veil of ignorance that each of them would lose his life if a war breaks out. It is highly probable that vast majority of the members of most societies would accept to forgo the redress, or to continue to suffer injustice in the society, or explore alter-

native solutions no matter how tardy these would be if the alternative would be the loss of their lives.

There are doubtless not a few individuals who are ready to engage in such acts as suicide bombing for a cause they believe in, or in order to avenge wrong or humiliation. Such individuals may most willingly offer up their lives in such hypothetical war if they believe strongly enough in the cause the particular war is intended to fight. But here we are working with the supposition that it is an uphill if not an impossible task to convince whole populations to commit themselves to something as unnatural as suicide bombing or any such act if there is a conceivable alternative. We have also noted that in such cases in which individuals willingly offer their lives; they are backed by a sense of honor or heroism in their society, or by special religious conviction. Again we have seen that from the Igbo point of view, it would be incomprehensible to think of suicide bombing or to contemplate losing one's life in such a tragic manner as in war, given the value placed on life over and above other values, and the view of afterlife in which tragic and premature death is a complete disaster.

7. Conclusion

We have argued that the just war theory has become almost impossible to put into practice, and that given the primacy given to life in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, no modern war can conceivably be judged to be a just war. The African view of life, here exemplified by Igbo view, amply supports the position that nothing that leads to the destruction of life can be judged to be positive, since life bequeaths meaning to every other aspect of the human existence. That war remains an option in the modern world is a big contradiction to proclamations of human rights. That Africans go to war in spite of the value their cultural belief places on life is incomprehensible. It means that if we take the UDHR seriously, if we take African view of life seriously, war would cease to be an option in human affairs.

Wale Olajide (Ado Ekiti, Nigeria)

YORUBA EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY AND GENEALOGY

Genealogy is the study of families and the tracing of their lineages and history. This paper seeks to underscore the significance of genealogy, lineage history ('iran; itan ebi') among the Yoruba a race found in the south western part of Nigeria, West Africa as a unique socio-existential instrument of heritage and authentication.¹ The stamp of existentialism is considered justified and relevant because always among the Yoruba genealogy or lineage history remains the one and only acceptable socio-cultural tool of self endorsement, authentication and identity. It is for them a mode of being that is inalienably present as of necessity to the individual. To lose it or cast a cloud of doubt or distortion over it is to both put in jeopardy or totally lose ones identity and beingness with the community. In fact it makes no sense whatsoever to name oneself Yoruba if one is not able to cite ones lineage. It is for emphasis the only acceptable cultural birth certificate without which ones heritage or identity is completely lost. Such someone is considered a nobody. The Yoruba refer to him as 'omo ti o niran' (a child without a lineage) It is thus very rare among the Yoruba to have rootless vagabonds who have no pedigree or distinct reference by birth or whose identity and significance as a member of the community is unassertable.²

Genealogy, Lineage and the Yoruba

Genealogy ('iran', 'itan ebi') are narrations detailing the history of descent of a person or persons or family from an ancestor generation by generation to establish proper lineage and kinship. They are attested records of pedigree robustly laced with historical events, socio-cultural references and religious

¹ The attempt to tackle the topic of genealogy in this fashion is novel. While some quantities of references exist on the Yoruba, their origin and culture, strangely, very little exist on genealogy as a specific subject of research. Genealogy is a serious social issue in the West and so it is among Africans also as this paper will show. However, unlike in the West where genealogists make use of written records, blood analysis, DNA and microfilms, oral tradition is the most prominent medium among Africans. This is partly because there is little problem about tracing genealogies. The facts are simply so obvious. I shall be using some amount of oral tradition in this paper.

² This is not the same as the concept of bastards or illegitimate children ('Omo ale'). This refers to children born as a result of adultery or other forms of sexual exuberance either on the part of the woman or the man. Even these children can still trace their roots and when forgiveness and acceptance are provided, the label is removed.

details in order to demonstrate and authenticate kinship. Sometimes, they are also cited in order to correct and or endorse existing data.

Every genealogy narration among the Yoruba always ends with the ancestors. They are the source and origin from which all members of the Yoruba race descend. It is thus sheer impossibility to claim to be Yoruba and not be able to trace ones lineage to an ancestor. Attached to every Yoruba, regardless of status, is a distinct story that dates back to the very first ancestor that bore the name of that family. The ancestors themselves though now dead and departed continue to serve and act as the guardian and custodian of the family moderating on their morals and social interaction. Professor Bolaji Idowu re-emphasises this point when he submits that:

“The truth is that the genius of the family, the extended family or the compact community is in the ancestor. The ancestor is believed to take active interest in the family or community and his power over it is now considerably increased as he is no longer restricted by earthly conditions. Matters affecting the family or community are thus referred to him for sanction or judgement ... he is the superintending spirit who gives approval to any proposals or actions which make for the well being of the community and shows displeasure at anything which may tend to disrupt it”.³

They are part and parcel of the family. It is because of this that they are venerated. It is not uncommon to see shrines dedicated to them. Professor John Mbiti noted about ancestors or the living dead as he preferred to refer to them:

“They are the closest links that men have with the spirit world ... They know and have interest in what is going on in the family ... they enquire about family affairs and may even warn of impending danger and rebuke those who have failed to follow their special instructions. They are the guardians of the family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities. Offence in these matters is ultimately an offence against the forebears who in that capacity act as the invisible police of the families and communities.”⁴

This is a shared standard belief of all traditional Africans of which the Yoruba is part. Food and drinks are offered to the ancestors, prayers of supplications are offered and when such are granted there are votive offerings of thanksgiving.

I have in my paper on ‘The Rationality Debate and Ancestral Worship Among Yoruba’ argued for the position that contrary to what some scholars

³ Bolaji Idowu, (1962), *Olodumare, God in Yoruba Belief*, London. Longman, p. 151.

⁴ John S. Mbiti, (1969), *African Religions and Philosophy*, London. Heineman, p. 82.

have suggested, ancestors are indeed venerated and worshiped⁵. Professor Mbiti belongs to this group or does he for he says of ancestors or the living dead:

“The living dead are appeased through a special formula, offerings and sacrifices of white chickens are given to them and they reveal themselves to their human relatives in dreams.”⁶

What more act or activity does worship require beyond these sacraments and sacramentals, prayers, songs and dance. If Africans worship their ancestors as indeed is the case particularly when we examine the cult of ancestors and the ‘egungun’ (visitors from heaven) masquerades among the Yoruba it does not in any way insult the African heritage. There is even today a stronger existential justification when we consider the emphasis on family and their role as the vital link and stabilizer. What may be odious however and perhaps irrational and definitely unacceptable is if we still carry on today offering food and drinks to the dead and expecting them to sneak in the dead of the night to sit at table and eat.

Among the Yoruba, two concepts remain most vital to the significance placed on genealogy. These are ‘ebi’(lineage) and ‘idile’(family). The former is larger in scope since it refers to all and every extended family that claim their heritage from their very first ancestor. The latter specifically refers only to the family cell within the global family. It is correct to say therefore without any hesitation that among the Yoruba, the sum of ‘idile’ is ‘ebi’.⁷ Yoruba usually offer a cautionary advice, ‘ma ba ebi je’ (do not spoil the family); or ‘ebi rere ni ebi wa’ (our family is a good one) or again, ‘idile oni gbagbo ni a je’ (‘we are a Christian lineage). ‘Idile’ can be further split into ‘idi baba’(patrilineal family) and ‘idi iya’(matrilineal family) as route path when tracing genealogies.

Among the Yoruba, individuals are allowed to grow and start their own families. No matter how many are these individuals and how large and dispersed the family units(idi), there is a common univicator, the identity bond which unites all. It is in the name (oruko).⁸

Name (oruko) among the Yoruba has two meanings. It refers first to that by which a person or a thing is called and second it refers to character(iwa). ‘Iwa’

⁵ Wale Olajide, (2011), *The Rationality Debate and Ancestral Worship Among Yoruba, Ibile, Journal of Traditions and culture*, No 3 Vol. 2, Ibadan, Hope Publications.

⁶ Ibid., p. 242.

⁷ The confirmation for this i obtained from Chief Dr. Kunle Olajide, of the Asemojo Olowolagba Dynasty, Efon Alaye. His clarification was corroborated by Chief Ronke Okusanya and Chief Kunle Ojewale, Asejuoba of Ikireland.

⁸ Hidden in this emphasis on name (‘Oruko’) is the high premium placed on the male gender over the female and the veritable cultural disdain and abhorrence towards barrenness. In total obedience to the marriage of the God of creation, the Yoruba accept it as a literal truth that they should be fruitful and multiply. There is therefore no limit on the number of children one may have. There is equally a welcoming tolerance for polygamy. Beyond the reason of procreation, it is considered a symbol of prosperity.

is used to describe animate objects while 'ise' is used for inanimate things. The line separating this usage has however become blurred over time and both 'iwa' and 'ise' are used interchangeably for conscious and unconscious beings. Regarding the former:

“Every Yoruba name has a character and a significance of its own. No child is given a name without a cause and that cause is not bare, inevitable one that a child must be born before it can receive a name. Every one of the names is almost invariably a sentence or a clause or an abbreviation of a sentence which can be broken into component parts.”⁹

It is always great joyful news when a young couple announces that it is awaiting the birth of the first child. This is considered a good omen and a testimony to answered prayers chief among which is the general one offered against barrenness; 'ehin iyawo koni meni (may the wife's back not stay too long on the mat and may it not take long before the wife conceives).

A person's name says so much about the individual's heritage and circumstances of his birth. There are names which are considered chosen from the metaphysical world; "Oruko amu t'orun wa". These are names that reflect the circumstances of delivery of the baby. Twins are called 'Taiwo' 'To aye wo' – ('Go and taste the world') – for the first to come out of the mother. 'Kehinde' ('The last to arrive') – for the second. Irrespective of gender, the two other babies born after the twins carry 'Idowu' and 'Alaba' respectively. A baby born with the umbilical cord around his neck is 'Ige'. Another born with the amniotic sack is 'Aina'. Yet another born with dreadlocks is 'Dada'. Other names such as 'Adewale' ('Crown has come home'), 'Adekoyejo' ('Crown has gathered many honours') are given to reflect particular incidents within the family or lineage at the time of birth.

A name prefixed by 'Ogun' for example, 'Ogunmola', 'Ogundeji', 'Ogundele', 'Ogunshakin point to worshipers of the god of iron. If the names are prefixed by 'Oya' as in 'Oyawale'; 'Oyabunmi' or 'Oyagbemi' these would be devotees of Oya, the goddess of the river. Those prefixed by Ifa; 'Ifakunle', 'Ifasanmi'; 'Ifayimika' 'Ifatunmise' would be worshipers of Ifa the oracle divinity. Persons from the family of drummers carry names prefixed by 'Ayan' while those from royal ancestors have names prefixed with 'Ade'(Crown). Once you encounter these names, not many questions are required. The route to their source is only too clear and the narration of their genealogies will expectedly not deviate let alone prove tedious. This is guaranteed particularly by the presence of male offspring in the families. They are the ones that will ensure that the name of their ancestors does not perish. When Yoruba pray *iran re koni*

⁹ Bolaji Idowu, *opus cit.*, p. 33.

parun'('Your lineage will not perish'), it is to underscore the fact that perpetuity is most germane to the issue of genealogy.

Names are also considered contagious. Yoruba say "Oruko nroni" ("Names affect their bearer"). Children born into warrior clans will sometimes be found to be belligerent and restless. Another born into royal pedigree will likely carry himself with royal dignity as any king would. Babies considered reincarnated sometimes behave in patterns similar to the personality who is meant to be reincarnated.¹⁰

Name ('oruko') among the Yoruba equally refers to character 'iwa', an ingredient which is critical to heritage and genealogy. Yoruba say 'iwa rere ni eso enia' (Good character is the guard of a person) or 'iwa lewa' (character is beauty); 'Eni ti koba niwa oku ni' (One without character is dead) or still, 'iwa ni bani de sare' (It is character that follows one to the grave). Among the Yoruba, a person of good character is called 'Omoluwabi' (One who behaves as a well-born). The one who is well-born is 'enia' (human being); 'omo a bire' (the child who is born well). The one without character is 'Eniakenia' (A mere caricature of a person or a reprobate). As Prof. Idowu explains:

"Iwa according to the Yoruba is the very stuff which makes life a joy because it is pleasing to pleasing to God ... Good character is a sufficient amour against any untoward happening in the life (and) it is laid upon every member of the community to act in such a way as to promote always the good of the whole body."¹¹

Components of good character include chastity, hospitality, selflessness, generosity, pursuit of the truth, disdain for stealing, lies and covenant-breaking. A man of good character must be honourable and protective of the weaker sex. All of these components form the basis for reference when the genealogy of an individual is required or his identity as a member of a particular lineage is queried. They act as strong bases for legitimacy. Within the society, character is always a reference point for appointment to positions or award of honours. To say of anyone 'Ko ni wa' (He has no character) literally cancels him out. He is considered worthless and good-for-nothing.

Name, when understood as character bears moral significance. Yoruba say 'Oruko rere san ju wa wura ati fadaka' (Good name as character is better than silver or gold). To call someone a thief (Ole), liar (Opuro), murderer (Apaniyan), prostitute (Asewo), drunkard (Omuti) is to literally ostracise the subject

¹⁰ The Yoruba believe that deceased persons do reincarnate in their grandchildren and great grandchildren. To determine which ancestor has reincarnated, the oracle is consulted through a rite known as 'Mimo ori omo' ('Knowing the child's *ori*').

¹¹ Opus cit., p.157.

and put a mark of Cain on his/her head. It is an indelible stain on the subjects' lineage and it is one that will be cited forever in his genealogy. Some have been known to commit suicide rather than live with the stain. Yoruba in such situation say 'Iku ya ju esin' (It is better to die than to be ridiculed).

Closely associated also with name and character is Oriki. An oriki is equally a name or collection of names which are rendered with superlative allusions to uncommon achievements, successes, valour and ancestral history. It is yet another route to tracing ones genealogy and affirming one's sense of family. Oriki is sometimes used to justify an appearance of class system or reinforce it. You would hear Yoruba say for example, 'iran oba lon joba' (it is only the royal lineage that produces kings or it is only one from the royal lineage that can become king.). It follows that no impostor can ever become king and it is even much more difficult for an individual outside the royal lineage to aspire to be king. It would be mere wishful thinking. There exist very bold lines separating one lineage from the other and Yoruba hold them to be sacred.

Every Yoruba, male or female, young or old have their own 'oriki' with which their praises and those of their ancestors are song repeatedly particularly during social outings. Drummers often capitalise on their knowledge of people's oriki to elicit money from them. There is the strong belief that no one will hear others sing and salute feats of their ancestors and laud their successes and remain unmoved one way or the other.

Facial marks or tribal marks as they are sometimes called equally serve as unique instruments for establishing identity and authenticating heritage. Facial marks make it so obviously easy to establish individuals lineage and their genealogy. These marks while underscoring heritage also define social class, status and profession.

There is yet another observation which must be made regarding names beyond their usage to identify persons and objects or lay emphasis on their character. There is an incontestable truth among Yoruba that words ('oro') are potent. They have power. Likewise names are considered potent. For this reason names are never given with frivolity. They are believed to carry within them metaphysical powers. Traditional medicine-men ('Ologun') and herbalists ('Babalawo') pride themselves on having the rare ability of knowing the true names of things and of the metaphysical power that exist within. This is the reason they are quick to suggest is behind the precision of their diagnosis and the efficacy of their prescriptions and healing powers. The underlying belief is that if you know the actual names of things whatever you want of them they will obey and do. It is the same belief that underlie the efficacy of incantations ('Ofo') and the practise of magic. To know the name of a thing or person is to

know the character and to know its character is to be able to harness and dominate its power.

Concluding

A closer and careful look at the Yoruba culture will reveal that genealogy ('Itan idile') drives his social structure. It is it that ensures that every structure is it religious, socio-political or economical stands in its place and that there is communal peace where everyone knows where he belongs and what is expected of him. This guarantee is uniquely provided by the family. Among the Yoruba, family is everything. It is the basis for the integrity accorded lineage and genealogy. When the Yoruba ask: "Omo tani?" ("Whose child is he?") or "Iran wo lobi?" ("What is his lineage?") it is all about genealogy. No one will allow into his home someone with questionable lineage ("Omo iran kiran"). And if by mistake one plays the host, he must accept the probable foul consequences.

It is equally for the same reason that marriage is considered a serious business by the Yoruba. It is not enough that intending couples find themselves fall in love and announce their intention to get married. Their marriage is not entirely dependent on their wishes. That they wish it is in fact sometimes considered irrelevant. Sometimes, it is even considered to have been made in haste, in error or from outright ignorance.

Marriages take place between two families. From the day the children make their intention known, the two affected families swing into investigative action. A thorough search ensues particularly on their respective lineages and their heritage. Their genealogy becomes an open book for scrutiny. Is there a history of insanity, barrenness, social disgrace, laziness, promiscuity, attack on women or drunkenness, preparations for the marriage are immediately called off. Families are known, just as in other matters, to have consulted the 'Ifa' oracle before a marriage consent is ever given. As Professor Idowu observes:

"It seems absolutely impossible for a Yoruba who is still fertile to his traditional belief to attempt anything at all without consulting the oracle by 'ifa'. It has always been throughout the history of the Yoruba a *sine qua non* to life. Before a betrothal, before a marriage, before a child is born, at the birth of a child, at successful stages in a man's life, before king is appointed, before a chief is made, before a journey is made, in times of crisis, in times of sickness, at any and all times, 'Ifa' is consulted for guidance and assurance."¹²

¹² Ibid., p. 77.

In other words the family lineage, its story and its status is crucial to the rite of marriage. As Professor Mbiti explains, the African family enjoys a wider circle for members that you will not find among Europeans where almost everyone is insulated from the other. Mbiti goes further:

“(The African, Yoruba) family includes children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters who may have their own children and other relatives. The number of family members may range from ten to even a hundred, where several wives belonging to one husband may be involved ... The family also includes departed relatives whom we have designated – the living dead. African concept of the family also includes the unborn members who are still in the loins of the living. They are the buds of hope and expectation.”¹³

In other words, the family points to the lineage and inform all elements that constitute its genealogy.

There is to all this an attending existential significance which makes Yoruba existential philosophy so distinct and uniquely fresh from that found in the West. Specifically, it is the latter’s strong emphasis on subjectivity and the high premium placed, first, on its lineage at someone with an identity in the community; ‘Omo ti a bi re’ (A child that is born well) and second, as someone deeply rooted in the community; ‘Omo to niran’ (A child with a heritage) or (a child with a traceable genealogy). The first leg of this emphasis has been dealt with in the earlier part of this paper on the discussions on name (Oruko) and cultural salutation (Oriki). By the same token, the second leg of the emphasis has equally been dealt with. We may justifiably make the inference therefore based on the extensions of meanings and emphasis the Yoruba have placed on names and the halo that surrounds them.

However, in order to properly put all submissions in perspective, a tiny, yet unique, observation needs to be made and it is this. Because of the strong emphasis on the significance the Yoruba ascribe to names, lineage, genealogy and pedigree, the dreaded consequence of a desolate free man condemned to name his own values in an absurd, unintelligible world that is devoid of meaning is not present to the Yoruba. The Yoruba child is born de facto into a community, a welcoming party of enthusiasts most eager and ever desirous of a new addition. The new born child is considered an extension of the community from which it receives its identity and authentication as member. Mbiti notes that:

“The individual does not and cannot exist alone except corporately. He owes his existence to other people including those of past generations and his contemporaries. He is simply a part of the whole. The commu-

¹³ John S. Mbiti, *opus cit.*

nity must therefore create or produce the individual; for the individual depends on the corporate group. Physical birth is not enough, the child must go through rites of incorporation so that it becomes fully integrated in the entire society... the family of birth, death and the living.”¹⁴

The Yoruba child is never alone. He always brings and can through his name and lineage, trace his identity to his community. It is this community that would protect the child, feed, bring it up and educate it and in both formal and informal ways incorporate it into the wider community. To put it in another way, it is only in terms of other people that the individual becomes conscious of his own being; who he is and what he is.

By extension, because the individual lives as it were in a corporate world, he is spared the burden of originality for himself, values to live by. As Professor Kwasi Wiredu observes:

“If we quickly run through what remains of the lists of cultural characteristics we will find that the most important is the great value placed on communal fellowship in our traditional society ... the extended family I believe, is the breeding ground of this extended scenes of communal fellowship.”¹⁵

On the one hand, there are moral imperatives and injunctions supplied by the gods, divinities, spirits and ancestors. There are also on the other, those supplied by the parents, families and extended families. The individual is equally spared the angst which according to existentialists accompanies the realisation that our existence has no coherence except that which we ourselves create. Already, there is at birth an existential cushion of established values which softens its landing and existence there from. But, does this socio-existential situation not invariably lead to bad faith and inauthentic existence? Perhaps; but that will only be if and only if the individual himself, confronted with these pre-existing values, refuses to adopt or reject them through his free choices in which case he will simply be less than human.

Genealogy remains most cogent as a socio-cultural instrument of establishing lineage, pedigree and kinship. It is most importantly and significantly so for the Yoruba because of its moral and socio-existential leverage in promoting a full and rich sense of belonging and self-worth. In delimiting the boundaries of alienation in a world that is fast losing the true meaning of human existence, the Yoruba existential philosophy clearly suggests something of merit.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁵ Kwasi Wiredu, (1980), *Philosophy and an African Culture*, London, Cambridge University Press.

Olatunji A. Oyeshile (Ibadan, Nigeria)

**HUMANISTIC CULTURAL UNIVERSALISM AS A VERITABLE BASIS FOR
AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT**

Introduction

“The Satyagrahi (practitioner of truth) must be a lover of all mankind” – Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

In the past few decades, there have been renewed efforts by African scholars¹ to combat the Eurocentric myth that Africans are an inferior race. As a corollary of the above, scholarship in African social sciences and the humanities has been dominated by an attempt to assert the African identity or African personality.² In other words, there is a renewed attempt at projecting what has been called African cultural nationalism.

Slightly opposed to the position above are some African scholars, like Anthony Appiah³, who believe that while it is difficult to ignore our cultural dynamics, we should move beyond our relativism to embrace a universalist culture, since the concept of race is an illusion and that there is only one race-the human race. Part of the reason for this is that the concept of ‘race’ which the relativists adhere to cannot be substantiated genetically but only in morphological and social terms.⁴

The attempt in this paper is to support the latter view, that African development should only be sought in universalist terms which should

¹ See works of African scholars, who advocate cultural relativism to challenge the European myth that blacks were inferior to whites. Frantz Fanon, Walter Rodney, E.W. Blyden, Wole Soyinka, Alex Kagame, E.B. Idowu, John Mibti, K.C. Anyanwu, are useful in this regard and some of their works are cited in this paper.

² The works of Blyden and Cheikh Anta Diop are tailored very much towards this project. They were both Pan Africanists and Africanist scholars of first rate. For instance, see Diop's *The Cultural Unity of Africa* (1959) and *Pre-Colonial Black Africa* (1960).

³ Anthony Appiah, *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁴ See Dipo Irele “Appiah and the Trope of Race”, *International Studies in Philosophy*, XXX: 4 (1998), pp. 39-46.

involve certain humanistic values. I argue that most works concerning African identity are now irrelevant, and if they are not, they are misguided. I further argue that the urgent task in Africa and of African scholars is human development in all its ramifications and not the assertion of the African personality (identity) which was more relevant at a particular period in our history.

The Genesis of African Cultural Nationalism

It is a fundamental truism that colonialism and imperialism unleashed incalculable damage on Africans psychologically and spiritually. Hence, according to Owolabi, there was a need for the emergence of cultural nationalism in Africa. According to him:

It emerged at a time when Africans were psychologically deflated. It was therefore a sort of psychological rearmament, a moral boosting enterprise after a loss of battle in order to forestall the total loss of war.⁵

The subjugation of Africans took various forms. It is needless stating all the various forms of this subjugation as volumes of literature have been churned out by many scholars on this phenomenon. However, it is expedient to examine some forms of this subjugation and the reaction of African scholars. By this we want to state briefly why the cause of African identity was relevant at a particular point in our history.

From the intellectual viewpoint, European anthropologists, ethnographers and philosophers somewhat labelled Africa as a dark continent. Levy-Bruhl and Hegel followed this line of thinking and believed that Africans were incapable of intellectual achievement. Levy-Bruhl sees the African mind as pre-logical⁶, and a mind that does not follow the canons of (European) logic. Hegel, on his part, excludes the African continent from the movement of the absolute spirit. He believes that the Absolute spirit is the European mind on its way to perfection and, hence, justified the sub-

⁵ K.A. Owolabi, "Cultural Nationalism and Western Hegemony: A Critique of Appiah's Universalism", (Review Essay) in *African Development* Vol. XX, No. 2, (1995), p. 118.

⁶ G.S. Sogolo, *Foundations of African Philosophy: A Definite Analysis of Conceptual Issues in African Thought* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1993), p. XV.

jugation of the African continent by the Europeans. These European scholars tended to undermine the validity of other cultures.

The works of E.W. Blyden, Cheikh Anta Diop, V.Y. Mudimbe *The Invention of Africa*; Frantz Fanon's critique of colonialism and neo-colonialism aptly expressed in the following books – *Towards the African Revolution* (1967), *Studies in Dying Colonialism* (1967), *Black Skin, White Mask* (1967) and *Wretched of the Earth* (1967); Walter Rodney's *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1974); W.H. Friedland and C.G. Rosberg, Jnr. (Eds.), *African Socialism*; Placide Tempel's *Bantu Philosophy* (1959), John Mbiti's *African Religions and Philosophy* (1969), Kwame Nkrumah's *Consciencism* (1970), Julius Nyerere's *Ujamaa*, Senghor's *Negritude*; Sekou Toure's *African Socialism*; Wole Soyinka's *Myth, Literature and the African World* to mention but a few, are all attempts to pronounce and defend the African identity in the face of European ethnocentrism.

Friedland and Rosberg Jnr., for instance, identified three main themes that necessitated African socialism. These are "(1) the problem of continental identity; (2) the crisis of economic development; and (3) the dilemmas of control and class formation".⁷ The African socialists, according to the above authors, wanted to differentiate the socialism of Africa from other kinds of socialism. It was the contention of African leaders of the socialist persuasion that they could forge common identity through this socialism. Hence, one can see African socialism as:

Both a reaction against Europe and a search for a unifying doctrine ... Part of the search for identity consists of discovering ostensible roots of African socialism in indigenous society.⁸

Some of the early African nationalists who tried to propagate cultural nationalism include Edward Wilmot Blyden (1832-1912); James Johnson (1836-1917); Mojola Agbebi (1860-1917); John Mensah Sarbah (1864-1910); Samuel Johnson and J.E. Casely Hayford (1866-1930).⁹ Blyden has been described as the seminal philosopher in the effort to construct a new world view combining European and African cultures. According to him:

⁷ W.H. Friedland & G.C. Rosberg Jnr. (Eds.), *African Socialism* (California: Stanford University Press, 1964), pp. 3-4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁹ See Rina Okonkwo, *Heroes of West African Nationalism* (Enugu: Delta Publications, 1985).

An African nationality is the great desire of my soul. I believe nationality to be an ordinance of nature and no people can rise to an influential position among nations without a distinct and efficient nationality. Cosmopolitanism never effected anything and never will.¹⁰

Mudimbe describes Blyden as the foremost precursor both of negritude and of African personality.¹¹ Accordingly, Blyden's theory of colonisation lies much in the assumption that any opening up and development of the continent must be a black enterprise.¹² Hence, Blyden is seen as putting forward a general criticism of western ideology not for its wrongness, but because it was irrelevant to African authenticity.¹³

The thrust of Blyden's cultural nationalism was to show how the potentialities of African personality were given impetus in the emerging new order to promote a new perception of the past and the present, and the recovery of the African psychological autonomy as well as an introduction of peculiar African systems of education. In fact, just as Mudimbe's work is tailored toward showing that Africa is an invention of Europe, due to the impact of colonialism, so also Blyden's effort, which came before that of Mudimbe, was an attempt to re-invent the African personality that had suffered from European denigration.

In all, Blyden's effort was a searching criticism of European ethnocentrism and its various expressions. He moved beyond this criticism to discover an African personality from within African culture, which also has its own unique epistemological framework.¹⁴

In the spirit of Blyden, Placide Tempels, a Belgian priest, wrote *Bantu Philosophy* in order to debunk the notion of pre-logical mentality. Marcien Griaule's *Conversation with Ogotmmeli* also indicates a far-reaching attempt to show that Africans have the equivalence of Plato and Aristotle.¹⁵

Innocent C. Onyewuenyi, starts off his brilliant book, *The African Origin of Greek Philosophy* with a restatement of the colonial yoke. And he

¹⁰ Blyden quoted in Rina Okonkwo, *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹¹ V.Y. Mudimbe, *The Invention of Africa: Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge* (U.S.A. Indiana University Press, 1988).

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 138-142.

describes his study as an exercise in ‘Afrocentrism’. In order to push up his position, he argues like some scholars, that philosophy started in ancient African Egypt. He attributes this to the Egyptian Mystery system which was a kind of university established by priest – scholars of Egypt where every kind of discipline was taught.¹⁶ He was also quick to note that:

The Greek, the so-called fathers of philosophy came to Egypt and studied under the Egyptian Mystery priest – philosophers, and that the theories and doctrines of the Greeks were influenced by their study in Africa.¹⁷

Accordingly, his effort in Afrocentrism consists:

In the positive effort to re-establish, recover, dig out what has been destroyed, stolen, suppressed and denied Africans, whether cultural, economic, scientific, philosophic or other forms of their heritage.¹⁸

In a similar vein, Anthony Echekwube talks of an urgent need to demonstrate authentically the existence of a genuine African philosophy.¹⁹ This demonstration, according to him, arose long ago due to the unsavoury remark of European explorers, settlers, traders and missionaries who entered, “what was then known as the ‘Dark continent’ or ‘the white-man’s grave’, so called because the weather and environment were inimical to these adventurers”.²⁰

According to Mudimbe, the urge to search for an African authenticity raises some fundamental questions about African identity. And African scholars have used various means at getting to this identity.²¹ For instance, while some scholars like Diop have taken Tempel’s book, *Bantu Philosophy* as a tool for the possible emergence of authenticity, others like Ce’saire, Fanon and Rodney, have made extensive use of colonialism to engender African identity.

The position of the scholars discussed above, inspite of its plausibility, is still beset with a lot of problems. For instance, there has been a call for a distinct epistemological framework by Blyden which is an impossible pro-

¹⁶ I.C. Onyewuenyi, *The African Origins of Greek Philosophy: An Exercise in Afrocentrism* (Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press, 1993), p. 21.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ A.O. Echekwube, *An Introduction of African Philosophy* (Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd., 1994), p. 11.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ V.Y. Mudimbe, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

ject. Secondly, it is also the case that cultural purity, the type that Blyden calls for, cannot be maintained.

Furthermore, we want to concede, unfortunately though, that there seems to be some truth in the position of the European ethnographers and anthropologists. This stems from the fact that in the contemporary period, Africa has not really moved completely out its darkness. This is based, among other things, on our bastardisation of moral, economic and political values. For instance, while we easily talk of how Europe underdeveloped Africa, many of us are reluctant to talk about how Africans underdeveloped Africa.

My arguments in this section has been that the call for cultural authenticity was relevant at a point. For it served as a rallying point for a people who wanted to have a belief in themselves, a people who wanted to be capable of determining their own destiny in the face of motley values.

Political Independence and the Recognition of Africans in Intellectual Discourse

The question of African identity engendered by colonialism and its mystification is largely irrelevant now since most of the problems stated above have largely been resolved or seem to have been resolved. For instance, most African nations have attained political independence, even if this independence is no more than flag independence. And in cases where full or genuine independence has been granted, such independence has largely been scuttled by African leaders due to their self-interest and greed.

On the intellectual plain, most literatures from the Western World now recognize the intellectual capability of Africans and African scholars of repute occupy positions of eminence in Western academia. By Western I mean Europe and America. Only recently, 1986 to be precise, Professor Wole Soyinka, an African, was awarded a Nobel Prize for Literature. There are countless achievements of other Africans in various fields of academic endeavours.

From the foregoing, it seems that the only area where the question of identity is relevant is in the moral sphere, where such values as kinship relation, extended family system, communal labour, honesty and hardwork are salient features. But we must note that these values are not uniquely

African, and some of them are sometimes seen as being detrimental to the growth of Africa itself.

The Post-Colonial Challenge

I have tried to show in the earlier parts of this work that the question of African cultural identity, if it is not irrelevant since it was imperative at a particular point in our history, has become misguided. In what ways can it be said to be misguided? One may reason the following way. The identity issue does not address the urgent problems confronting Africa. It lays more than enough stress on the African personality rather than on the compelling problems of scientific development, hunger, religious emancipation and political anarchy.

While Oladipo follows Mudimbe and others in asserting that European ethnocentrism has resulted in Africa's present day marginalisation, which to him is usually explained in socio-economic terms, he posits further that there is an intellectual dimension to Africa's impoverishment and marginality.²² According to him, this marginalisation manifests "itself in the failure of Africans to understand or know themselves, because of a crippling immersion, conscious or unconscious, in an European order of knowledge".²³

He goes further to show that the solution to our problem should not only shed light on the present but should attempt to make a project for the future. Hence, according to him, the important task of the African philosopher,

If he is genuinely interested in seeing Africa emerge from the morass of ignorance, hunger and want in which she is presently submerged should not be the demonstration of the uniqueness of the African world outlook, nor even a defence of the thoughts of the crowd ... but to show the contribution which that world outlook has made to the determination of the African condition.²⁴

Oladipo suggests that where this African world outlook is insufficient or 'negative', the search should be directed to an alternative outlook or combination of outlooks. "An authentic African philosophy has to be a phi-

²² Olusegun Oladipo, *The Idea of African Philosophy* (Ibadan: Molecular Publishers, 1992).

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

losophy of action. It certainly cannot be a combative phenomenological sketch of traditional beliefs”²⁵, Oladipo remarks. The above extensive reference to Oladipo’s work is to show that the challenges confronting African must be tackled through a pragmatic approach which, I think, does not exclude borrowing from other cultures.

While P.O. Bodunrin largely acknowledges the fact that in Africa a call for relevance is a call for Africaness²⁶, he defends the view that the key to development and modernisation in the contemporary world is science and technology. The African traditional past, he believes, was dominated by intense religiosity, spiritism, authoritarianism and supernaturalism, which are inimical to scientific thought.²⁷ To him, the racial superiority of the Europeans which has engendered in us, a colonial mentality, was due to the scientific and technological achievements of the whites. To Bodunrin therefore, the essential features of the scientific spirit which were lacking in traditional African culture include freedom of enquiry, openness to criticism, a general type of scepticism and fallibilism and non-veneration of authorities.²⁸

Having situated some of the responses to the post colonial challenge in a philosophical context, I shall briefly look at the attempts by some social scientists to grapple with this problem. Claude Ake, in one of his major works, *Social Science as Imperialism: The Theory of Political Development* (1982) argues that Western social science scholarship on developing countries with the exception of the Marxist tradition, amounts to imperialism.²⁹

Ake’s reasons for levelling the charge of imperialism against the social sciences in their developmental efforts on Africa include the following: (a) It foists, or at any rate attempts to foist, on the developing countries capitalist values, capitalist institutions and capitalist development; (b) it focuses social science analysis on the question of how to make the developing countries more like the West; and (c) it propagates mystifications,

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ P.O. Bodunrin (ed.) *Philosophy in Africa: Trends and Perspectives* (Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press, 1985), p. viii.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Claude Ake, *Social Science as Imperialism: The Theory of Political Development* (Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1982), p. xiii.

and modes of thought and action which serve the interests of capitalism and imperialism.³⁰

According to Ake, many works have been done by progressive economists to correct this lopsidedness. Such works include that of Samir Amin's, *Accumulation On a World Scale: Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment* and Paul Baran's *The Political Economy of Growth*. Baran, according to Ake, is mainly interested in how the economic surplus is produced and used and how developed and underdeveloped societies undergo economic transformation. Samir Amin, on his part, sets for himself the primary aim of classifying the phenomenon of underdevelopment. And Ake argues that these two writers do not actually come out clearly and forcefully on the imperialist leaning of the social sciences. Hence, he suggests that we cannot "overcome our underdevelopment and dependence unless we try to understand the imperialist character of western social science".³¹

This imperialist tendency of the social sciences consists in the fact that they tend to play a major role in keeping us (Africans)³² subordinate and underdeveloped by feeding us with noxious values and false hopes in order to make us pursue policies which undermine our competitive strength and guarantee our permanent underdevelopment and dependence.³³

What Ake sees as a clog in the wheel of progress of Africa's development is western capitalism which has rendered us more underdeveloped. Of course, he suggests that African crisis lies primarily in the political sphere and that economic crisis of Africa largely lies primarily in political sphere and that economic crisis of Africa is largely a by-product of the political one. He suggests that the type of social science that is conducive to African development must have socialist roots. It is this type that can easily be used in the eradication of underdevelopment, exploitation and dependence.³⁴

It is not only Ake that maintains this socialist economic paradigm in resolving the African crisis. Daniel A. Offiong, in his work, *Imperialism and Dependency* (1980), criticises all the modernisation theories on development which he believes are based on capitalist's economic foundation and

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

³² The emphasis on 'Africans' is mine.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. xviii.

hence inimical to the growth of African countries. According to him, the two main theoretical models that seek to understand the perpetual wealth and poverty of some countries are the theory of modernisation (which has been alluded to above), and the theory of imperialism.³⁵

The modernisation theory does not recommend more than the fact that African countries should ape the development strategies of the West. The theory of imperialism, on the other hand, attempts a Marxist interpretation of history believing that the wealth and poverty of nations have resulted from the global process of exploitation. This process has been referred to by various scholars such as Andre Gunder Frank and Walter Rodney as “the development of underdevelopment”.

Given the double-faced development theories and the dilemma of the African nations, Ofiong opines that:

Before African countries can know growth and development in their territories, there must be profound analysis of Africa’s position in global economy and stratification of power as well as an appreciation on the growing complexity of Africa’s class structure.³⁶

In a somewhat complementary twist, Molefikete Asante, in his foreword to Wey & Osagie (1984), *The World at Adult Stage*, talks about the integratist approach which the authors expound in their work towards African development. According to him:

Integratism as explained by Wey and Osagie rejects the conflict positions inherent in capitalism and communism. While capitalism represents conflict between individuals for the highest profits, communism represents conflict between classes for control; integratism rejects both systems as distinctive to the human spirit. Rather than using the conflict model, integratism looks to the nature and objective conditions of society for the sources of its strength. Furthermore, it is not antagonistic to culture but views culture in its adult stage as essential to human survival.³⁷

I have quoted from Asante extensively to show both the import of the African crisis and the dilemma involved in adopting a particular model of development in Africa. Many African scholars are in a dilemma on the

³⁵ Daniel A. Offiong, *Imperialism and Dependency* (Enugu: Fourth Dimension Publishers, 1980), p. 13.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³⁷ S.O. Wey & E. Osagie, *The World at Adult Stage* (Ibadan: Evans, 1984), p. 2.

issue of which developmental option to endorse. Should it be the capitalist or communist model of development? Wey and Osagie talk about integration. My position is not radically different from theirs in the sense that one cannot adopt a single model, either capitalist or communist for African development. It is also the case that the African society (if we can talk of a homogenous Africa society) has been through and through invested with European values. Hence, it is impossible to divorce ourselves from this trend. But in which ways can our immersion in foreign values not be detrimental to our well-being, while at the same time we want to be ourselves and retain what is left of our identity? This and other related questions bring us to the next section of this paper.

Cultural Universalism and Related Issues

Cultural universalism occurs in a situation where man takes the whole world as his constituency. In other words, cultural universalism is anchored on the belief that modes of behaviour, belief, morality can be hinged on objective and universal standards which are applicable the world over. Of course there have been an unending contention between cultural relativists and universalists, but this paper does not address itself to the fundamentals of this debate. Rather, we want to consider each in such a way as to show how it could lead to African development.

It should be noted that cultural universalism gains ground when one is confronted with the fact that despite certain cultural specifics, it cannot be denied, “on the grounds that blend apriori with the empirical, that there are certain universals which cut across all human cultures”.³⁸ In this way, when we say that man is a rational being we are implying, according to Sogolo, that there are certain things shared in common by mankind, and if these traits are absent in any human group, there will be doubt as to whether that group is human at all. One of such traits is the ability for self-reflection.

Having realised the above fact, it should not be surprising to us why some have adopted a universalist approach toward development. Of course, this universalism is construed in the form of adopting what I call a pragmatic culture – a culture that promotes development, that is able to

³⁸ G.S. Sogolo, *op. cit.*, p. xv.

cater for our needs and, above all, a culture that can endure. Whether by accident or design, the western culture has attained some degree of excellence which has made other cultures to borrow from it.

Some may want to argue that many cultures have been forced, due to colonial incursion, to adopt western culture. Of course, this is only true to some extent. This is true in the sense that colonialism or imperialism did actually take place. But the above line of thinking has little weight in the sense that we can hardly undermine the scientific and technological paradigm, which did not only give western culture an edge but has also turned the world into a global village. Furthermore, the utilitarian and pragmatic effect of the western scientific culture is easily seen to have made it possible for a handful of Europeans to subjugate millions of Africans, take their lands and resources and carry the remaining ones into slavery. Of course, some of our forefathers like King Jaja of Opobo and King Ouverami the great of Benin resisted, but the resistance was not potent enough to stop the aggressors. Also worth nothing is the active collaboration of our people with the Europeans in the dastard act for marginal gains.

The foregoing however is not to justify imperialism in any guise. Neither is it an attempt to make western sciento-technical culture “the culture”. The emphasis however is that there is more to be gained in adopting a culture that engenders development, whether it is from the sun or the moon.

The early man started as a food gatherer wishing to satisfy his natural cravings but as time goes on he becomes more sophisticated in his ways of life. But we should note that human civilisation that is officially recorded to have started in Egypt and Mesopotamia³⁹, extended to other parts of the world during succeeding centuries. Thus, we can talk of Greek, Roman, European and Western civilisations. But now the rest of the world seems to be interested in the happening in U.S.A. and Japan for various forms of breakthroughs. The point being made is that there is no crime in embracing whatever lifts the human person. And the march of civilisation, which is nothing but human development, will never cease as long man still desires to increase his store of knowledge to meet his needs, Guest suggests.

The above intermingling of cultures has been described as ‘alienation’ by Abiola Irele. According to him:

³⁹ George Guest, *The March of Civilisation* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1979), p. 3.

The concept of alienation in this collective perspective is regularly employed to refer to the conflict of cultures implied by this opposition, a situation whose implications are taken to be essentially negative.⁴⁰

But Irele does not see this intermingling of cultures, particularly that of Europe and traditional Africa in negative terms as the concept suggests. Rather he believes that such alienation has its positive side. To him, “this situation in fact offers possibilities that could confer upon the transforming values of western civilisation in their effect upon society, a positive significance”.⁴¹

While attempting to argue his case for a universalist approach to culture and civilisation, Irele does not forget the damages done by colonialism, which has made people to view alienation in a purely negative sense. But he believes that we cannot ignore the impact of western science and technology, if we as Africans are to develop. Furthermore, while he believes that western science is based on the logic of rationality, he does not fail to show that Europe’s present development was as a result of what she assimilated from other cultures such as the Chinese. In a similar vein, Africa’s contribution to western civilisation is so obvious. Egypt is said to have contributed immensely to early Greek civilisation. Also African labour and resources have also been used to build the material property of Europe.

Accordingly, Irele suggests that we all have claims to western civilisation. More fundamentally he suggests that we could only benefit more from such civilisation if we overlook the colonial past and play down the trait of cultural nationalism. The adoption of the above recommendations has made Japan to emerge stronger after the devastating second world war. According to Irele, language and culture are no longer obstacles in contemporary times, when science and technology have turned the world into a global village thereby re-inforcing our awareness of a common humanity. But he cautions that:

The notion of universality of human experience does not however imply uniformity-quite the contrary-but it does mean that cultures maintain their dynamism only through their degree of tension

⁴⁰ F. Abiola Irele, *In Praise of Alienation*, An Inaugural Lecture delivered in Nov. 1982, at University of Ibadan (Published by Samgys, 1987), p. 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

between the particular and the universal. Alienation, in this view, cannot mean total loss; the fulfilment it promises resides precisely in the degree of integration it helps us to achieve. In its creative potential, alienation signifies the sensitive tension between the immediate closeness of the self and the reflective distance of the other.⁴²

In a similar spirit, Appiah believes that cultural purity cannot be maintained by Africans because of the interaction and interdependency of contemporary global society. He believes that modernity abhors cultural nationalism and modern culture by virtue of printing technology only encourages privacy and individualism. Hence, if there is solidarity among people at all, it is just solidarity of humanity not that of race.⁴³

According to Owolabi, the main position of Appiah is that between the past and future of African culture, many events have taken place which demand that the desire to attain a unique African identity must be jettisoned because such an ambition cannot be realised in the interdependent global community of today. Africa can only develop if we, Africans, recoil from the path of antagonism and accept the synthesis of all “hitherto opposing camps, modernism and traditionalism, Africanity and Eurocentricity to forge for us the desired progress”.⁴⁴

The attempt of Appiah has been described as a revolutionary scholarship of post-modernism, in which there is a departure from the orthodoxy of excluded middle in Africa where a scholar is either a traditionalist or modernist. According to Owolabi, “post modernism subscribes to the position that diverse interpretations can be given to one fact and it is therefore imperative for all positions to cohabit in an interdependent manner”.⁴⁵

It should be pointed out that Appiah’s universalist position has also been subjected to searching criticism particularly by Owolabi. For instance, Appiah’s unquestioned acceptance of the global order has been described as no more than the adoption of the position of the catch-up theorists.

In a seeming defence of the universalist culture, but not at the expense of African cultural nationalism, Paulin Houtondji, pointed out that nothing is wrong in the African researcher moving beyond his locality to gain by

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁴³ K.A. Owolabi, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

observing what goes on elsewhere. The interdependency of world societies has come to stay. To him:

It is instructive, for example, for the African historian to study the conditions responsible for the industrialisation of Japan in the nineteenth century, as it is for him to study the conditions underlying the colonial domination of Africa. It is as informative, and perhaps even more so, for the African philosopher to study the sciences and technologies in Europe and outside Europe, the conditions necessary for the elaboration of scientific paradigms which are dominant today, the theoretical framework and the operation of ideologies which have led and still lead the world ...⁴⁶

The point here, again, is that nothing is lost, indeed a lot is gained by learning from others. While there are plausible aspects of African culture that can be promoted, it is very dangerous to romanticise the African past.

The Imperative of Africa's Development Through Humanistic Cultural Universalism

The suggestion here is that Africans should adopt a humanistic cultural universalism in her quest for development. This type of humanistic universalism is not too different from that upheld by universalist scholars except that it does not see development as something to be modelled strictly or exclusively on western science and technology. In other words, some of the universalist scholars have tended to restrict themselves to western science and technology in their development model. Humanistic cultural universalism moves beyond (western) science and technology to embrace any system, orientation or model that can lead to development.

Human beings the world over are united by many factors such as science, politics, economics, religion, sports and so on. Hence, it would be wrong to isolate any of these factors as being the ultimate solution to our problems. Of course, it is a truism that Africa is currently enmeshed in political and economic problems. Solutions to these problems would go a long way to engender development. However, these problems can only be solved if we as Africans see ourselves as an integral part of the world

⁴⁶ Paulin J. Houtondji, "Distances" in *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, No.3 (October 1993), p. 143.

order. It is then that human rights and other political values will be respected by African political leaders. It is also then that the goal of economic emancipation can be pursued vigorously.

The point is that the over-contextualisation of problems is likely to lead us to making nonsense of the issue at hand. Developed societies are developed because they believe that there are human essences such as justice, truth, love, goodness and so forth which are worth pursuing and must be safeguarded. These are universal attributes.

The humanistic cultural universalism which I am suggesting as a model of development in Africa is different from both the modernisation and catch-up theories. I believe that human problems are basically the same with some variations. Hunger, disease, political instability, scientific development are issues that must be addressed by all nations. They are not a white man's show, neither are they basically the black man's predicament. There are diversities in the ways these problems come about:

But the most interesting fact in all this is that the very possibility of perceiving the diversity, not to talk of any prospect of resolution, is predicated upon circumstances having to do with the fundamental biological unity of the human species.⁴⁷ Development is a thing of the mind that must be translated into action. And this is only possible when it is rooted in genuine humanism which, "entails a belief in reason, science, democracy, openness to new ideas, the cultivation of moral excellence, a commitment to justice and fairness, and a belief in the inherent worth of humanity".⁴⁸

The humanism that is being suggested here entails that we become citizens of the world in a loose sense and develop a sense of sharing among mankind. This give-and-take attitude is greatly stressed by Echekwube when he writes that there is the urgent need to harmonise and complement the goal-oriented search for man's overall development in order that a world of peaceful co-existence may dawn on us for what the African world-view advocates and entrenches. But this is the task which awaits the

⁴⁷ Kwasi Wiredu, "Canons of Conceptualisation", *The Monist*, Number 4, Vol.76, (October 1993), p. 473.

⁴⁸ Norm R. Allen Jr. (Ed.) *African Humanism: An Anthology* (New York: Prometheus Book, 1991), p. 10.

programming of the African scholar and its urgent implementation for the realisation of a richer and more perfect human culture and civilisation.⁴⁹

In conclusion, the attempt in this paper should not be misconstrued to mean that there is nothing like African identity. Rather, my argument is that the question of African identity was more relevant at a particular epoch in our history than now.⁵⁰ The question confronting us now is not that of identity as such, but how to engender development in the face of starvation, disease and abuse of political and economic powers by many African leaders who have turned themselves to oppressors of the people. The answer, I suggest, is that our development effort should be guided by minimum universal standards. The adoption of these standards, I believe, is the beginning of our march to authentic civilisation and humanised identity.

⁴⁹ A.O. Echekwube, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

⁵⁰ I am grateful to Dr. J.A. Aigbodioh for making useful corrections in the original draft of this paper.

Fred Poché (Angers, France)

GLOBALIZATION, DE-TERRITORIALIZATION AND CITIZENSHIP¹

With a view to clarifying the concepts of « history », « culture », « globalization » and « diversity », *Idol and Grace* by Orlando O. Espin, is in tune with my own philosophical research. Just like Espin, and in Raul Fornet-Betancourt's wake, I lend much importance to the idea of « contextuality ». As a matter of fact, not only does today's context entail major societal changes, but also a complete anthropological mutation. Among the numerous examples at hand is the question of space. In the second part of his book, Espin claims: « The globalized economy has become de-territorialized. Access to cultural and symbolic goods is now increasingly de-territorialized through de-territorialized means, as is the case with the Internet and other virtual vehicles. Divisions among human groups are increasingly dependent on access to the Internet and other similar means, and much less dependent on territories of residence or national citizenship »². To further illustrate this statement, I would like to expound the idea that the above-described phenomenon does not only concern States or economies in general but also citizens, human relationships and the way cultural identities and « community life » can develop today. The process of de-territorialization I would like to describe in this paper takes three specific forms - *physical, mental and digital* - with, in my opinion, only the last one tallying with the new societal pattern.

The first form simply refers to individuals desire to change places. In this case deterritorialization, either considered or actually occurring, is usually accompanied by reterritorialization. It consists of a *physical* displacement related to (1) an act of will such as we experience everyday (e.g. when we say: « What about going to the cinema? »), or more radically (2) an imperative such as a self-imposed exile on account of poverty, racism or survival.

The second form - *mental* deterritorialization - shows a distinction between *space* and *place*³. In *La phénoménologie de la perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes a situation that illustrates my statement perfectly: « I arrive in a

¹ This text is a written version of the lecture I gave at the Theological Colloquium on Orlando Espin's new book *Idol and Grace: Traditioning and Subversive Hope*, in Münster from 1-4 April 2014.

² O. O Espin, *Idol and Grace. On Traditioning and Subversive Hope*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2014, p. 49.

³ F. Poché, «Après la dé-symbolisation. Quel avenir pour les quartiers populaires ?» *Cahiers de l'Atelier*, n°532 janvier-mars 2012, pp. 45-54.

village for the holidays, happy to leave behind my work and my ordinary surroundings. I settle into the village, which becomes the centre of my life. The low level of water in the river or the corn or walnut harvest, are events to me. But if a friend comes to see me and brings news from Paris, or if the radio and newspapers inform me that there are threats of war, then I feel exiled in this village, excluded from real life, and cut off from everything. Our physical being and our perceptions lead us to consider the physical surroundings around us as the centre of the world. But this physical location is not necessarily the physical location of our life. I can « be elsewhere » while remaining here, and if I am kept far from what I love, I can feel remote from real life »⁴. Feeling *physically* in one place while allowing one's mind to wander in other spaces, is not specifically characteristic of contemporary society. For quite a long time, it has been possible to be in one specific *place* and to mentally - or should I say *spatially* - be with our loved ones. French poet Jacques Prévert illustrated this in one of his famous texts describing the student Hamlet who remains silent as the teacher asks him to answer « present ». He is actually mentally absent, hence the teacher's reproachful tone: « You've got your head in the clouds again ».⁵

The third and last form of deterritorialization that I would call *digital* is prompted by new technologies. This radically new approach in human history has an impact on politics, economics and at a *social* level. To be more precise, it increasingly generates a split between *place* (linked to the *body*) and *space* (linked to the *mind*). Such a split or separation results in a new way of connecting with others, of having a sense of community, of forming one body -or not - within a given territory or more generally within a specific society. It directly touches on the issue of our conception of « diversity » (O. Espin) and the production of *shared values*. What is happening to us exactly? In many so-called « developed » countries, most individuals spend the greater part of their time digitally deterritorializing themselves. And such common practice changes the relationship each one of us has with others and ourselves.

What is *digital deterritorialization* exactly ? It is the permanent dissociation between *space* and *place*, bearing in mind that, as specified above, *place* relates to the body and *space* to the mind. What is exactly happening when, many times a day, one is physically present, but in reality is elsewhere? What is at stake when physical *presence* is dispossessed of its capacity for awareness and attention? The use of new technological tools contributes to constantly creating a new form of deterritorialization.

⁴ M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la Perception*, Paris, Gallimard, 1945, p. 330. (our translation)

⁵ J. Prévert, *Paroles*, Paris, Gallimard, 1972, p.58. (our translation)

To put it another way, the current social fragmentation occurs concurrently with fragmentation of space and time. Thanks to mobile phones, you can call your contacts, send or receive text messages whenever and wherever you please. Similarly, you can easily access the Internet and your e-mail box anywhere at any time of day or night. Consequently, individuals are constantly connected with things and people who are not there. Their *attention* is incessantly captured by the non-present, sometimes to the detriment of *civility* and *compassion*. Information technology, which enables us to get in touch with others or be reached at any time, to stay connected with our next of kin or those we feel close to, significantly alters our relationship with ourselves and with others. It modifies the very meaning of such phrases as « social group » and « accepting otherness », although it may in some way reveal new forms of solidarity. Places are perpetually deterritorialized and an issue is therefore raised: let's take the example of teenagers who send text messages during a class or a family meal. The new individual is no longer an « individual there » but a « mobile phone individual »: physically there, but mentally elsewhere.

In my opinion, what we see here on a daily basis does have an impact on our relations with the *political community*. Since individuals consider themselves always available for their next of kin or the *community of their own choosing* (friends, members of a club, society or religion, etc.), the very idea of belonging to a *community sharing a common destiny* (related to place) is questioned. The identification process of individuals, which used to be built on sharing the same territory, is deterritorialized today. As cyberspace and satellite dishes make it possible to cross all borders, the sense of belonging rises beyond the usual territorial boundaries. The narrative logic is giving way to « a network logic » (Z. Laidi). *Narrative identity* is being diverted toward - and in some ways, replaced by - what I would call *iconic* or *digital* identity⁶. Images that appeal to emotions help building identities that transcend the usual territorial boundaries. Individuals thus build up an affective, interdependent network with people who do not share the same geographical territory but to whom they feel close (same religion, memories, cultural origins, etc.). The shared destiny of the *political territory* gives way to a community of one's own choosing in the « post-political sphere »⁷.

We said previously that any environment inhabited by humans necessarily provided a space for the body. And yet, for the first time in the history of human communication, it is now possible to get in touch with unknown people and

⁶ F. Poché, *A-t-on encore le droit d'être fragile ?* Interviews with Francesca Piolot, Lyon, Chronique Sociale, 2013.

⁷ F. Poché, *Le temps des oubliés. Refaire la démocratie*, Lyon, Chronique Sociale, 2014.

communicate with them in an entirely anonymous, disembodied and synchronized mode⁸. A « virtual identity » emerges on Internet forums or IRC (Internet Relay Chat). This identity is supposed to represent a real identity, but this is obviously not always the case. As we know, some people lie about their identity so as to present a false mask to other users and be considered for the people they wish they really were.

When human communities are no longer rooted in specific geographical settings, but are instead defined according to short-lived similar interests of individuals interacting within virtual environments, they undergo ontological mutation. But at the political level, one may wonder how a minimum of collective solidarity, of faithfulness toward one's territory, district or country, and of concern about the common good can be preserved. Beyond a certain amount of efficiency that nobody would think of denying, the permanent possibility - or constant diktat - of deterritorializing with the purpose of exchanging with one's « close relations », and behavioural patterns that increasingly involve a sense of urgency, may both induce attention deficit disorder. The breakdown of attention may occur because of information and communication technologies such as cell phones or the prolonged use of screens. Some specialists claim that ADD has a premature, structural and irreversible impact on synapse formation in children.

The French philosopher Bernard Stiegler would say that « biopolitics », a concept introduced by Michel Foucault, is replaced or rather perfected by « psychopower »⁹, itself leading to the industrial capture of attention. Instead of governments seeking to gain control over the *bodies* and *lives* of citizens, multinational companies endeavour to have an influence over their *minds*¹⁰. Hence, for the French philosopher, the « psychopower » wielded by cultural and audiovisual industries is destroying the exchange and educational processes. Attention is gradually altered at several levels: (1) on the one hand, as the *psychological faculty of concentration on an object*, whatever the latter is ; (2) on the other hand, as a *social ability to build up a society with rules of civility* based on various capacities: social graces, know-how, the capacity to theorize notably in the sense of a meditative analysis.

⁸ F. Jauréguiberry, « Le moi, le soi et Internet », *Sociologie et Sociétés*, Vol XXXII, n°2, autumn 2000, p. 135.

⁹ « In the late 20th century, it was not the nation states and the 'bourgeois' public powers that wished to psychologically control populations, but rather those enterprises aiming at global markets ». B. Stiegler, *Prendre soin, De la jeunesse et des générations*, Volume 1, Paris, Gallimard, 2008, p. 323.

¹⁰ More particularly the weakest ones: F. Poché, "Die Armut, die gesellschaftlichen Vorstellungen und die Kulturelle Entwicklung", in Raul Fornet-Betancourt (Hrsg), *Kapital, Armut, Entwicklung*, Dokumentation des XV. Internationalen Seminars des Dialogprogramms Nord-Süd, Wissenschaftsverlag, Mainz 2012, pp. 95-105.

In a context marked by behavioural patterns that increasingly involve a sense of urgency and a very high level of technology, those individuals lagging behind (immigrants, disabled, illiterate people, the old, etc.) barely draw the attention of healthy or privileged people. They have been socially excluded¹¹. If some attention is finally paid to them, it usually takes the form of one-sided aid and support, but has generally little to do with a strong belief which is nevertheless of the essence: these people do possess the true *abilities* for building a better society but such abilities are often denied or neglected. Our world is turning into an inward-looking, fragmented temporality, where the process of deterritorialization is constantly at work to reach virtual spaces - logging onto the Internet, receiving or sending text messages, etc. This virtual, dematerialized environment of *interconnection* substitutes for the world of *communication* that physically links people through the common production of meaning and gets us to care for others. Obviously, the current anthropological mutations (new relation with time, space, history, communication, politics or post-politics, identity, etc.) should not incite us to systematically criticize new technologies, but rather encourage us to thoroughly examine the purpose of these new tools (new technologies) and the meaning of a community life characterized by an acceptance of being unsettled by the *margins* of society, the *lower classes* and *minority groups*.

This is the way of politics understood as both the organization of the city and the questioning of a social order that defines *places* and *roles* (Rancière), and the *abilities* of each one of us. It also has to do with the responsible behaviour of all citizens: first and foremost an ethics of perception keen on modifying our representations of others. As Orlando O. Espin rightly puts it, the point is to reintroduce *compassion* and the will to build a fairer world without exclusion or oppression¹².

¹¹ F. Poché, *Le temps des oubliés*, Lyon, Chronique sociale, op. cit.

¹² O. O. Espin, *Idol and Grace. On Traditioning and Subversive Hope*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York, 2014, p. 217.

Mayra Rivera (Cambridge, USA)

**CARNAL CORPOREALITY: TENSIONS IN CONTINENTAL AND CARIBBEAN
THOUGHT**

The notion of flesh played an important role in early elaborations of the principles of liberation philosophy. Between 1969 and 1975 Enrique Dussel published three books cataloguing models of the body in Hebrew Scriptures, Greek literature, and the New Testament. He contrasted two basic ideas that influenced Western thought: “Semitic anthropology,” based on the flesh that viewed the human being as an integration of the spirit of life and the flesh, and Hellenistic anthropology, based on the body that assumed the separability between body and soul. He concluded that only a model based on the relationship between flesh and spirit — rather than body and soul — could lead to a wholistic anthropology and thus ground an ethics of liberation. Dussel wrote: “John said: ‘the word became flesh’. A Greek would have said: ‘the word took a body’ — which is radically different.”¹ Dussel returns to this anthropological issue in more recent works, arguing that a critical ethics derived from the experience of victims would develop an ethical criterion based on a “carnal corporeality” and not on the soul.² As a historical account, one would need to interrogate interpretations that assume impermeable boundaries between a semitic Judaism and a Hellenistic culture. However, genealogical considerations aside, his philosophical goal was to provide an anthropology that avoided the separation between body and soul, one that could inform an ethics attuned to the material needs of human beings — basic necessities such as food, health, and protection against violence. As long as the essence of human life was assumed to reside in an immaterial principle such as the soul, material necessities would be deemed as secondary or derivative, merely supporting something more lasting and true.

The most heated contemporary debates about corporeality may no longer assume the relationship between body and soul (or flesh and spirit) as an ontological foundation, but some of the tensions foregrounded by the distinction between body and flesh are still significant and continue to affect philosophical debates on corporeality and its ethical ramifications. In common parlance, the terms evoke different associations. “Body” suggests an entity complete in itself and visible to those around it. It is easily imagined as an object of perception and a sign legible in society. Thus “the body” as a category helps us analyze the

¹ *El Humanismo Semita* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Universitaria 1969), 28, my translation.

² Enrique Dussel, *Ética De La Liberación: En La Edad De La Globalización Y De La Exclusión* (Madrid: Trotta, 2002).

dynamics of social re-presentation at work in processes of racialization, gendering, and other forms of social normalization. In contrast, “flesh” evokes the very materiality of the body, which relates it to the non-human and to broader processes of material exchange that constitute bodies. This makes flesh an important category for thinking about the *embodied* effects of socio-economic practices as well as ecological ones — the quality of food, air, and water, for instance — all of which demand attention to the matter of life.

I am interested in pursuing this insight of the significance of “flesh” as a supplement to contemporary body-talk in philosophy and theology.³ But flesh has ambiguous connotations. Indeed its materiality often carries the weight of sin — either as dead and decaying matter or as an unruly force threatening rationality. Flesh commonly evokes what is despised and feared in human bodies—physically and morally. And as metaphysical presuppositions and associations inflect socio-political representations, these descriptions of the body in general influence descriptions of particular types of bodies. People described as “carnal” are likely to be despised and feared. Any account of flesh in contemporary thought must consider the term’s long association with sensuality and instincts, and thus its role in racializing discourses.

In this short essay, I can only address these questions very broadly. My interest here is on the intersections between continental and Caribbean contributions to the discussion. I will first present key elements of the debates about flesh in continental philosophy as brief engagements with Michel Foucault and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, focusing on the definitions of “flesh” as distinct from “body.” I then move to an engagement with Franz Fanon’s representation of colonial racialization and the counter-narratives of the Negritude poets, where the philosophical debates converge with political ones. In doing so, I foreground the risks and possibilities of developing a critical philosophy of carnal corporeality.

Discredited as Flesh

The details of Foucault’s work on the flesh are shrouded in mystery due to the indefinitely deferred publication of *Confessions of the Flesh*, yet in an interview with the same title Foucault offers his account of the argument in a nutshell. “We have had sexuality since the eighteenth century and sex since the nineteenth. What we had before then was no doubt flesh. The basic originator of all of it was Tertullian.”⁴ This flesh that Foucault follows through the history of

³ I am completing a book-length project on this topic, tentatively entitled *Poethics of the Flesh*.

⁴ Michel Foucault, *Power/ Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 211.

sexuality is Christian flesh — but not only. He tells the story of its emergence repeatedly — each version assuming previous ones and modifying them.⁵ It is told as a fable: “from the day Tertullian began saying to the Christians, ‘where your chastity is concerned...’ ” — Foucault mocked his own fabulation.⁶

As is well known, the broad framework of the analysis is the description of the emergence of technologies that deploy power-knowledge to shape and control life. Foucault describes sexuality as one of the arrangements of such technologies of power. The story is clearly a complex one, but for the purposes of following the role of “flesh” in discourses about sexuality and instinct, we can identify three distinct stages and conceptions of flesh: as a general principle vaguely associated with sin, as the cause of corporeal sensibility, and as the location or substance of instincts. Before the transformations in Christian understandings of confession, which Foucault traces in the *Abnormal*, “corporeal materiality” was “merely identified as the origin of sin.”⁷ The identification of the origin of sin with corporeal materiality is hardly inconsequential, of course, and it would have been considered appropriately Pauline.⁸ If anything, Foucault’s statements sound like the fulfillment of what Paul described in Romans 7 — the “recognition” of sin, another law, dwelling within his “members,” in the flesh. Indeed, Foucault describes the outcome of the modern transformations in suggestive terms: “Now the sin of the flesh dwells within the body itself.”⁹ This discursive pattern — *defining* flesh as the cause of sin and then *recognizing* sin in the flesh — is consonant with Foucault descriptions of the emergence of such categories of knowledge/power.¹⁰ For Foucault, the significant difference of modern practices of examination is that in them the “complex and floating domain of the flesh as a domain of the *exercise of power* and *objectification* begins to stand out from the body.”¹¹

⁵ I will refer only to *Abnormal* (1975), *Power/Knowledge* (1977), *History of Sexuality* (1978), and *Government of the Living* (1980).

⁶ Foucault, *Power/ Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*, 213.

⁷ Michel Foucault, *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège De France 1974-1975* (New York: Picador, 2003), 201.

⁸ Examples: Melancton read “flesh” as including the whole human nature, accentuating that the best in humanity was still “according to the flesh.” This he contrasted with Duns Scotus’ use of the term. “The ‘tinder’ is an inordinate quality of the flesh that inclines the sensitive appetite to an act which in relation to the judgment of reason is deforming and defective” (Duns Scotus, In sent., lib II, d. 29.4, Melancton, *Loci Communes*

⁹ Foucault, *Abnormal*, 189.

¹⁰ See for example *Ibid.*, 193. The discourses on sexuality represented sexuality as emerging from biology rather than from those discourses.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 201.

In Foucault's reading, modern in views about confession refine the skills of examination, showing a gradual intensification of its importance, progressively extending a scheme for transforming sex into discourse from the monastery to all laity, making such discourse obligatory, regular, and exhaustive. This emerging system of questioning would not only bring more areas of everyday life under the purview of confession, but also shift the focus of the examination to the flesh. A key turning point occurs when attention shifts from an *act* to something else deemed as, or constructed as, the *cause* of an act; in this case there is a shift from sin as a transgression of a law — mainly concerning relations to other people — to a “kind of illness that is sin's *raison d'être*.”¹² “It is no longer the relational aspect that is now at the very heart of questioning concerning the Sixth Commandment, but the movements, senses, pleasures, thoughts, and desires of the penitent's body itself, whose intensity and nature is explained by the penitent himself.”¹³ As the source of knowledge about the flesh, the body becomes an object for endless, exhaustive examination. The questioning is targeted to different parts of the body and different sensory levels. These are confessions *of the flesh*.

“We are witnessing the flesh being pinned to the body,” Foucault observed.¹⁴ This influential aspect of modern understandings of the relationship between body and flesh presumes and codifies earlier associations between flesh and sin. Flesh figures as an obscure element working inside bodies—one that must be examined and controlled. “What I wanted to show was that this description of the body as flesh at the same time *discredits the body as flesh*.”¹⁵ The effects of this process would extend beyond Christian institutions, shaping also discourses that bring anatomical elements, and biological functions, conducts, sensations and pleasures under unifying principles of human normality. Foucault argues that the examination and control of flesh is eventually transferred to the jurisdiction of medicine. “What was called the ‘nervous system’ in the eighteenth century was a codification of the domain of the flesh.” And around 1850, psychiatry “ceased being the analysis of error, delirium and illusion in order to become the analysis of all the disturbances of instinct.”

The tendency to treat flesh as the cause of sensations and sexual desires and eventually “instincts” influenced colonial anthropological descriptions and the racializations emerging from them. “Race” would emerge as a concept vaguely

¹² Ibid., 179.

¹³ Ibid., 186.

¹⁴ Ibid., 188.

¹⁵ Ibid., 202. My italics.

related to instincts, similarly imagined as indwelling in the flesh.¹⁶ Like the sexualized body, the racialized body was identified with carnality — discredited as flesh — it is not surprising that postcolonial discourses tend to focus exclusively in its deconstruction. But flesh has also been praised as that which exceeds and can unsettle the limiting frameworks of Cartesian discourses and their objectifications.

Excessive Flesh

Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *The Visible and the Invisible* remains a crucial reference in discussions of the flesh in continental philosophy.¹⁷ It tried to overcome the limitations arising from taking consciousness as a point of departure and from understanding knowledge as the pursuit of an autonomous subject set up above the world it surveys. It is impossible to capture here the subtleties of Merleau-Ponty's account of flesh, one that relies on nuanced language and style. Instead I offer a few notes about his remarkable use of "flesh," particularly when compared to the uses that concerned Foucault.

Merleau-Ponty described "flesh" as the very relationship between the body and the world — indeed as the condition of possibility of corporeality as such. He proposed that bodies perceive things because they share with them their sensible nature, their visibility — the flesh. Thus, in contrast to the idea of flesh as an invisible cause operating within bodies, Merleau-Ponty's descriptions focus on outward movements, "coiling" from the body toward the world and from the world back to the body — as dynamic processes of corporeal constitution. "Bursting forth of the mass of the body toward things...this magical relation, this pact between them and me according to which I lend them my body in order that they inscribe upon it and give me their resemblance, this fold...."¹⁸ This "intertwining" between the flesh of the body and the flesh of the world is not merely a fusion between them. Merleau-Ponty insists that the sensing and the sensed never fully coincide; there is always a "lining of invisibility" in the visible, there is always opacity in all things.

In common parlance, flesh evokes materiality. But Merleau-Ponty wanted to distance the notion from prevailing understandings of "matter." "The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance," he writes. He seems to be wrestling with

¹⁶ See for example, Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, trans. Timothy Campbell (University of Minnesota Press, 2008). and Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995).

¹⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1968).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

the logic of a Cartesian dualism that would immediately cast his “flesh” as “matter” as the very opposite of rationality — as simply dead stuff. Thus he reaches back briefly, though enticingly, to pre-Cartesian metaphysics. To designate flesh, he states,

we should need the old term ‘element,’ in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a general thing, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being. The flesh is in this sense an ‘element’ of Being.¹⁹

Flesh stands between the individual — a body at a particular moment in space-time — and the idea, connecting them from within. This gesture toward an elemental grounding of philosophy could productively shift ontological frameworks, provoking more rigorous attention to the material character of relations. Merleau-Ponty’s caution against simply equating flesh with one side of the Cartesian dualism would be crucial for such a project. I will return to this point. Yet some of the best-known criticisms of Merleau-Ponty’s project focus on the dangers not of reductive readings of flesh as dead matter, but rather of reading flesh as more than flesh — as soul or spirit.

Jean Luc Nancy associates the notion of flesh with ontotheology, a symptom of that desire for presence that postmodern philosophy is intent on diagnosing and dispelling, if and when possible.²⁰ They read Merleau-Ponty’s work as an example of this tendency. Invocations of flesh signal for them the persisting influence of Christian ideas about incarnation, specifically of the claims to immediacy of divine presence and the absorption or sublimation of flesh into the domain of the spirit. Flesh is associated with the possibility of immediate contact and thus full knowledge of the world, the self, or God — true and absolute sense. Arguing against such metaphysical accounts, and their tendency to absorb bodies, and thus pain and suffering into higher spiritual meanings, Nancy declares: “the ‘passion’ of the ‘flesh,’ is finished and this is why the word body ought to succeed the word flesh, which was always overabundant, nourished by sense, and egological.”²¹

¹⁹ Ibid., 139.

²⁰ Jacques Derrida, *On Touching--Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005).

²¹ Jean Luc Nancy, *The Sense of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 149. Nancy’s *Corpus* builds on Merleau-Ponty’s work, although it rarely mentions it.

The misgivings about Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, extended to philosophies of flesh in general, were that flesh would end up on the other side of the dualism, as another term for Spirit or Reason. Where flesh stands for some other source of meaning — whether theological (as the locus of spirit) or anthropological (as biological essence) — it may shift the attention away from concrete, finite corporeality just as much as some accounts of the “soul.” The needs and suffering of a body would be explained by appeals to something external to or more fundamental than the body. Such an outcome would undermine the efforts to provide a truly material account of being and relationships — including social, ecological, and economic ones. It would also occlude the limits, vulnerability, fractures, and loss of bodies, which must be at the heart of an ethics of corporeality. However, it does not follow that flesh is necessarily “nourished by sense” or “ecological.” On the contrary, the worldly relationality evoked by Merleau-Ponty's flesh can hardly be reduced to spiritualization and may instead ground a rethinking of bodies and materiality beyond the dichotomy of dead matter and absolute spirit. But such a thought would have to wrestle more explicitly with social constraints to carnal flourishing.

Racialized Flesh

The critiques of flesh in continental philosophy — as the focus of sin and thus irremediably moralistic or as the locus of an incarnational imaginary and thus inherently spiritualizing — are crucial for evaluating the promise of a critical ethics based on a carnal corporeality. The concept of carnality in Caribbean thought is not fully disentangled from these interpretations. The assumption that carnality is the place of sensibility, instinct, and erotic desire is contiguous with its representation as the underlying principle and cause of sinfulness, translated and displaced as flesh became a category of medical and colonial discourses. In his commentary on Édouard Glissant's work, Michael Dash comments: “For a long time, the Caribbean has been *trapped* in a discourse that accentuates carnality.” While he does not distinguish clearly between body and flesh, Dash refers to the feminization of the Caribbean in relation to the European metropolis. Thus assuming common associations between flesh, sensuality, femininity, and race. But although the use of flesh needs to be understood in relation to these complex discursive connections and displacements, it can hardly be reduced to these traits.

Franz Fanon's contribution to the discussion in his essay “The Lived Experience of the Black” complexifies the discussion of corporeality by engaging it as part of his incisive critique of colonial racialization. One of the most remarkable features of this essay is its style. It uses corporeal language to draw

the reader into the disturbing experiences it describes, namely how discourses mark, wound, incite, elevate, or shatter bodies. Through a non-linear narrative, we see the author performing, as it were; he tries on himself alternative modes of being, adopting attitudes other thinkers recommend, and eventually showing where those alternatives break down. This writer inhabits the texts he reads and writes about.

The argument in his essay can be divided into two distinct parts: one relates to European discourses, the other to Caribbean ones. In the first part he adopts and shows the limits of Merleau-Ponty's account of the constitution of the body in relation to the world. Fanon tries to perform the role Merleau-Ponty imagines for any human being: "I came to the world imbued with the will to find meaning in things, my spirit filled with the desire to attain the source of the world," Fanon affirms. But the harmonious aims of a subject in the world expressed by that statement are at odds with the society in which it seeks actualization. The objectifying phrase "Look, a Negro!" has already been uttered—at the beginning of the essay, before anything else is said, as well as before the beginning of the lives of Fanon and his readers. The statement captures, fixes, seals identity into a "crushing object hood," before any encounter takes place. For the racialized person, the desire to "attain the source of the world" always arrives too late. But it is a change in context — from Martinique to France — that sets its dynamics evidently in motion. The Martinique of Fanon's youth was hardly outside the reach of the colonial systems, yet it is the encounter with the racializing gaze that reveals for Fanon colonialism's most intimate, embodied dimensions: "And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. The real world challenged my claims."²² His encounters with others were mediated by elaborate discursive systems, racist mythologies of primitivism, savagery, and biological deficiency.

While Merleau-Ponty described flesh as the connective and co-constitutive *tissue* between body and things, the site of reversibility between seeing and seen, Fanon describes a body seen and being *woven* "out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories," a site of alienation.²³ All this stood in the way of his attempts to relate meaningfully with the world he now inhabited. In an instant the weight of centuries of such stories falls on one person. Under that weight, the sense of a body composed organically in relation to the world, the "corporeal schema" just crumbles.

Another schema becomes visible: one woven by racism. And Fanon laments, "There are times when the black man is locked into his body." A self trapped in

²² Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 110.

²³ *Ibid.*, 111.

a body? The statement expresses an idea related to what Foucault described as having the flesh “pinned to the body.” Foucault described the effects of relentless examination of the body as one in which flesh seen merely as the site to unruly sensuality and instincts — the cause of degeneracy — is “incorporated.” In contrast, Fanon describes the problem as being locked in the body. Still the racialized body to which Fanon refers is defined in colonial contexts as flesh conceived as the cause of degeneracy, just as in the discourses Foucault examines. Despite their differences, both formulations seem to trouble easy appeals to the body as sources of knowledge that could counter social narratives. Even though the image of a self (or soul) trapped in a body may seem archaic, the trope of confinement persists. Mayra Santos-Febres adopts this same language to say that still in the twenty-first century, it is as if we, women of the Caribbean, could not leave the narrow cell of our bodies.²⁴ What Fanon and Santos-Febres express is not a longing for an interior, spiritual self, hidden in the body, to which one could turn to find true, unmediated knowledge or absolute sense. On the contrary, the point is that as bodies we are visible and exposed, and societies learn to use that visibility to regulate relations to the world. What these thinkers lament is being blocked from the kinds of relations they need for the becoming of their flesh, indeed for positive incarnations.

The second part of Fanon’s essay is a critique of strategies intended to *counter* colonial narratives and their demeaning representations of blackness. For this Fanon focused on the works of Négritude poets, especially Senegalese Leopold Senghor and Martinican Aimé Césaire. The poets were part of an international movement that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, claimed what they assumed to be African cultural and aesthetic values.²⁵

Fanon cites Césaire’s cosmological appeals to the flesh in his celebrated *Return to the Native Land*, where he praises the people as being:

truly the eldest sons of the world
open to all the breaths of the world
meeting-place of all the winds of the world
undrained bed of all the waters of the world
spark of the sacred fire of the World

²⁴ Mayra Santos Febres, *Sobre piel y papel*.

²⁵ The movement had already started in Puerto Rico and Cuba in the 1920s, with poets like Luis Palés Matos and Nicolás Guillén. By the 1930s it had taken ground in the Caribbean, and among black intellectuals in the United States and France. The celebrated poet of Harlem Renaissance, Langston Hughes, translated Nicolás Guillén’s poetry into English, and the Senegalese Léopold Senghor translated Langston Hughes’ poetry into French.

flesh of the flesh of the world, throbbing with the very movement of the world!²⁶

In Césaire we find again the idea of flesh as a site or means of connection with the world. We observed before that for Merleau-Ponty the flesh was the medium and condition of a relation to the world that he also described as the “flesh of the world.” But for Césaire that world is encountered specifically in his native land, to which he says, “Your mud enters in the composition of my flesh,” as he declares the end of the days of dead flesh.²⁷ He imagines giving himself, plunging into the flesh of the world and receiving an embrace that links him to the world.²⁸

Fanon was clearly troubled by all this. It reminded him of colonial anthropologies that exoticized African culture as a source of primitive religion, animism and ritualized sex. Fanon was imagining the European gaze. Talk of the elements — winds, water, fire, *flesh* — immediately sparked fears of a primitivism imagined as the spiritualization of the merely material. And Fanon would have none of it! He aspired to be a man among men. Indulging in such ecstatic dreams, seeking wisdom in an imagined ancestral culture, or legitimacy in a community of blood relations was to accept representations and assumptions that had to be challenged.

Fanon’s reading of Césaire’s poetics is problematic inasmuch as it reduces those poetics to a simple denial of rationality or a naïve appeal to bonds of blood. But warnings are crucial. Surely, we cannot afford to adopt a flesh defined as the substance of primitive impulses, a material element assumed to be more securely attached to dark bodies than to lighter ones. We cannot ignore the colonial inflections of flesh, even in affirmative depictions. More important, appeals to a cosmic flesh could take on problematic metaphysical overtones, like those to which I alluded before, where flesh is implicitly spiritualized. However, I wonder if the pain caused by the colonial logic, and the fear of reproducing it, has led postcolonial studies to develop a kind of allergy to *any* talk of flesh or earth, instead focusing mostly on social and discursive dimensions of corporeality. In running away from flesh in search of a truly liberated body, crucial insights might be lost.

²⁶ Césaire, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal*, cited in Fanon 124.

²⁷ Aimé Césaire, *Cahier D'un Retour Au Pays Natal* (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1983), 22.

²⁸ “enroule-toi, vent, autour de ma nouvelle croissance...je te livre ma conscience et son rythme de chair...lie ma noire vibration au nombril même du monde (64-64). See also *Ibid.*, 47.

Carnal Longings

As these debates illustrate, even when the debates do not appeal to religious notions about body and soul, the challenges of engaging the body in ways that do not reduce it to dead matter, moral corruptibility, or the promise of absolute knowledge or spiritual presence have not disappeared. The important liberationist aim to offer an integral anthropology in order to place material human necessities as a central concern for philosophical discussion entails not only the deconstruction of received dualisms but also an articulation of the many dimensions of the body's constitutive relation to the world. The notion of flesh can help foreground the materiality of such relationships, to see the corporeal intertwining of discursive, ecological, and all social practices.

This does not imply that flesh as a category is any less shaped by discourse than body. To the contrary, the fact that flesh has been such an ambiguous notion in Western discourses suggests that it names important assumptions and values about corporeal materiality — even if only implicitly, through vague associations that surface as negative affective reactions to the notion. The associations between flesh and materiality, sexuality, and degeneracy, for instance, offer significant insights about what is considered problematic or threatening in Western ideas about corporeality and its social dimensions. For thinkers wrestling with the legacy of destructive views of racialized bodies, evaluating carnal corporeality entails not only exploring that history and its persistent effects, but also analyzing how that history has influenced and limited our own thought about bodies. What corporeal dimensions are still foreclosed? How can contemporary discussions of corporeality accentuate its materiality, including the materialization of social arrangements at the level of the body, in addition to related discussions of the body as a visible sign?

This would imply seeing in flesh not a condemnable corruptibility but undeniable vulnerability, a source of transformation that is not reducible to absolute spiritualization. When speaking about the spiritualizing tendencies of some appeals to the flesh, I noted the risks of representing flesh as more than flesh. But I do not mean to suggest that we can or should strive to know something that is purely flesh, perhaps even purely material, and nothing more. I wonder if there is such a thing. The promise of flesh might lie precisely in helping us conceive things as irreducibly material and yet neither passive nor corrupting, as intimately in our bodies and yet also in dynamic relation to the eco-social processes of the world.

Carnality and mud, water and soil: we cannot avoid these themes when seeking better ways to understand corporeality. Appeals to a common, soil-less humanity or abstract notions of culture are not enough to ground visions of a

livable planet. Thought of human bodies necessarily moves us toward broader relationality with the non-human. We might also need to acknowledge the poverty of our philosophical language and embrace poetic dimensions of thought. I envision a reintegration between Fanon's postcolonial critique and elements of the very poetic sources he rejected. I am especially intrigued by the poetics of Caribbean thought, that while being aware of the intimate reach of colonial and racist ideologies, explored the links between flesh and the land, the elements, and the sea. Their poetics of flesh would be read not simply as direct and thus problematic metaphysical descriptions, but rather to ponder again the potential of attempts to perform in language what we seek to understand and envision in the world as another productive element of carnal thought. That is to interpret such poetic dimensions complex flows of carnal exchange as words that "burst forth" from the body toward the world, seeking to inscribe the world with affirmations of corporeal possibilities and longings.

Cited Works

- Césaire, Aimé. *Cahier D'un Retour Au Pays Natal*. Paris: Présence Africane, 1983.
- Derrida, Jacques. *On Touching--Jean-Luc Nancy*. Translated by Christine Irizarry. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Dussel, Enrique. *Ética De La Liberación: En La Edad De La Globalización Y De La Exclusión*. Madrid: Trotta, 2002.
- Esposito, Roberto. *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*. Translated by Timothy Campbell: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.
- Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press, 1967.
- Foucault, Michel. *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège De France 1974-1975*. New York: Picador, 2003.
- . *Power/ Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Visible and the Invisible*. Translated by Alphonso Lingis. Evanston, Il: Northwestern University Press, 1968.
- Nancy, Jean Luc. *The Sense of the World*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.
- Stoler, Ann Laura. *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1995.

Héctor Samour (San Salvador, El Salvador)

LIBERATION AND INTERCULTURALITY

At present, we are facing a crisis of thought and of homogenizing and totalizing discourses, with the result that we are more conscious that it is no longer possible to control the world by means of hermetically sealed theoretical systems. Therefore, the construction of a renewed critical and liberating thought, worthy of our times, cannot consist in the contraposition to the dominant/hegemonic universalistic discourse, another discourse, every bit as universalistic and closed. As things stand, it is practically impossible to propose definite solutions to the grave problems, which affect humanity, or to respond in an absolute way to the so-called ultimate questions concerning human reality in accordance with the Kantian questions. Any possible response to them will always be historically and hermeneutically located, and it will be, therefore, provisional, and subject to the changing requirements of historical reality.¹

This leads to the necessity, when it comes to doing philosophy, of affording priority to the concrete realities of the historical world – to praxis –, in opposition to any unifying and universalizing discourse. We may be in agreement with postmodern philosophy when it speaks in terms of the “end of history”, so long as we take this to mean nothing more than the limit of universal history, that is, the limit of the grand meta-narrative of (capitalist) Eurocentric Modernity, and, as a consequence, try to design new liberating, discursive strategies which part from an epistemology that opens itself up to reality, and which gives primacy to it rather than its interpretation and speculation about meaning, thereby recognizing the present crisis of theory as a crisis of speculative and logocentric reason.

The problem with the postmodern discourses is that they reveal obvious contradictions. However positive might be their deconstruction of the modernist aspects of certain philosophies which still move within the ambits of that paradigm, their renunciation of normativity in the name of diversity and difference is inconsequential. As various authors have demonstrated, in their option for incommensurate “linguistic games” they have already

¹ Cf. J. A. Estrada, *La pregunta por Dios*, Desclée de Brouwer, Bilbao, 2005, p. 407.

expressed a normative decision and a metaphysic.² At the same time, the renunciation of normative narratives is itself questionable, given that the same postmodern discourse not only constitutes its own narrative but also represents, to a certain extent, the continuation of the modernist narrative.³

The most serious difficulty with postmodernist thought is that the social, political and cultural conditions that underlie its discourse are the privileged realities which present themselves in post-industrial capitalist societies, and which are not enjoyed, nor shared by the majority of human beings on the planet.⁴ On the other hand, their critique of strong ideologies, ideological totalitarianism, and religious fundamentalism translates, in practice, into an absence of ideologies, values and convictions, as a corollary to their outright rejection of every threat to difference and dissent. However, from here, it is very easy to pass over to ideological travestism and idle chatter, and to allow one to be carried along by the ideological propaganda of the neoliberal empire. It is certainly true that the sense of tolerance and the respect for pluralism proper to postmodern philosophy is an important element in the construction of open and democratic societies. But by renouncing out of hand any and every possible project of liberation and the utopia of an emancipated society, and putting into question the very possibility of a common articulation which might be determined by the creation of a normative that promotes a real democracy, capable of guaranteeing the satisfaction of personal and social necessities⁵, they all too easily fall into the trap of individual and collective pragmatism.⁶

² Cf. O. Kozlarek, *Crítica, acción y modernidad*, Textos Devenires, Universidad Michoacana de San Miguel Hidalgo, México, 2004, p. 20; J. Conill, *El crepúsculo de la metafísica*, Anthropos, Barcelona, pp. 11-28. J. A. Estrada, *Dios en las tradiciones filosóficas*, t. 1, Trotta, Madrid, p. 1994, p. 11.

³ Cf. G. Lipovetsky, *L'ère du vida. Essais sur l'individualisme contemporain*, Gallimard, París, 1983, p.127; O. Kozlarek, opus cit., p. 20; T. Eagleton, *Las ilusiones del posmodernismo*, Paidós, Barcelona, 1977, p. 102; F. Jameson, *Teoría de la postmodernidad*, Trotta, Madrid, 1996, p. 27; Z. Bauman, *La posmodernidad y sus descontentos*, Akal, Madrid, 2001, p. 102.

⁴ Cf. Lipovetsky, *L'ère du vida. Essais sur l'individualisme contemporain*, opus cit.; F. Jameson, "Postmodernismo y sociedad de consumo", from *La posmodernidad*, Kairós, Barcelona, 1985, p. 167; J. L. Rodríguez García, *Crítica de la razón posmoderna*, Biblioteca Nueva, Madrid, 2006, p. 75.

⁵ Cf. F. Féher, "La condición política posmoderna", from *Políticas de la posmodernidad*, Península, Barcelona, 1989, p. 152; Z. Bauman, *En busca de lo político*, FCE, México, p. 131.

⁶ Cf. J.A. Estrada, *Dios en las tradiciones filosóficas*, Trotta, Madrid, 1996, p. 232.

The political posture promoted by postmodernism turns out to be paradoxical at this very moment of a renewed consciousness of the challenges planted by the denial of human rights, the structural injustice of the present world order, and the necessity to potentiate and promotes a liberating process. It is also paradoxical that at the very moment when a de facto occidentalization of the world is being brought to a head, which threatens human cultural diversity in a very real way, one might deny the possibility of critical reflection, and the possibility of opening horizons, and establishing the bases of interpretation and normativity, which is one of the central tasks of philosophy. In opposition to postmodernism, we must affirm, given the gravity of the present crisis, that it is not possible to renounce two elements, which are, at least in theory, co-substantial with enlightened modernity: rational criticism of the existent, and the transformation of praxis by way of the rationally known. We cannot deny the capacity of reason to form the basis of understanding and action, even though, today, we are all too conscious that whatsoever rationality that might be introduced into the historical process will be the product of a conditioned and limited reason, with no transcendental guarantees, and no final certainties.⁷

At the same time, the post-metaphysical turn of some contemporary philosophies is oriented towards the real, and they acknowledge the present theoretical crisis as a crisis of speculative reason, while, at the same time, endeavoring to rescue the modernist project with its universal, normative pretensions by attempting to base them in the factic recognition of a world society. Examples of these philosophies would be the discursive ethics proposed by Habermas and Apel, which elaborate a normative theory with pretensions of universality, incardinating practical reason in the rational structures of communicative action. Where Kant recurred to God to guarantee the ultimate validity of rationality and moral obligatedness, these proposals advocate normativity rooted in the subjectivity of the human being, that is, in his universal linguistic rationality, which provides the foundations for the ideals of Truth-Liberty-Justice, with the purpose of justifying the conditions that make argumentative and public communication possible. However, what is questioned is whether the universalism they postulate is genuinely universal, and whether the manner of attaining it

⁷ Cf. H. Samour, “El significado de la filosofía de la liberación hoy”, *Diálogo filosófico* (65), 2006, p. 243.

represents the best route towards the integration of the Other⁸, especially of the socio-culturally excluded and of the oppressed by the system.⁹ It is also questioned whether they fall back or not on Eurocentrism and Occidentalism in their starting points and in their implicit assumptions.

In reality, the modernist discourse is not to be deconstructed immanently, neither by way of the simple construction of alternative discursive formations, nor by means of simple interpretation. Ignacio Ellacuría once said that neither the mere refutation of ideologies nor the construction of a new ideology are, in themselves, sufficient to change a social order, and that the promotion of purely ideological change can become into the excuse whereby the real change does not come about.¹⁰ To this extent, postmodernism is mistaken. The real existent discourses always refer to a dimension which is, already, no longer merely discursive or linguistic, but the realm of historical praxis with all its complexity and contradictions, in particular those generated by the social conditions of power which generate and multiply the discourses. In practice, the discourses can always be divided into at least two types: that of those who have power, and that of those who don't.¹¹ Besides, there are individual and/or collective actions which lack systematic, discursive representations, but which emerge as the unconscious resistance to the relations of power and domination which the official discourses legitimate and reproduce.

From the ideas above, we can conclude that a critical strategy for configuring a critique of globalization must start from the negativity of historical praxis, and from the analysis of the political, social and cultural processes and dynamics of the multiple forms of resistance expressed against the discourse and the uniforming practices of global capitalist modernity. This is not about projecting a normative horizon *a priori*, nor about starting from philosophical discourses with pretensions to universality, but about elaborating a theory and a normativity that accompanies and establishes a

⁸ O. Kozlerek, opus cit., p. 21.

⁹ Cf. E. Dussel (editor), *Debate en torno a la ética del discurso de Apel. Diálogo filosófico Norte-Sur desde América Latina*, Siglo XXI, México, 1994; A. Sánchez Vázquez, *La filosofía al final del milenio*, El Colegio de Sinaloa, México, 1998, pp. 18 f.

¹⁰ Cf. I. Ellacuría, "Función liberadora de la filosofía", from *Veinte de años de historia en El Salvador*, UCA Editores, San Salvador, p. 114.

¹¹ Cf. J. C. Scott, *Los dominados y el arte de la resistencia*, ERA, México, 2000.

compromise with the battles of resistance against the “dominant narratives” and their institutional objectifications.¹²

The error of some philosophers has been that, in their eagerness to see themselves as liberators, they have tended to consider themselves capable of contributing to liberation all on their own, supposing it to be somehow feasible to construct a liberating discourse without reference to any liberating praxis, and without the necessity for philosophy to join itself to a liberative social praxis.¹³ This is an error which has its roots in the attribution of especially liberating characteristics to this type of thought, with an excessive emphasis on its autonomy, in much the same way as they tend to centre on the person in his individual form rather than on the person in his socio-historical context. On the contrary, the actual reality of Latin America, and the periphery in general, lead us to postulate that philosophical reflection, if it is to have a critical and liberating character, can only be effective if it is incarnated in liberating practices which, in principle, are independent from it.¹⁴

With this in mind, Ignacio Ellacuría proposes a way of philosophizing oriented towards the historical, the factic and the concrete, attempting to apply an historical hermeneutic, distinct in character from an hermeneutic of meaning along the lines of Gadamer and Heidegger, but similar to the type of hermeneutics practiced by Benjamin, Adorno and Jameson.¹⁵ The level of meaning Ellacuría aims at, and clarifies in his interpretative works remits, not to the finite character of individuality, nor to the originating unveiling-occluding of Being (as in Heidegger), nor to the happening of the tradition in comprehension (as in Gadamer), but to the level of the historically real: to the catastrophic situation of the present epoch. As a consequence, what we are dealing with here is an hermeneutic task oriented by an explicit interest in the promotion of processes of practico-political emancipation in an attempt to cast light on the the political practices of the oppressed social collectives in as much as they are the potential subjects of a politically transforming activity or the generators of a critical comprehension of the existing society.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ I. Ellacuría, “Función liberadora de la filosofía”, opus cit., p. 108.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

¹⁵ Cf. J. M. Romero, *Hacia una hermenéutica dialéctica*, Síntesis, Madrid, 2005.

This is precisely the fundamental purpose of what Ellacuría calls the *method of historicization of concepts*¹⁶, which is configured by way of an hermeneutic that primarily does not search for the comprehension of the meaning of the interpretations, ideologies and cultural practices, but of the real social conditions that make them possible. Its foundation lies in the Zubirian concept of *sentient intelligence*, but considered, not in its abstract form, but from the point of view of the concrete, material and historical form in which human beings apprehend and face reality with the end of assuring their survival and possibilitating their lives' full development.¹⁷

From this perspective, meaning is a condition of the real with respect to human being, and is shaped by the specific relationships which finite and concrete human beings establish, or have established, with encompassing reality. Being, or meaning are, in this way, rooted in reality, and for this reason there can be no real change of meaning without a real change of reality. In other words "to believe that by changing the interpretation of things, we change the things themselves, or, at least, the deep consciousness of our installation in the world is a grave epistemological error and a profound, ethical breach".¹⁸ Mere changes in the interpretations of meaning and, inclusively, the pure, objective analyses of social and historical reality are not even real changes of meaning but in the majority of cases, mere changes in formulation.

For Ellacuría, the important thing is to raise the question of meaning starting from the concrete practices of individuals and collectives, which is where the meaning of reality radically originates. "Only by parting from this confrontation with reality and this compliance with reality does the question of meaning have any real relevance."¹⁹ Obviously, the meaning of reality is important, because, as a matter of fact, human beings need to

¹⁶ Cf. "La historización del concepto de propiedad como principio de desideologización", *ECA* (335-336) 1976; "La historización del bien común y los derechos humanos en una sociedad dividida", from E. Támez y S. Trinidad (eds), *Capitalismo: violencia y antividia*, T. II, EDUCA, San José, Costa Rica, 1977; "La historización de los derechos humanos desde los pueblos oprimidos y las mayorías populares", *ECA* (502), 1990. The three articles can be found in I. Ellacuría, *Escritos filosóficos III*, UCA Editores, San Salvador, 2001.

¹⁷ I. Ellacuría, "Hacia una fundamentación del método teológico latinoamericano", *ECA* (322-323), 1975, p. 419.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, p. 420.

¹⁹ *Ibid*.

make sense of the meaning of things in the social context in which they are immersed. But what needs to be made clear is that this real need for meaning, just as meaning itself, is inscribed in the dimension of the real, and on the real-historic plane, and not the reverse; that is to say, not on the purely interpretative or conceptual plane, but on that of historical praxis, which is the fundamental axis from which the former emerges.

From this point of view, the hermeneutic circularity, to which we must pay attention when it comes to constructing a critical, liberating, philosophical way of thinking, is primarily a real, historical and social circularity. “The fundamental circularity which is given inclusively in human knowledge – without going into other dimensions of human activity – is not that of a theoretical horizon, and of a theoretical contents, understood from such horizon, but that of a historico-praxical horizon, and of definite socio-historical structures, which flow from it, and at the same time reconform it, whenever there is a real transformation of the concrete realities.”²⁰ The circularity is, therefore, primarily physical, and it is already so from the point of departure of all comprehension and all human activity, in the same way as in the process by which the concrete determinations of historical reality are constituted.

If the idealistic hermeneutic of sense conceives the historical method as the search for the meaning of historical occurring, and of the interpretations of the same, the Ellacurian, historico-realist hermeneutic attempts to adequate itself to history as a real, encompassing process of human reality, personally and structurally considered. “As against the concept of history as an historical record with its own proper hermeneutic, we propose the concept of history as *historical action*, as a real historical process, with the social and historical hermeneutic that corresponds to it.”²¹ This last point implies to return to history, which does not merely consist in the methodological recovery of historical data – which is always necessary if we are to avoid falling into the traps of fantasy and speculation –, but in returning to history to capture the sense of actions and interpretations from historical praxis, as the primary place of verification of the interpretations and concepts.

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 423.

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 424.

His primary objective, therefore, is not meaning and the comprehension of sense, but predominantly the transformation of historical reality, taking into account that which every interpretation and all comprehension owe to the concrete socio-historical conditions of a given society. And this “as much in the case of the interpreted as in the case of the interpreter. Which does not, in itself, exclude methodologically hermeneutic techniques, but which, rather, subordinates them within a framework, more general and profounder than the hermeneutic task.”²² If the idealist hermeneutic believes in a depth change of the real by means of the changing of ideas and formulations, the historical hermeneutic assumes a realistic position, which understands that it is not possible to bring about a real change in human beings and their ideas without changing the real conditions of their existence.

In accordance with the above, the *hermeneutics of historization* consists in going to history, understood in its formal character of *praxis*, in order to critically elucidate the meanings expressed in the interpretations and the discourses that legitimate the relations of power and domination, unmasking their universalistic claims, and making evident the real conditions and the social interests that sustain them. This implies a praxical verification, which attempts to show what is revealed, or concealed, by the formulations and the abstract approach, in order to examine the real conditions in the absence of which that which his proclaimed as real or just on the theoretical or ideal plane has no reality.²³ Consequently, it does not claim to realize a punctual or de facto verification in the empiricist sense, so much as to carry out a test that looks to contrast that which is claimed ideally in abstract principle with the historical process of a determined society in a sufficient period of time, with the aim of measuring the objective results of that process and its correspondence or not with that which is claimed ideally as real, good or true.

Historization is exercised and practiced as an element of a practico-theoretical process oriented towards historical liberation, and presupposes a previous option for the victims and the excluded from the system, and all system. On a practical level, it attempts to support the multiple battles of resistance and emancipation which are being brought to a head at present

²² *Ibid*, p. 415.

²³ Cf. “La historización del bien común y de los derechos humanos en una sociedad dividida”, *opus cit.*, pp. 88-94.

in the peripheries of the system, with the end of achieving a socio-historical transformation of a structural character which might permit the superative negation of the negative, and the negativity, which is the actual state of things as they stand.²⁴

Ellacuría is conscious that the function exercised by historization, by means of ideological criticism, is not sufficient in itself to effectively accompany a liberating process, and, for this reason, insists in the need for philosophy to also make a creative function in the proposal of horizons and theories, in the design of models, and in the theoretical fundamentation of factible and viable solutions capable of sustaining an alternative to capitalist civilization. Specifically, Ellacuría refers to the need to elaborate a critique of human intelligence and understanding (epistemology); a general theory of reality (metaphysics); an open and critical theory of man, society and history (anthropology); a theory of values and the meaning of things (ethics); and a philosophical reflection regarding the transcendent.²⁵

From Ellacuría's perspective, it is not so much a matter of creating a closed system, capable of affording definite answers to these problems, as it is of constructing a critical and open discourse, whose point of departure is not an ideal or something previously esteemed as positive, but the negativity of common evil, which is manifested in the historical reality of Latin America (and the periphery in general), and in the responses, and implicit arguments, which are consciously, or unconsciously, assumed by the diverse social groups practicing resistance and proponing liberation.

Raúl Fonet-Betancourt has also expressed the need to prioritize a theory of human being, or an alternative anthropology, capable of responding to and neutralizing the anthropological change propitiated by the "spirit" of neoliberal globalization as the generating principle of a specific way of being and living, which is based on the primacy of the economical-rentable, on the centrality of the market, and on the overriding need for inter-individual competition. The urgency of elaborating this anthropology is rooted in the transmutations that such "spirit" is bringing about in "the very substance of human being", and in the "referential horizon for an under-

²⁴ Cf. I. Ellacuría, "Historización de los derechos humanos desde los pueblos oprimidos y las mayorías populares", opus cit., p. 438.

²⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 106 f.

standing of that which we really must be and how we must live together in our world”.²⁶

The principal difference between the proposals of Ellacuría and Fernet-Betancourt is that the latter proposes the constitution of a contextual anthropology of an intercultural character which takes on board, and articulates, the diversity of the forms of cultural comprehension of the human, parting from a communication between the contextually cultural processes of the world as a whole, but affording a special place in this dialogue to the critical and liberating traditions of the culturally silenced in the actual context of globalization.²⁷ From this perspective, Ellacuría would suffer from an intercultural deficit in his project of liberation, given that, despite his affirmation and sustention of the contextual in the historical character of philosophical reflection as a theoretical moment of the historical process, he continues to privilege a notion of philosophical reflection, proper to the Western philosophical tradition, as an eminently theoretical task, requiring a peculiar capacity and preparation which cannot be substituted for by “any willful compromise, nor by the exercise of social praxis, no matter how clarified”.²⁸

Despite the fact that this last thesis affords Ellacuría the possibility of claiming for philosophy a critical distance from the dominant praxis – however correct this might be in its the fundamentals – and also affords the possibility of proposing that the philosophers lead a Socratic existence, forever pointing out the deficiencies in doing and knowing, his proposals would contain the latent idea that the liberative task of philosophy consists in the realization or incarnation of “the philosophy” in the world, without taking into account the fact that the contexts from which one philosophizes are contexts charged with interculturality.²⁹

²⁶ R. Fernet-Betancourt, “La inmigración en el contexto de la globalización como diálogo intercultural”, from *Interculturalidad y filosofía en América Latina*, Concordia (36), Aachen, 2003, p. 145.

²⁷ R. Fernet-Betancourt, “Interculturalidad: asignatura pendiente de la filosofía latinoamericana”, from *Interculturalidad y filosofía en América latina*, Concordia (36), Aachen, 2003, pp. 132-133.

²⁸ I. Ellacuría, “Función liberadora de la filosofía”, opus cit., p. 113.

²⁹ Cf. R. Fernet-Betancourt, “La interculturalidad como alternativa a la violencia”, from *Filosofar para nuestro tiempo en clave intercultural*, Concordia (37), Aachen, 2004, p. 100.

It's important to clarify that intercultural philosophy does not seek to rupture with the contextual philosophy developed up to now in Latin America, and much less with that of the philosophy of liberation, so much as to radicalize its focus, in order to overcome its deficiencies with respect to the perception of the intercultural reality of the continent. Here we are talking about a transformation of the actual tradition of Latin American contextual philosophy, by means of the re-ubication of such philosophy within the given "multiple cultural matrices" and the freeing it of its "partial ubication in Latin America" so it can "contextualize itself within all the cultural contexts of the same".³⁰ To this extent, the criticism that Fonet-Betancourt makes of the philosophy of liberation is not directed at the contextuality of its way of doing philosophy, as much as at the partiality with which it has "contextualized and perceived our cultural diversity".³¹ The exercise of intercultural philosophy claims, in this sense, to philosophize "from diversity, and not merely be philosophy about cultural diversity".³²

R. Fonet-Betancourt considers the transformation, or the intercultural reorientation of philosophy to be necessary due to the hegemony of monoculturality in Latin America, which expresses itself on every level, and which translates into the exclusion and marginalization, not only of other ideas and cosmovisions, or world views, but also to the marginalization of alternative contexts or possible worlds in our continent. To this extent, intercultural philosophy sees itself as a theoretical framework for the elaboration of a political philosophy, which responds to the "uniformizing challenge of neo-liberal globalization".³³ In the last analysis, it aims to contribute to the achievement of a truly human convivence, of a "convivient humanity", by means of "the task of the creating, on a planetary scale, a culture of convivence in solidarity, which overcomes the asymmetries and inequalities in every context of human relationships, as much on the personal level as in the international field, which might, in this way, be the

³⁰ R. Fonet-Betancourt, "La filosofía y la interculturalidad from América Latina", from *Interculturalidad y filosofía en América latina*, Concordia (36), Aachen, 2003, pp. 110-111.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 111. See also R. Fonet-Betancourt, *Crítica intercultural de la filosofía latinoamericana actual*, Trotta, Madrid, 2004, pp. 19-75.

³² R. Fonet-Betancourt, "La filosofía y la interculturalidad en América Latina", opus cit., p. 111.

³³ R. Fonet-Betancourt, "Interculturalidad: asignatura pendiente de la filosofía latinoamericana", opus cit., p. 130.

culture of a humanity equilibrated economically and politically, but also affectively, culturally and epistemically”.³⁴

Now then, the proposal for the intercultural transformation of philosophy is not incompatible with Ellacuría’s project of a philosophy of liberation. According to this, the political character which philosophy acquires upon linking itself consciously with historical praxis will make it re-establish theoretically its proper foundations, methods, concepts and categories, which is to say, philosophical reflection. Once this reflection assumes the social and political realities that are given historically, as the *loci per excellence* of philosophy, will find it forced, at each moment of the historical process, to creatively formulate the appropriate categories, and to elaborate novel theoretical frameworks in the order of the criticism, analysis, interpretation, valuation and the transformation of said realities.³⁵ This effort does not exclude, therefore, the necessity of seriously assuming the intercultural as an integral part of philosophical reflection.

The above statement allows us to understand that although Ellacuría may indeed have his own, proper cultural point of departure, and his own contextual position, he does not bring them up to the position of a unique paradigm, nor does he make them absolutes. Consequently, he is open to the questioning of his own cultural presuppositions. This implies, initially, openness to the diversity of the cultural formations that are expressed in the intercultural praxis of the continent. In any case, within the Ellacurian philosophical method, priority is given to the reality made present to us in historical praxis, and is to that reality to which we must always return to test the level of logicity and rationality achieved in any specific historical moment. This implies that Ellacuría’s liberating proposal admits diverse forms of philosophising and a diversity of specific philosophies, in the same way as it permits a plurality of discourses and theories, emerging from varied contexts for differing historical stages and situations, without this supposing the rupture of the unity – multiple and complex, but nevertheless unitary – of historical praxis.³⁶

³⁴ R. Fonet-Betancourt, “Rumbos actuales de la filosofía o la necesidad de reorientar la filosofía”, en *Filosofar para nuestro tiempo en clave intercultural*, opus cit., p. 41.

³⁵ Cf. I. Ellacuría, “Función liberadora de la filosofía”, ob.cit., p. 104.

³⁶ Cf. I. Ellacuría, “El objeto de la filosofía”, from *Veinte años de historia en El Salvador (1969-1989)*, UCA Editores, San Salvador, 1990, p. 91.

What matters is the locus from which one chooses to exercise philosophical reflection. Being situated in one place or another at the moment of doing philosophy is one of the facts that most contributes to the differentiation of philosophies. It is not the same thing to philosophize from the sciences, or from language, or from culture, or from personal reality as is to part from historical reality, as Ellacuría proposes. In each case, distinct philosophies would be produced, not only from an ethical but also from the theoretical point of view. For Ellacuría, what is crucial in each historical situation is to opt for the perspective of liberation and liberty, not only because of “that which it contains as an ethical task as the privileged locus of reality and realization” of persons and humanity itself “but for that which it contains in terms of theoretical potential, as much in the creative phase, as in the critical deconstructive phase”.³⁷

³⁷ I. Ellacuría, “Función liberadora de la filosofía”, opus cit., p. 115.

Rolando Vázquez (Middelburg, The Netherlands)

**QUESTIONING PRESENCE:
THE SURVIVAL OF THE PAST IN
WALTER BENJAMIN AND HANNAH ARENDT**

L'absence n'est-elle pas, pour qui aime, la plus certaine, la plus efficace, la plus vivace, la plus indestructible, la plus fidèle des présence?
Marcel Proust, *Les Plaisirs et les Jours*

This article brings to question the modern conception of presence. Modernity's equation between reality and presence excludes from our understanding all the dimensions of time that do not belong to presence, to the present. In Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin we find a thinking that challenges this equation. They both strove for an active relation to history. For them the present is not self-sufficient, rather it is always already an interaction with what has been. The present bears a responsibility towards the past generations. Benjamin's 'dialectical image' and Arendt's notion of 'plurality' exceed the present and reach towards absence. In challenging the parameters of the real as presence, they bring thinking in the vicinity of literature. The ensuing critical gaze is one in which presence is divested from its solidity and appears as a thin veil hovering amid the immensity of time.

The Problem of Presence

Modernity's perception of the real is dominated by the material, by the spatial ordering of actuality, by what is visible in presence (Bergson, 1999, Arendt, 1978). A critique of modernity ought to question the assumption that holds presence as the site of the real. In raising the question of time we want to reveal the limits of presence. We want to challenge the logic of space and the chronological appropriation of time that harness our forms of understanding. The question of time effectuates a displacement of critical thinking from its traditional questioning of rationality. The critiques of reason, frequently, fall back in progressive explanations of history, that is, they appropriate uncritically the temporality that is embedded in the rationality that they are criticising.

Philosophy is not a safe haven in face of the instrumental logic of science and technology. They all pertain to the same historical movement: a historical movement that is characterized by its orientation towards the world of objects, towards presence, and therefore establishes the appearance of the material as the whole of reality.

'The development of the sciences is at the same time their separation from philosophy and the establishment of their independence. This process belongs to the completion of philosophy. Its development is in full swing today in all regions of beings. This development looks like the mere dissolution of philosophy, yet in truth is precisely its completion' (Heidegger, 2000a: 433).

Philosophy opened the question of the 'what', the question that directs our attention towards what is there, what is present, extant. Science appears as a path into the world of things and technology attests the possibility of transformation and manipulation of that world. In this historical movement 'Man' is turned only toward what is present and the presentation of what is present (Heidegger, 2000). The move towards the world of presence not only includes the analysis of what there is but also its transformation and manipulation.

The orientation towards the world of things has been mediated by rationality. Rationality has become the principle of our relation to the world. It not only obtains its legitimacy from the measurable domain of space, but also from its empirical results in the transformation of the world.

'The technological-scientific rationalization ruling the present age justifies itself every day more surprisingly by its immense results. ... Perhaps there is a thinking that is more sober-minded than the incessant frenzy of rationalization and the intoxicating quality of cybernetics. One might aver that it is precisely this intoxication that is extremely irrational' (Heidegger, 2000a: 449).

The rationalization of the world should raise the question of its own limits. The validity claim of reason, its assimilation to truth, its totalising manner of interpreting and representing the world, are irrational in-themselves. The questioning of reason we are aiming at is not about the reversal of reason that is raised in the negative dialectics of Adorno (1973). The limits of rationality showed through negative dialectics are insufficient; rationality can also be contested from the question of time, that is by restricting its claim to totality and demarcating its area of competence, namely:

space. Reason, science and technology could be divested of their claim to hold the truth, the totality of the real.

Proximity denotes the peculiarly modern way of relating to the real, the way it is perceived, approached, transformed and reproduced. We only see what is close at hand. Proximity is our farthest horizon. It blinds us to what is and remains at a distance. What remains absent to our senses, the virtual for Deleuze, 'nothingness' for the early Heidegger, the 'absent' for Blanchot, has been excluded from our imaginary. The worldview achieved in the completion of philosophy, in science and technology is blind to the realm of the 'absent'.

In the rule of presence, space is master. Only what has a place in space or can be spatially represented, is conceivable as real. Even time has been represented in accordance with space (Bergson, 1999). The ensuing representation of the world is one in which language, thought, science and technology create the idea of a totality. The perception that the real coincides with the world of presences, has become itself the principle of reality. When presence becomes the only reference to presence, and claims the real as its domain, simulacra starts. The 'real' has become the image of itself.

Questioning Presence

The presumed soberness of mind and superiority of science become laughable when it does not take the nothing seriously.

Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics"

The nourishing fruit of what is historically understood contains time in its *interior* as a precious but tasteless seed.

Walter Benjamin, "On the Concept of History"

In their thinking, Arendt and Benjamin show a relation to reality that is fundamentally different from the commonly accepted scientific approach. Through our reading, their work stands for a difference between empirical knowledge and thinking, between appropriating and questioning. What is at stake when we approach their way of thinking vis-à-vis scientific knowledge, is our very conception of the real. The panorama of modern sciences has been dominated by a relation to the world in which presence, that is, all

that is present, is upheld to exhaust the real. Presence is for scientific knowledge both its object and source of legitimacy.

'The relation to the world that pervades all the sciences as such lets them ... seek beings themselves in order to make them objects of investigation and to determine their grounds. ... [S]cience is exceptional in that, in a way peculiar to it, it gives the matter itself explicitly and solely the first and last word' (Heidegger, 2000c: 94).

Heidegger's observation shows how the materiality of the object is the ground of the scientific conception of reality and truth. This statement may already sound like a truism. What else can the real be if not that which is objective, that which is present?

Through our encounter with Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin we propose to challenge the modern equation of presence with the real. Their work exemplifies how thinking exceeds the conception of the real as presence. It is noteworthy that questioning presence points already to the question of time. When the real is assumed to be coextensive with, and fully contained within presence, not only is presence raised as an absolute, but so too is the time of presence: the present. The 'scientific' conception of the real excludes from 'reality' all the dimensions of time that do not belong to presence, to the present.

Why bring together Benjamin and Arendt? At first sight, despite their biographical similarities, being both German Jews that had suffered exile under nazism, their work seems to be concerned with very different topics. It can roughly be said that Arendt is concerned with political thinking and the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries whereas Benjamin is interested in cultural history from the Romantics to our time. However, under closer examination, they bear striking similarities, not in what concerns their specific topics of research, but rather in their way of thinking. What is particularly important for us is that they share an understanding of the world that transcends the modern equation between reality and presence. In their theoretical thinking, they strove for an active relation to history, to the past.

They moved away from totalising systems of thought, from the grand theories and narratives of their time. 'Comprehension, in short, means the unpremeditated, attentive facing up to, and resisting of, reality—whatever it may be or might have been' (Arendt, 1985: xiv). Their efforts to grasp reality through unpremeditated thought, without deterministic preconcep-

tions involved to renounce the search for definite explanations and, often, to pay the prize of logical inconsistency. In showing that there is no continuity in history that could be firmly ascertained, they unravelled the idea of progress as a chimerical artefact. They saw that actuality cannot simply be accounted for as the obvious result of a pre-conceived 'historical necessity'. The present is for them a permanent 'state of emergency' that overpowers our frameworks of interpretation; it is the site of the unexpected, be it the cessation of the political event or that of the dialectical image. This conception of the real as always being in excess of presence, is coupled with a recognition of the depth of the human heart, the depth of experience that exceeds our rational intelligibility. Their thought clears the path to think beyond presence.

Thinking beyond Presence

Science wants to know nothing of the nothing.
Martin Heidegger, "What is Metaphysics"

To think beyond presence is not tantamount to a negation of the real, it is simply a refusal to confine the real to presence. Benjamin and Arendt were fascinated by those historical facts that revealed a reality that is in excess of presence, a reality that is interspersed by the eventful, immersed in historical constellations; a reality extended in time. The real in Arendt and Benjamin is not a self-contained present, rather it appears as an opening between the time of *what-has-been* and the *to-come*.

In the face of historical realities that defied all previous frameworks of explanation, totalitarianism and the European war, Arendt and Benjamin turned to theoretical thinking in search for understanding. For them theory is not an all-embracing system of explanation, but rather it is the practice of independent thinking of assuming the responsibility to face up to the given state of things. The real is not there just to be compartmentalized, dissected according to preconceived conceptual frameworks. The real is there to be questioned, not only in its ordering principles, but most importantly in its relation to *what-has-been*.

Arendt and Benjamin see the present as a place that bears a responsibility towards the past generations. In contrast, the conception of time in modernity is characterized by its dismissal of the past, of tradition and its

praise for novelty. The modern praise of novelty gives us a core element wherefrom we can thematize the modern conception of time. This novelty is as noticeable in the commodity as in technological discourses. It is the novelty that severs the links of the present with the past claiming autonomy from history. Technological innovation, the consumption of the new, the newest technological gadget, the latest scientific discovery, they all belong to the modern conception of time, to what Benjamin calls the empty present. The present that in modernity is turned into the totality of the real, is revealed as empty. Its content is the futility of the ever-same 'novelty', a futility that Benjamin relates to fashion. Speaking of Blanqui's last piece of writing he says:

'Humanity figures there as damned. Everything new it could hope for turns out to be a reality that has always been present; and this newness will be as little capable of furnishing it with a liberating solution as a new fashion is capable of rejuvenating society' (Benjamin, 1999: 15).

In Arendt's and Benjamin's thinking, presence is dissociated from its universal validity claim, which is already given in most scientific research. Arendt was not trying to define absolute categories, or determine conceptual frameworks but rather to understand, that is why she refuses to be called a philosopher. 'I want to look at politics, so to speak, with eyes unclouded by philosophy' (Arendt, 2000: 4). Arendt's understanding recognizes actuality as a particular historical configuration that is not fixed and can always be transformed. Concurrently, for Benjamin actuality is not an absolute. In actuality, the past, which exceeds the possibilities of the present, remains of central importance. Benjamin's critique uncovers actuality as a thin veil, behind which the past lies wide open. In both Arendt and Benjamin, actuality is deprived of its illusion of totality. In what follows we will see how they construe a relation to the past, that perceives history not as an object whose traces are in the present, but as a site of experience in its own right.

Benjamin and Arendt provide us with an example of how thinking can avoid the illusion of totality that lurks in modern systems of thought. In exploring the task of thinking, we are not denying the importance of empirical research, for indeed these thinkers were highly concerned with facts. Arendt looked for the historical facts that led to the rise of totalitarianism, and to the demise of revolutions; whereas Benjamin assembled a prodigious amount of facts in his notes to construe a 'cultural history' of the

nineteenth century. Whether they managed or not to accomplish in their empirical research an alternative relation to history is not a question that will be addressed in this essay. Rather what concerns us here is to stress the unique possibility that theory as thinking has to go beyond the ordering and representation of facts by questioning the given state of things.

Thinking Discontinuity

Thinking involves not only the movement of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly comes to a stop in a constellation saturated with tensions, it gives that constellation a shock, by which thinking is crystallized as a monad.

Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire"

The temporality of Benjamin and Arendt's thinking can be elucidated by looking at their way of approaching history. None of them was a historian, they rejected the practice of historicism, and more generally the making of history as an empirical science that turns the past into a congealed object of knowledge. 'The characteristic residue of this conception is what has been called the "History of Civilization," which makes an inventory point by point, of humanity's life forms and creations' (Benjamin, 1999: 14). In their thinking history is no object, it is the open space necessary for thinking, since thinking dwells in remembrance. Thus, Arendt says, 'thinking always implies remembrance; every thought is strictly speaking an after-thought' (Arendt, 1978: 78)¹.

Their negation of the idea of progress as the total horizon of explanation, is concomitant with their interests in the caesuras, the cessations that happen in history. Arendt perceives the impossibility of thinking the eventful with the traditional tools of philosophy and political theory. The eventful shatters the continuum of history and in so doing breaks away from the

¹ In a passage of *The Life of the Mind*, Arendt shows that thinking is in time and not in space: 'The everywhere of thought is indeed a region of nowhere. But we are not only in space, we are also in time, remembering, collecting and recollecting what no longer is present out of "the belly of memory" (Augustine), anticipating and planning in the mode of willing what is not yet. Perhaps our question – Where are we when we think? – was wrong because by asking for the *topos* of this activity, we were exclusively spatially oriented' (Arendt, 1978: 201). . .

chains of explanation peculiar to the social sciences and philosophical systems of thought. It breaks with the same chains of explanation that hold the notion of progress. Not surprisingly they coincide in their interest on revolutions as primary examples of historical events that sever the continuum of history. Benjamin says that, '[w]hat characterizes revolutionary classes at their moment of action is the awareness that they are about to make the continuum of history explode' (2003: 395). This same perception of revolution as rupture appears in Arendt.

'The revolution—so at least it must have appeared to these men [the men of the American Revolution]—was precisely the legendary hiatus between end and beginning, between a no-longer and a not-yet. ... Moreover, this hiatus obviously creeps into all time speculations which deviate from the currently accepted notion of time as a continuous flow ... If one dated the revolution, it was as though one had done the impossible, namely, one had dated the hiatus in time in terms of chronology, that is, of historical time'. (1990: 205)²

Revolution stands as a historical event that defies the chronological time of historicism and the sciences. Revolution brings time to a standstill; it overflows our rational systems of interpretation. "In some respects, revolution is a miracle" (V. I. Lenin in Buck-Morss, 2000: 42).

In her attempt to think the discontinuous in history, Arendt introduces the concept of beginning, for a beginning is always a departure from the given order. It announces the historically new. The beginning in Arendt should not be confused with modernity's idea of novelty. For what she is referring to is not the result of an instrumental chain of action, or process, as the 'new' commodity or technological innovation can be, but it is the coming into the world of the unpremeditated. Furthermore, as we shall see, the notion of a historical beginning evidences the multiplicity of absence.

'It is in the nature of beginning that something new is started which cannot be expected from whatever may have happened before. This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in all beginnings and in all origins. ... The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday pur-

² The fact that Arendt refers to the American revolution while Benjamin has in mind the socialist revolution and possibly the French Revolution, is of little importance for our argument on the temporality of thinking.

poses amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle' (Arendt 1989: 177-178).

The use of the term miracle, makes very explicit Arendt's intention to depart from any rational conception of novelty. Benjamin approaches the eventful in a different manner. He strives to construe a method of relating to history that allows for discontinuity to happen. Benjamin attempts to put historical discontinuity at the service of thinking. He argues for a relation to the past in which the past is not an object of knowledge, but rather a place for experience. 'Historicism offers the "eternal" image of the past; historical materialism supplies a unique experience with the past' (Benjamin 2003b: 396).

Needless to say, Benjamin's conception of historical materialism is very distant from the historical materialism practiced in the main currents of Marxism, where history tends to be seen as a sequence of processes bound by historical necessity. Rather Benjamin's historical materialism opens a unique experience of the past wherein the past comes to visibility in a unique tension with the present. It comes in a dialectical image. The dialectical image arrests the continuum of history. Benjamin's method challenges the idea of progression and of temporal continuity. To come to grips with Benjamin's notion of dialectical image we will analyse its temporality so as to differentiate it from the modern conception of time, and hence from historicism.

'It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.—Only dialectical images are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language' (Benjamin, 1999: 462).

Benjamin's dialectical image, challenges directly the modern conception of time. If we accept the possibility of the dialectical image, we have to conceive time beyond a sequential, chronological order. The dialectical image evidences the existence of time as a 'realm' beyond presence. It forms a constellation that exceeds the present, that exceeds presence; it overwhelms the realm of space. The dialectical image is the

expression of that which remains in time despite its not being present and which is summoned by a moment of recognition in the present. Thus the arcades were for Benjamin an endless source of dialectical images.

"They are forerunners of department stores. ... *An Illustrated Guide to Paris* says: "These arcades, a recent invention of industrial luxury, are glass-roofed, marble-paneled corridors extending through whole blocks of buildings, whose owners have joined together for such enterprises. Lining both sides of the arcade, which gets its light from above, are the most elegant shops, so that the *passage* is a city, a world in miniature" (Benjamin, 1999b: 15).

In this example of his historical method, Benjamin brings the moment of the present, the time of department stores, in a constellation with the image of the Arcade as it was presented in a text of the past. In reading this passage, the dialectical image erupts in the realm of the visible, a realm usually considered to be exclusive of that which belongs to presence. The dialectical image comes to presence, to visibility, from afar. It speaks of its provenance in history, memory, what-has-been, it belongs to time. It is a manifestation of the past's incidence upon the present.

Benjamin says that we are to find the dialectical image in language. The temporality of remembrance is related to the temporality of language, they both are in excess of the present. As we will see, language belongs to history, our collective past; it belongs to the time of plurality, which is the time that is in excess not only of presence but also of the modern conception of the world that is built around ideas such as subject, object, reason and consciousness. Benjamin's dialectical image is pregnant with a radical critique of modernity. The dialectical image is a reversal of the modern conception of time, and consequently it is a reversal of our conception of the real. The real appears as a thin fabric. 'Thus, he [the 'historical materialist'] establishes a conception of the present as now-time shot through with splinters of messianic time' (2003:397).

Arendt's conception of plurality also gives us the possibility to think beyond presence. Her idea of plurality begins with a very simple observation, namely with 'the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world' (1989:7). This human togetherness is for her the condition of the political. 'While all aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics, this plurality is specifically *the* condition—not only the *conditio sine qua non*, but the *conditio per quam*—of all political life' (1989:7).

When analysing further what is implied in the condition of plurality, Arendt reveals it as an 'in-between subjects'. The condition of plurality, in its belongingness to the in-between, reaches towards the intangible.

'This ... subjective in-between is not tangible, since there are no tangible objects into which it could solidify; the process of acting and speaking can leave behind no such results and end products. But for all its intangibility, this in-between is no less real than the world of things we visibly have in common. We call this reality the "web" of human relationships, indicating by the metaphor its somewhat intangible quality' (Arendt 1989: 183).

The intangible quality of the in-between shows how it is in excess of presence. It is the interstice that is opened in-between subjects, it is designated by the hyphen in the word in-between. What is not obvious in Arendt's conception is that the subjective in-between in its intangibility is not constrained by the temporality of presence, by the present. It is not confined to the interstice between present individuals. If the subjective in-between comprises not only the in-between present individuals, but also the in-between individuals of different historical times, we could say that the subjective in-between corresponds to our extended conception of time and hence to the space where language and memory dwell. Our contention is that the temporality of plurality is one that expands between present and past generations and reaches towards the to-come. It holds the possibilities of freedom and hope, the possibility of beginning.

In some of her remarks on the paradoxical function of plurality as a space of equality and distinction, Arendt gives grounds for an interpretation of plurality as a trans-historical condition, one that is not reduced to the present. 'Plurality is the condition of human action because we are all the same, that is, human, in such a way that nobody is ever the same as anyone else who ever lived, lives, or will live' (1989:7-8). And in another passage, she says: '[i]f men were not distinct, each human being distinguished from any other who is, was, or will ever be, they would need neither speech nor action to make themselves understood'(1989:175-6). In Arendt's remarks it becomes clear that plurality makes us equal and distinct not only from the individuals of our own present, but also from those of the generations that precede us and from the ones that are to come.

In its relation to the invisible, and to other generations, plurality unravels its extended temporality. The in-between allows us to think both the political and history beyond the rule of presence. The temporal dimension

of the in-between is further revealed in its relation to action because '[a]ction, in so far as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the condition for remembrance, that is, for history' (1989:8-9). Plurality is the realm where history is enacted and is as well the source of the eventful. The action that is only possible in plurality is for Arendt closely related to the possibility of beginning.

'Action has the closest connection with the human condition of natality; the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting' (1989:9).

Thus, plurality is the condition where the possibility of beginning is actualised. Furthermore, plurality designates an absence that is in excess of presence, of the visible, it is an interstice that is held open by the 'presence' of human beings living together, or shall we say, by the presence in the world of those who live and have lived together. Plurality designates an in-between whose temporality exceeds the individual, it is in-between subjects. History, memory and language are in plurality as they are in time.

We could not understand the temporality that is in excess of presence without a conception of plurality as an in-between that in all its intangibility remains real and belongs to the realm of time. It designates a realm in time akin to Benjamin's dialectical image. The in-between of plurality holds the possibility of freedom, of the event, of the miraculous, of remembrance, of hope and pardon, of redemption. All of our relations to time, all of our genuine experiences of the historical, are mediated through the in-between we share with past generations and that holds open both the realm of appearances and the invisible realm of time.

Critique and the Veil of Presence

Error is the price we pay for truth, and semblance is the price we pay for the wonders of appearance.

Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*

Under Arendt's and Benjamin's gaze, the reality upheld by modernity, the reality of presence, appears as a thin veil, a veil that is the tangible surface of historical-time. Modernity's temporality has endowed the veil of presence with the monopoly of the real. The veil of presence hides is

oblivious to all that which escapes its order of appearance, its visibility and tangibility. However, as soon as presence is presented under the metaphor of the veil it reminds us of the finitude of the realm of appearances.

The recurrent image of the veil in Benjamin's thought is emblematic of the movement of his critique. The veil, paradoxically enough, conveys a presence in its concealment. The veil signals, negatively as it were, what remains hidden, it is at one and the same time the surface and the limit of what can be seen. Likewise for Heidegger, thinking appears as a relation to the present, in which the present is seen as that which withdraws; hence thinking points to the lands of memory, to the lands of time.

'Withdrawal is an event. ... Being struck by actuality is what we like to regard as constitutive of the actuality of the actual. However, in being struck by what is actual, man may be debarred precisely from what concerns and touches him—touches him in the surely mysterious way of escaping him by its withdrawal. The event of withdrawal could be what is most present throughout the present, and so infinitely exceed the actuality of everything actual' (Heidegger, 2000b: 374).

The task of critique is not to 'unveil' a definite 'truth' lying beneath the presence of actuality, but rather to think the realm of appearance with the qualities of a veil. What appears and makes itself present to us is turned into a thin fabric that stands visible between us and the unintelligible. Under the gaze of critique the firm grounds of the actual appear just as the surface of time. Beneath lies the unfathomable abyss, the open and moving darkness of the past.

'The seer's gaze is kindled by the rapidly receding past. That is to say, the prophet has turned away from the future: he perceives the contours of the future in the fading light of the past as it sinks before him into the night of times' (Benjamin, 2003c: 407).

The thinker beholds the always already withdrawing present, that is, the withdrawal from presence of what-has-been, but she knows as well that what withdraws is preserved in time, is awaiting remembrance, awaiting the dialectical image that will summon it and return it anew, in an instant, to visibility. 'Imagine the extremest possible example of a man who did not possess the power of forgetting at all and who was thus condemned to see everywhere a state of becoming' (Nietzsche, 1997: 62) ... The sight of the critic is such that she sees everywhere a state of becoming, which is the flow in the tide of time, always already accompanied by the ebbing of its

withdrawal. In a commentary on a poem by Brecht, Benjamin also contrasts the futility of historical presence with the image of water.

"That the soft water as it moves/ Vanquishes in time the mighty stone." This teaches us that we should not lose sight of the inconstant, mutable aspect of things, and that we should make common cause with whatever is unobtrusive and plain but relentless, like water. Here the materialist dialectician will think of the cause of the oppressed' (Benjamin, 2003a: 248).

When the 'historical materialist' blocks the 'power of forgetting' the reality of what is given becomes imbued in its historical depth and acquires its veil form, its temporal tide. The materiality of the real is dissolved. The critic as the poet performs a metamorphosis of the real as presence. The real becomes mutable, translucent, just a thin membrane hovering between 'the bright and discernible ... [and] the unilluminable' (Nietzsche, 1997: 63). It transcends the horizon of the possible wherein the modern individual feels at home. The critic challenges the illusion of totality that is conveyed by the assumed horizons of the actual. In thinking, she challenges the realm of appearances, she confronts presence with her questioning.

It is in Benjamin and Arendt's relation to language that we can perceive the possibility of thinking beyond presence, of questioning the present. They both recognize in language a provenance that allows thinking to outreach the present, to summon the knowledge of tradition and the past in images. This reading of Benjamin and Arendt through the question of time, inspires us to see the task of theory, of thinking, as one that is closer to literature than to science or philosophising. The temporality of a thinking that questions the given state of things is in excess of the present, in the same manner as the temporality of the dialectical image and plurality, or that of the work of art and the political event.

The relation that Arendt and Benjamin hold to language and poetry, one that can also be traced in Heidegger, encourages us to speak of thinking as literature. Their thinking, as a question to presence, is only possible in, and through, a relation to language that is characteristic of literature. In language they summon the images of what-has-been; they enter the space of plurality and tradition. Their questions are directed towards presence, towards the state of human affairs, but they are addressed to language.

An interpretation of their thinking as literature comes to the fore when we look at the way they use allegories and metaphors. Benjamin praises

Baudelaire for his allegories, and not only he gets from them many of his own ideas on the nineteenth century, but he also enlists the Baudelaireian images for his own literary montage, for the construction of dialectical images. 'Allegories appear in fact to represent for him the distance between the present and an irrecoverable past' (Owens, 1992: 1052).

Arendt, despite her less prominent use of metaphors, also acknowledges their centrality for thinking, specially in that metaphor allows us to bridge the gap between presence and what is absent, the invisible, the ineffable. Metaphor, Arendt argues, is necessary for thinking.

'It is true that all mental activities withdraw from the world of appearances ... Thought with its accompanying conceptual language, since it occurs in and is spoken by a being at home in a world of appearances, stands in need of metaphors in order to bridge the gap between a world given to sense experience and a realm where no such immediate apprehension of evidence can ever exist' (Arendt, 1978: 32).

Metaphors displace the visible, and make it speak of absence. Let us hear an Arendtian metaphor that illuminates the importance of thinking: 'The only possible metaphor one may conceive of for the life of the mind is the sensation of being alive. *Without the breath of life the human body is a corpse; without thinking the human mind is dead*' (Arendt, 1978: 123).

Thought shows itself in the vicinity of poetry; we can thus speak of literary thought. The high praise that Arendt and Benjamin had for poetry testifies to their affinity to language. In their questioning of reality, they search for the margins of language, or rather they question language, so that they bring language to hold the question of the real.

'On est donc tenté de dire que le langage de la pensée est, par excellence, le langage poétique et que le sens, la notion pure, l'idée doivent devenir le souci du poète, étant cela seul qui nous délivre du poids des choses, de l'informe plénitude naturelle. 'La Poésie, proche l'idée' (Blanchot, 1955: 39)³.

³ 'Then we are tempted to say that the language of thought is, par excellence, poetic language and that meaning, the pure notion, the idea have to become the concern of the poet, being only this that delivers us from the weight of things, from amorphous plenitude. "Poetry adjoins the idea"'. [my own translation]

Thinking as Literature

Thinking holds to the coming of what has been, and is remembrance.
Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology"

When viewed from the standpoint of the question of time Benjamin and Arendt appear as two wanderers following the same path. Their thought teaches us a critique that is not only looking for the internal inconsistencies of rational systems of explanation, but perceives the limits that the modern conception of the real entails for our understanding. Under the penetrating force of their thinking, the present appears as a thin veil, or rather as a screen in whose shadows one intimates the presence of the past.

The thinking of Arendt and Benjamin exposes the limits of our systems of explanation. For them theory is not a space of accurate representation or classification, it is not about structuring or representing presence. They enact theory as an open space wherefrom one can summon what is in excess of presence in order to question. This questioning is not simply a playful activity of the mind, its impulse is grounded in an ethical responsibility towards plurality, towards others. The ethical content of their thinking dwells in the recognition of the responsibility we bear towards the past generations, be it towards the oppressed in Benjamin's historical materialism, or in Arendt towards the care and preservation of our tradition of thought. And it is in this recognition of the past, of the roots of the world in the depths of time, that we may bear fruits for the generations to come. In Arendt and Benjamin theoretical thinking is raised to the status of literature; they question the given state of things through the possibilities of creation and imagination held in language.

Bibliography

- ADORNO, T. W. (1973) *Negative Dialectics*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- ARENDT, H. (1978) *The Life of the Mind*, San Diego, New York and London, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company.
- ARENDT, H. (1985) *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, New Edition with Added Prefaces, San Diego, New York and London, A Harvest Book.
- ARENDT, H. (1989) *The Human Condition*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press.
- ARENDT, H. (2000) "What Remains? The Language Remains": A Conversation with Günter Gaus. IN BAEHR, P. (Ed.) *The Portable Hannah Arendt*. London, Penguin.
- BENJAMIN, W. (1999) *The Arcades Project*, Cambridge, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- BENJAMIN, W. (1999b) *Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century <Exposé of 1939>*. *The Arcades Project*. Cambridge, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- BENJAMIN, W. (2003a) *Commentary on Poems by Brecht*. IN JENNINGS, M. W. & EILAND, H. (Eds.) *Selected Writings Volume 4 1938-1940*. Cambridge, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- BENJAMIN, W. (2003b) *On the Concept of History*. IN JENNINGS, M. W. & EILAND, H. (Eds.) *Selected Writings Volume 4 1938-1940*. Cambridge, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- BENJAMIN, W. (2003c) *Paralipomena to "On the Concept of History"*. IN JENNINGS, M. W. & EILAND, H. (Eds.) *Selected Writings Volume 4 1938-1940*. Cambridge, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- BERGSON, H. (1999) *Matière et mémoire, essai sur la relation du corps à l'esprit*, Paris, Quadrige.
- BLANCHOT, M. (1955) *L'espace littéraire*, Paris, Gallimard.
- BUCK-MORSS, S. (2000) *Dreamworld and Catastrophe, The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, The MIT Press.
- HEIDEGGER, M. (2000) *Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*, London, Routledge.

HEIDEGGER, M. (2000a) *The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking*. IN KRELL, D. F. (Ed.) *Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. London, Routledge.

HEIDEGGER, M. (2000b) *What Calls for Thinking (from What is Called Thinking)*. IN KRELL, D. F. (Ed.) *Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. London, Routledge.

HEIDEGGER, M. (2000c) *What is Metaphysics?* IN KRELL, D. F. (Ed.) *Basic Writings, from Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)*. London, Routledge.

NIETZSCHE, F. (1997) *Untimely Meditations*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

OWENS, C. (1992) *The Allegorical impulse: Towards a Theory of Postmodernism*. IN HARRISON, C. & WOOD, P. (Eds.) *Art in Theory 1900-1990, An Anthology of Changing Ideas*. Oxford, Blackwell.

