

Reethnicizing the Minds? Cultural Revival in Contemporary Thought
Ed. by Thorsten Botz-Bornstein and Jürgen Hengelsbrock
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Preface

Re-ethnicize the Minds? Cultural Revival in Contemporary Thought

Jürgen Hengelbrock

The expansion of Western civilization, driven by the globalization of industrial development, world-wide economic interconnections, technical products changing every-day life (cars, fridges, phone, television and so on), promoted and striven for on all continents, undermines traditional ways of life, value systems and authorities. Comforts, given by these means, reduce the severity of living conditions and the hardness of work; thereby they arouse desires for moral relaxation, individual enjoyment, independence. Such tendencies are strengthened by the mass media that transgress all frontiers. They fascinate people, leading them to believe in the possibility of an easy life, free from duties, full of never-ending pleasure, whose only prerequisite is money.

The erosion of traditional cultures and societies is a very ambivalent process. It weakens structures of domination, oppression and exploitation, thus encouraging individuals to emancipate themselves and creating areas of freedom. On the other hand, the traditional authorities, by no means disposed to give up their privileges, try to preserve the old structures by violence because they can no longer do so by consensus. Consequently, the balance between tradition and individual expectations is in danger. Traditional value systems hinder change and progress; often they decline and turn into reactionary ideology.

Where the traditional power has been chased away, the old wrongs are often followed by new ones. In Sub-Saharan Africa we find even today shocking examples. Colonialists weakened traditional authorities enormously and exploited the population ruthlessly. When they withdrew, a new upper class emerged, composed of native busi-

nessmen and returnees from Europe. After only a short time this new class declined morally and proved hardly preoccupied with the welfare of their peoples.

These facts cause a terrible lack of intellectual and moral orientation. What is the way to go (if there is any)?

Shall we give up, allowing the consumer and fun society to take its own course? The appeal of consumption and fun is like the power of a Tsunami which carries away centuries-old life forms and social structures. At the same time it pulls down both good and bad foundations: those of solidarity and those of oppression. Can we stop it? Maybe the leveling out of traditional societies creates a new global civilization whose guiding orientation is the individual right to the pursuit of happiness. Reactionary forces defending traditional order revolt again, but in the long run they will be defeated. – Maybe the void created by the implosion of traditional order will be filled up by new mafia structures and lawless regional warlords. At the moment, this prognosis seems to be more realistic.

Shall we push forward the global implantation of the Western model society and of democracy, confident that it will guarantee automatically freedom and wellbeing?

In this context, all over the world, we see emerging new tendencies of ethnic thought (“hinduization” in India, “ivoirité” in Ivory Coast). Western rationality is considered to be alien, even dangerous, to native culture and thinking. What has it brought to traditional societies but new forms of colonization, technical, economical, intellectual ones? There is, in view of this situation, a need for a new intellectual and moral orientation. The means to achieve this is a return to the roots; the objective is not a pure retreat into the past, but the creation of an authentic world-view, corresponding to people’s ancestral wisdom and experience and to their conditions of life, rooted in geography, in political and mental history. We see the renaissance of doctrines that arose in Africa, in the 1960s, named “ethnophilosophy”.

In my eyes, there are two motives of the new ethnophilosophy which make it double-edged: on the one hand, there is an authentic humanitarian impetus to save peoples from mental alienation, to give them self-confidence and to look for intellectual and moral coordinates, taking into account both the cultural roots and the actual challenges. This impetus does not compete with parallel efforts in other parts of the world. The leitmotiv is rather a vision of mankind living in different cultural biotopes, split into something like human sub-species, one equivalent to the other, one respecting the other.

In this perspective, universal statements on mankind and human affairs seem no longer possible. Consequently we have to abstain from judgments on values and forms of life inherent in other cultures on the basis of our own coordinates. There is no privileged culture legitimated to hold the tutelage of mankind.

On the other hand, in a lot of countries the ruling classes, worried about the erosion of their authority, welcome ethnocentric thinking; they support and elevate it to national ideology. By this means they try to stabilize their power and not seldom to oppress minorities.

Ethnocentric thinking has a double face: it emphasizes the cultural plurality and diversity of mankind, regarding cultures as human treasures and sources of renaissance. At the same time, ethnocentric thinking can divide mankind by including human beings into cultural biotopes from which they are not allowed to escape.¹

Note

- ^{1.} I express my thanks to my co-editor for taking over the lion's share of the laborious editorial work with competence and commitment.

Introduction

Philosophy as Space: Goethe's *Weltliteratur* and a Potential "World Philosophy"

Thorsten Botz-Bornstein

1. World Literature

Over the past few decades encounters between western musicians and traditional musicians from Africa and Asia have become more and more frequent. Sometimes these attempts to fuse western modernity and non-western tradition are productive as they manage to enrich the poor western rhythms and grant western music a more universal scope. Sometimes, however, they end up as vague conceptual elaborations of a "World Music" guided by no other motive than by the search of exoticism.

As a matter of fact, the idea of "World Culture" is not as modern as it might seem. At the end of the 18th century, Johan Gottfried von Herder insisted, in his *Ideen zur Geschichte der Menschheit*, that *peoples* and not political movements are central participants in the creation of world history. While Herder's claim remained restricted to reflections on philosophy of history, Goethe extended it some forty years later to the realm of literature. Literature is not the private heritage of a few cultured men but the work of the world's peoples.¹ Literature is restricted neither to certain social classes nor to special geographical regions² and to limit oneself to one's own national literature is simply pretentious.³ Everybody can produce literature, and if we only look around in the world we will discover many creations of highest standing. The seventy-eight year old Goethe coins the term "World Literature" as representative of a new international intellectual reality; and he asks everybody to help to accelerate its development by taking note of its different manifestations.

One may be divided about the ethical or aesthetic truths that Goethe attributes to his newly discovered "World Literature" – what

remains spectacular is that he managed to wrest literature away from the realm of pure subjectivity and see it in terms of space.

In spite of this achievement it is impossible to pretend that Goethe coped very well with the task he set himself. Stumbling between relativism and traditional elitism, particularism and universalism, Goethe did not really know what to think of this “space” in which new and exotic elements could be discovered on a daily basis. In a letter to Zelter (21 May 1828), he admits that he feels like the sorcerer’s apprentice: that he is simply overwhelmed by the phenomenon of World Literature because it remains a field too large and too difficult to structure.

Tentatively, Goethe suggests some abstract guidelines. He recommends, for example, seeing Greek beauty as a leading aesthetic structure and evaluating the literatures of China, Egypt, etc. in the light of this model. In a way, he suggests submitting the infinite space of World Literature to a timely structure: once the aesthetically valuable elements have been filtered out of these exotic literatures, the rest will be scheduled as mere historical facts (or as curiosities).⁴

Another guideline is his idea of seeing Europe as a kind of “central zone” of World Literature (Weber 1996: 1135). The “generally-eternally-human” contained in literature cannot be grasped as long as it remains dispersed over an infinite global space. It is necessary to establish a point of departure. This guideline leads, however, to even more confusion. The problem is that Goethe fuses the problem of World Literature with another problem in which he has the strongest personal interest: that of the exchange of opinions among European intellectuals. At the moment when he was dealing with the problem of World Literature, his works had just been translated into several European languages and his desire to learn more about their reception abroad is understandably great. As a consequence, his vision of the “world” was corrupted by these eurocentric interests. Tellingly, an issue of the revue *Kunst und Alterthum* that he edited at the time is called “European, i.e. World Literature” (Birus 1995: 9).

In spite of this, I think that the most noteworthy fact about Goethe’s World Literature remains that he never suggested understanding it as a synonym for “classics” in the way it is very often used today. For Goethe, World Literature was simply a space for international communication that would remain guided, as supra national as it was, by a serious interest in local affairs. World Literature was supposed to help humanity to cope with modern conflicts that arise in all parts of the world, though not necessarily in the same form. In no way

did Goethe suggest that the whole world's writers should attempt to produce masterpieces by imitating European models. The "central zone" that he spoke of was more something of an improvised device meant to save us from confusion. In reality, the space of communication created by World Literature would be place-oriented and not geometrically-hieratically divided. The ideal space of World Literature is a space large enough to include everything, not too well structured in order to avoid centralization, but coherent enough to make communication possible.

One can say that the idea of World Literature attempted to deconstruct the same kind of linearity that Hegel's late 19th century adversaries wanted to deconstruct within the context of history. The Russian thinker Danilevsky regretted in 1875 that Hegel's artificial linear system of history remains unable to provide an integral perspective on the subject of study because "the fall of Rome in 476 was supposed to divide ancient and medieval. But what did the fall of Rome have to do with Chinese history? Or with the earlier 'falls' of Egypt and Greece? What significance did it have for Arabian history? Had not the fall of the Parthian empire or the rise of the Sassanid been more meaningful for the Euphrates area than the fall of Rome?" (Danilevsky quoted from MacMaster 1967: 202). The world is not a linear but a spatial phenomenon and World History as much as World Literature requires methods capable of grasping their truths in terms of space.

The fact that World Literature appears today most often as a collection of international classics is not only the fault of European scholarship. Japanese writers of the late 19th century, for example, hardly ever did more than try desperately to imitate Western models. Some Chinese writers like Mao Tun, Shen Ts'ung-wen, and Lu Xun (but also Japanese intellectuals like Katsuichiro Kamei⁵) recognized the errors that such a strategy contains. These Chinese writers attempted to create a literature that is rooted in Chinese experience and in keeping with the cultural traditions of their countries. Lu Xun introduced the image of the "slave nation" alluding to a nation which, even when being formally freed of its colonial fetters, continues to imitate its master.

Lu Xun himself took a great interest in literature produced by smaller nations like Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the Balkans (which he read in German translation).⁶ His ideas anticipate Deleuze and Guattari's concept of "minor literature" that is, a literature that exists far away from the mainstream and attempts to find "its own

point of underdevelopment, its own dialect, its own third-world, its own desert” (Deleuze & Guattari 1975: 33).

Deleuze and Guattari use the concept of “minor literature” in the context of Kafka studies and the literature produced by the German speaking community in Prague. In this literature, they find, individual affairs are immediately linked to larger, collective and political affairs, they constantly produce active solidarity between members of the community. This is the reason why minor literature is often more interesting than major literature. In minor literature “the individual affair becomes [...] more necessary, indispensable, blown up like with a microscope to the point that a completely different story acts within it (p. 30)”. As a matter of fact, Deleuze and Guattari make the same claims that others have made on third-world literature. Frederic Jameson writes for example: “All third-world texts are necessarily [...] allegorical, and in a specific way: they are to be read as [...] *national allegories*...” (Jameson 1986: 69).

2. World Philosophy

If World Literature was ever supposed to be a kind of minor literature able to deploy itself on a major level we can state that the experiment definitely failed. What about “World Philosophy?” The failure could hardly be more complete. Many of us know the names of the classics of some faraway countries and some of us have even read them. In our university libraries we find big volumes bearing the title “World Philosophy” that contain extracts of texts from the Upanishads to Kant. These volumes are rarely used for the purpose of research.

Serious attempts to establish World Philosophy as a space for international intellectual communication remain sparse. True, there have always been philosophers who thought that imitating the classics is not enough. African “ethnophilosophers”, being eager to create a philosophy in keeping with their particular cultural environment, would certainly have signed Lu Xun’s declarations about the necessity of overcoming the mentality of the slave nation. On the other hand, ethnophilosophy did few things to contribute to the establishment of a World Philosophy since it decided to establish its own philosophy within the borders of a certain nation or even an ethnic group.

Where is the philosophical scene that depicts global culture as an event of *cultural ambivalence* or as the *unification of antagonistic values* in the way it has been done in literature by writers like Hesse, Schnitzler, Proust, Musil or Moravia?⁷

At the time Goethe elaborated the term World Literature, the philosophy of Russian Pan-Slavism took up Herder's idea that *peoples* and not political movements are central participants in the creation of world history. Herder's book was important not only for Pan-Slavism but for all other Pan-movements including Pan-Africanism.⁸

The most supra national of all Pan-movements is Pan-Asianism and it produced in its margin notable Japanese philosophers like Nishida Kitarô and Tetsurô Watsuji. It is interesting to note that initially, Pan-Asianism started with a more literature oriented agenda. Pan-Asianism was initiated by the Bengal poet and Nobel laureate for literature Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)⁹ who declared in 1915 that "each people has its own past history and external ways and customs which are useful to it, but a barrier to other people [...]. An international feast is only possible in the realm of literature. There he who has a long beak is not deprived of food, and he who has a greedy tongue is also satisfied".¹⁰

Why should this "international feast" be possible only for literature and not for more abstract thought? Is an international feast of philosophy impossible? A standard reply is that the abstract and conceptual nature of philosophy makes national distinctions unnecessary. And where there are no nations there can be no inter-national scene either. But what if, as Bruce Janz put it, philosophy is a discipline for which place matters? In that case World Philosophy itself would become a spatial phenomenon. As soon as philosophy recognizes that it exists within a place, something like a supra-national space of philosophy arises. If, on the other hand, philosophies regard their own places as unimportant they will forever remain unable to create a space called World Philosophy.

As strange as it seems, talking about the "ethnic" aspect of philosophy still contains a great deal of the challenge it had around 1800: it still means reconciling enlightenment with regional tradition. It still means relativizing the social dreams of reformers who believe in unchanging principles of social life. It still means making fun of abstract metaphysical doctrines as much as of so-called natural laws of social life. It still means repeating Herder's and Goethe's claims that not the "poetry of the enlightened bourgeoisie" but "national literature" should be granted the status of universality. Who would be ready to do all this in the name of some "ethnic truth" that ninety-nine percent of humanity ignore anyway?

The editors of the present volume believe that it is useful to change the perspective on the topic. As a matter of fact, within a space

called World Philosophy, neither enlightenment values nor “truth” as such are discarded. “Truth cannot be national—truth is always universal”, has said Nicolai Berdiaev (Berdiaev 1986: 13 note 9). The point is that different nationalities bring forward different aspects of the same truth. What will be discarded is not “truth” as such but the kind of general liberal humanistic universalism current within a sphere of denationalized and depersonalized “democracy in general” (Trubetzkoy) that seems to become more and more representative of the world’s most prominent “philosophical” principle.

World Philosophy is not a space within which people are supposed to celebrate their own culture. It is not a space within which people can hope to obtain a new Western-inspired rationale for their own age-old particularism. World Philosophy is a space in which different cultures bring forward their way of seeing and thinking about topics that are common to all of them. In this way, World Philosophy can prevent the fragmentation of an international society whose coherence, to the extent that it is more and more granted by nothing other than by a liberal humanistic universalism, remains up to date superficial.

3. What is ‘Contemporary Thought’?

Some remarks are due with regard to the subtitle of the book that announces an analysis of cultural revival tendencies in “contemporary *thought*”. Perhaps surprisingly, the apparently neutral word ‘thought’¹¹ bears a problem that the much more traditional word ‘philosophy’ could successfully elude for decades. As a matter of fact, the use of the word ‘thought’ is in this context slightly unorthodox (as would have been the word ‘theory’). While most people would agree that, for example, some Asian countries have produced something that can be called ‘philosophy’, the words ‘thought’ or ‘theory’ remain widely restricted to the Western hemisphere. While French thought or theory and German thought or theory have almost replaced French and German contemporary *philosophy*, ‘Japanese thought/theory’ or ‘Chinese thought/theory’ *in the sense of strong and general intellectual models* are almost inexistent. Do we implicitly believe that Indian, Chinese or African thinkers have the right to – or even should – use Western thought in order to develop their own philosophy but that they should not produce something identifiable as ‘Indian theory’? The subtitle of the present book is provocative since ‘Contemporary Thought’ is here presented in an outspokenly “non-Western” context.¹²

4. What do the Authors Write About?

In October 2004 we decided to put an outline of our book project, together with a “Call for Papers” on the internet. We had a core stock of contributions and wanted to receive some more. The response was stunning: within twelve months the site had been visited 1200 times and we were flooded by a wave of proposals that, at some point, we had difficulties coping with. Perhaps we felt a little like Goethe who, when being overwhelmed by the quantity of pieces of *Weltliteratur* that were sent to him, admitted that he had sparked off a process that he was subsequently unable to stop. Goethe was lucky: there was no internet in his time.

The selection is eclectic. Not only do the authors write about various concrete subjects – also their style of writing and dealing with philosophical subjects differs. Some authors are “only” specialists in their field; others live on the territory and have long term first hand knowledge of the culture they describe. Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi once said that the difference between a semi-cultured and a cultured person is that the former knows only his own culture while the latter knows his own culture plus the cultures of other countries (Coudenhove-Kalergi 1976: 73ff). When going through the bibliography of the present book, most of us will be surprised how few titles we actually know. To be “cultured” seems to be rather difficult.

Still, on an abstract level, many authors approach similar themes. There is, of course, the main theme of the book that suggests a re-evaluation of “ethnization” of the humanities. Though this theme is not treated by all authors in the same fashion, many authors approach it through similar questions. In general, most of them discuss the possibilities of careful “ethnization” though some point to the dangers of “folklorization”.

Some approach the subject by attempting to re-establish the meaning of culture as opposed to civilization. Some clarify the meaning of particularism as opposed to universalism and infelicitous shortcuts to relativism. Some speak about the importance of language for thought. Some refer to Humboldt’s theories about the diversity of languages or critically engage in discussions of findings by Whorf and Sapir of the correspondence of language and thought.

It needs to be pointed out, in this introduction, that Sapir-Whorf’s theories about linguistic relativism led to determinism and regionalism and were discredited already in the 1960 with the rise of Cognitive Sciences and “Folk-Psychology”, which insisted on the universality of human cognition.¹³ Cognitive scientists began to oppose

behaviorism by trying to reintroduce more conceptualist schemes into experimental psychology. The most radical one of these “universalist-scientific” positions held that cultural differences are just a matter of convention and will vanish with the dissemination of scientific knowledge among peoples.

All authors of the present book base their reflections on a theoretical middle ground between Whorf-Sapirist relativism and scientific cognitive universalism. With this they are in keeping with the interdisciplinary spirit that has been growing in recent decades and that has so strongly been influenced by structuralist/post-structuralist warnings never to take “signs” as such for granted but to understand them as entities imbedded in a larger, complex context.

It remains to say that by doing so, the authors leave behind what Deleuze has called the “dogmatic image” or the “orthodox, moral image” that has dominated philosophical research since Descartes. The recognition of the same, the *je pense* as a Cartesian identity of the ‘I’, chooses the banal and everyday-like *recognition* as a criteria for philosophical veracity, instead of engaging in stranger and more disquieting adventures into the thought of others (cf. Deleuze 1968: 172-73). We hope that the readers of the present book will enjoy these adventures.

Notes:

1. Goethe: *Frankfurter Ausgabe* 1. Abt., Bd. 14, p. 445.
2. FA 1, Bd. 22, p. 287.
3. FA 2, Bd. 12, 224ff. As a matter of fact, Goethe distinguished between World Poetry and World Literature. Many of his most relativistic statements about the value of non-European literature he intends to apply rather to World Poetry and not to World Literature (cf. Strich 1946, p. 27).
4. Conversation with Eckermann: “Wir müssen nicht denken, das Chinesische wäre es, oder das Serbische, oder Calderon, oder die Nibelungen; sondern im Bedürfnis von etwas Musterhaftem müssen wir immer zu den alten Griechen zurückgehen, in deren Werken stets der schöne Mensch dargestellt ist. Alles übrige müssen wir nur historisch betrachten und das Gute, so weit es gehen will, uns historisch daraus aneignen” (FA 2 12, 225).
5. “It is high time [...] for the Japanese to recognize this attempt as a mistake and to return to their own tradition as the basis of a Japanese world-class literature”. Quoted from Kevin Doak’s account of Kamei’s *The Future of Things Japanese* (*Nihonteki no mono no shôrai*) (Doak 1994: 99).

6. See Takeuchi 2005, p. 46. According to Frederic Jameson, there is now among third-world intellectuals “an obsessive return to the national situation itself, the name of the country that returns again and again like a gong, the collective attention to ‘us’”. “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” in *Social Text* 15, 1986, p. 65.
7. Comparative philosophy went certainly farthest in this direction but it represents a marginal trend within philosophy.
8. The Romantic stance included in these projects cannot be found in the political branch of Pan-Asianism though it is certainly present in philosophical writings of *Rôman-ha* (Japanese Romantic School) and Japanese culturalists, especially in Watsuji who used Herder’s same book (though sixty years later) for his climatology. From Richard Clarke’s contribution to this volume we learn that Herder’s ideas have also been profoundly influential on modern cultural nationalism in the Caribbean.
9. Tagore cooperated here with the Japanese indologist and art historian Kakuzo Okakura.
10. *Diary of a Traveler in Europe* in *Rabîndra-rachanâbalî* I, quoted from Hay 1970, p. 31.
11. The Oxford English Dictionary defines ‘thought’ as “the knowledge or study which deals with ultimate reality, or with the most general causes and principles of things”.
12. Richard Calichman has unraveled the problem of non-Western ‘thought’ in the introduction to his book *Contemporary Japanese Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press 2005).
13. Since the early 1980s discussions within the field of Folk Psychology turned around the question if “different peoples often do, in fact, employ predominantly different cognitive processes”. (Don LePan: *The Cognitive Revolution in Western Culture. Vol. 1: The Birth of Expectation* (Houndsmill: Macmillian, 1989), p. 3.

AFRICA

1. Emotion is Black Like Reason is Greek: Remembering the Fight for the Africans' Recognition as Human Beings

Jürgen Hengelbrock

Abstract: In the introduction to his epoch-making book *Bantu Philosophy* Tempels states: "To declare on a priori grounds that primitive peoples have no ideas on the nature of beings, that they have no ontology and that they are completely lacking in logic, is simply to turn one's back on reality". African peoples have suffered from such a prejudice and in the middle of the last century African intellectuals and white missionaries took up the fight against it. The article presents the arguments of four of them: Léopold Senghor, Martins Vaz, Sheik Natal Diop, and Tempels. Tempels' book *Bantu-Philosophy* has been continuously reprinted until today. It became the manifesto of Africa's philosophical maturity. Many African thinkers blamed Temples of mental colonization and paternalism. These judgments are wrong. **Key Words:** Bantu philosophy, ethnophilosophy, négritude, Southern Negroid Egypt, vital force.

1. The African Thinker's Trauma

In 1946 J. P. Sartre wrote that classical humanism leads straight to fascism (Sartre 1946: 92). Indeed, African people could have felt like that. Classical humanism taught that there is a common nature shared by all human beings. There was a particular idea of man European thinkers thought to correspond to the fully developed human nature: the idea of an enlightened person, refined by reasonable education, using skillfully the means offered by a highly developed civilization (above all the European one). This idea proved to be very ambiguous: theoretically, it founded the ideal of the equality of all men, participating in a common universal nature. People who lacked these qualities had to be helped and educated in order to gain access to the full development of humanity. In fact, this idea served as a criterion for distinguishing primitive from civilized man, primitive being those who did not correspond to it. A considerable number of western citizens were inclined to consider these men to be subhuman creatures – and to treat them as such.

African peoples suffered particularly from this discrimination. In contrast to most other civilizations the African civilization was an inward and spiritual one, without creating visible, everlasting monuments to prove greatness and sublimity. Consequently, European conquerors failed to take notice of African wisdom, intellect and moral subtlety. “Niggers” were regarded as primitive.

Hegel expressed this prejudice in a very harsh manner: “The characteristic feature of the negroes is that their consciousness has not yet reached an awareness of any substantial objectivity – for example, of God or the law – in which the will of man could participate and in which he could become aware of his own being. [...] He is dominated by passion, and is nothing more than a savage. All our observations of African man show him as living in a state of savagery and barbarism, and he remains in this state to the present day” (Hegel 1975: 177). Until today African thinkers have considered this statement as outrageous. Their feelings towards Hegel are dramatically ambivalent: They were very impressed by Hegel’s monumental philosophical system in the face of which they found nothing equivalent in their own tradition, whereas, at the same time, they felt hurt by his judgment condemning Africans to be eternally uncivilized.

This prejudice proved itself very persistent. It is not until the middle of the 20th century that we find coherent intellectual efforts trying to overcome it. Three of them will only be briefly mentioned here, a fourth one is portrayed in depth because of the endless ideological debates it provoked.

2. Ways of Recovery

2.1 Négritude

The movement of “négritude” arose from the fact that black youngsters gained access to European schooling. By achieving academic degrees they became the first generation of African intellectuals (in a western sense). They were completely imbued by European modes of thinking and living, highly cultivated; on the other hand, however, there remained two factors segregating them from white men: their skin color and a different kind and intensity of emotion. Instead of considering these factors as signs of inferiority, they transformed them into marks of positive otherness that made them *different* from white people but nonetheless *equal*, outstanding because of qualities missed in European civilizations. Léopold Senghor wrote: “Emotion is black, like reason is

Greek”¹. He dedicated a wonderful poem to the black woman, praising her beauty and charm, the warmth of the heart and the endurance of the character. In his eyes analytical reason is the strength of the white man. It enables him to conquer nature and to subjugate it by technological subtlety. But at the same time analytical reason is a hindrance to human intercourse and to looking for the real nature of life.

J. P. Sartre welcomed the movement of “negritude” as a transitory position, as a weapon in the fight for recognition of the black man’s intellectual and moral equivalence to the members of all the other civilizations. But he asked its protagonists to keep in mind that this doctrine was in danger of resulting in a new racism. African man, being different, is still conceived as in opposition to the white man. Sartre considers negritude as an “anti-racism racism” (Sartre 1948: 34). For him, the equality of men is based on universal conditions of existence, shared by all men, and, being free, on the necessity to conceive a life project in desertedness. In relation to this all cultural or racial differences (if there are any) are accidental.

2.2 Common roots of African and Greek Philosophy

In his books and lectures at the University of Dakar the Senegalese scholar Sheikh Anta Diop always stuck to the idea that there was a common African tradition, rooted in the culture and philosophy of old Southern Egypt (Cheek Anta Diop 1954). The origins of this culture were Negroid. Black Africans created rudiments of philosophy that were the ground not only of Egyptian, but also of ancient Greek cosmology and metaphysics. The renaissance of Africa has been made possible by going back to these roots.

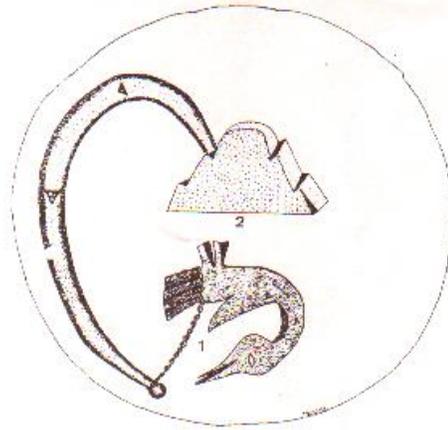
Indeed in ancient Greek philosophy (specially in Plato’s dialogues) we find numerous references to Egyptian thought. However, the proofs, provided by Diop, that Egyptian and black African culture have a common origin, are less evident (Jones 1990). – Be that as it may, until today, Diop’s thesis has encouraged numerous scholars to investigate Egypt’s wisdom and philosophy and to find out the cultural affiliations leading to Sub-Saharan Africa (Summer 1986). Diop’s thesis was and still is an important contribution to the development of Black Africa’s cultural self-confidence.

2.3 Cabinda’s Traditional Philosophy

In 1969 the Portuguese missionary Martins Vaz published a voluminous study entitled *A filosofia tradicional dos Cabindas* (Vaz 1969/70). For more than 20 years he lived among the Cabinda people in the south of the Congo. Faithful to the spirit of the gospel he regarded black women and men as God's children exactly like white women and men, sharing the same divine gifts. Approaching Cabinda people as brothers and sisters he obtained knowledge of their vision of life and their customs. Observing their practice of giving moral advice, included in tales and proverbs, and of resolving conflicts he found an intellectual and moral wisdom that, in his eyes, deserved the predicate "philosophy". For him, the essence of philosophy was reasonable and responsible judgment in human affairs.

Human affairs have never been free from conflicts. The idea of the lucky savage has always been illusory. Cabinda people had to face quarrels between husbands, between parents and children, between elders and youngsters. Vaz reports that Cabindas avoided direct confrontation in conflicts (like many other African peoples). This may be interpreted as cowardice, but it could be also an indication of wisdom. When a husband had an argument with his wife, he did not dispute. The injured party went to the elders, told them what had happened and asked for help. There was a custom to create figures of men, animals, plants, and so on, upon the tops of pots, each figure referring to a proverb giving a general exhortation in a special situation. When the meal was served with the top on the pot, the other part saw the figure and realized its message. He or she could answer in the same way. In this manner the particular quarrel was integrated in the ancestral memory of similar cases and could be settled by the advice of perennial wisdom. Injurious words pronounced in rage are hindrances to reconciliation. Proverbs can help people to understand one another.

Vaz's collection of "speaking" tops revealed a subtle vision of man, aware of his conflicting nature and without illusions, as becomes evident in the following example:



The figure represents a bird fallen into a trap. The proverb referred to is: “You’ve fallen into my trap”, says the hunter. “Only my tail was caught”, answers the bird (If I want to, I’ll leave it and go away). Vaz relates that an old Cabinda explained the meaning of the figure to him: everybody, man or woman, is entitled to be free. A woman gave it to her husband because she felt harassed by him.

The linguistic barrier was a hindrance to Martins Vaz’s message getting beyond the Portuguese frontiers. However, it deserves to be saved from oblivion. The author did not intend to establish any African philosophy or to suggest local pride to Cabinda people. For him, there was no question of cultural identity. His only ambition was to reveal Cabinda’s wisdom as most subtle and profound, by no means primitive, and as a resource that could be useful to all men.

2.4 Bantu Philosophy

It’s no accident that, on the philosophical level, the African striving for identity has not been set up by the Africans themselves, but by Christian missionaries. African peoples were said to lack abstract concepts, logical principles, literacy, moral sense. Consequently, they got neither invitation nor encouragement to enter into the philosophical world supposed to be European. The only access to philosophy was given by

Catholic seminaries which taught scholastic metaphysics and ontology as preparatory courses to theology. These teachings were alien elements to the African scholars.

There was another, a Belgian missionary who tried to raise their morale. In 1946 Placide Tempels published his book on *Bantu-Philosophy*. This work was the starting point of endless controversies on the existence and nature of genuine African philosophy and on the idea of philosophy itself. Translated into many languages, continuously reprinted until today, it became the manifesto of Africa's philosophical maturity, despite the malice it provoked in both camps, the African and the European one. It's still the only book known all over the world witnessing and representing African philosophy. Even its harshest critics have to acknowledge this fact.

The extraordinary response to this book calls for a more intensive survey. Tempels's book has no high technical and philosophical qualities. Critics are right to deplore its methodical insufficiencies and thoughtless generalizations. It's not groundless to think that the fruitfulness of the book is partly due to its insufficiencies.

In the introduction to his book Tempels states: "To declare on a priori grounds that primitive peoples have no ideas on the nature of beings, that they have no ontology and that they are completely lacking in logic, is simply to turn one's back on reality. Every day we are able to note that primitive peoples are by no means just children afflicted with a bizarre imagination. It is as men that we have learned to know them in their homes" (Tempels 1959: 6). Today we are astonished that in the middle of the last century such a statement was necessary. But obviously it was. Knowing this we may imagine how difficult it was for African men to be acknowledged as true human beings.

For Tempels, man's thinking and acting starts from fundamental ideas about good and evil, the ground of being and so on. Without awareness of these ideas we cannot understand his beliefs, convictions and practices. "In fact, primitive peoples have a concrete conception of being and of the universe, this 'ontology' of theirs will give a special character, a local color, to their beliefs and religious practices, to their mores, to their language, [...] to their whole behavior" (Tempels 1959: 17). "Ethnology, linguistics, psycho-analysis jurisprudence, sociology and the study of religions are able to yield definitive results only after the philosophy and the ontology of a primitive people have been thoroughly studied and written up" (Tempels 1959: 17). "Anyone who

claims that primitive peoples possess no system of thought, excludes them thereby from the category of men" (Tempels 1959: 16).

For Tempels, formed by Aristotelian and Thomist philosophy, the human being is defined by the ability to think conceptually. We have to search for this. In order to do so, given the lack of written tradition, of worked-out treatises, Tempels looked for the Bantu ideas of human beings, of God, of good and evil where he was able to find them: in their social practices, their customs, their language, their sayings.

In accordance with the scholastic philosophy of language (rooted in Aristotle's *On the Soul*) words are signs of ideas.² There is no language without ideas; ideas are prior to words, which would be blind without them. Logically, going from the posterior to the prior, i.e. examining the meanings of the *words* Bantus use when speaking of man, God and so on, we find out their *ideas*, i.e., according to this philosophy, their thinking. Collecting these ideas and assembling them it may be possible to discover Bantu philosophy.³

He proposes, "We could begin with a comparative study of the languages, modes of behavior, institutions and customs of the Bantu; we could analyze them and separate their fundamental ideas; finally, we could construct, from these elements, a system of Bantu thought" (Tempels 1959: 28). "It seems to me that neither the imperfections of terminology, nor the lacunae which still remain in my suggested synthesis of Bantu philosophy ought to cause me to hold up publication of the fruits of my investigations" (Tempels 1959: 29).

According to Tempels, the Bantu people conceive being as force, more precisely as life force: "Bantu behavior [...] is centered in a single value: vital force. Certain words are constantly being used by Africans. They are those which express their supreme value; and they recur like variations upon a leitmotiv present in their language, their thought, and in all their acts and deeds. This supreme value is life, force, to live strongly, or vital force. The Bantu say [...] that their purpose is to acquire life, strength or vital force, to live strongly, that they are to make life stronger, or to assume that force shall remain perpetually in one's posterity" (Tempels 1959: 30).

Even God is power. "When they try to get away from metaphors and periphrases, the Bantu speak of God himself as 'the Strong One', he who possesses Force in himself. He is also the source of the Force of every creature" (31). "Bantu hold that created beings preserve a

bond one with another, an intimate ontological relationship. [...] For the Bantu, there is interaction of being with being, that is to say, of force with force. Transcending the mechanical, chemical and psychological interactions, they see a relationship with forces which we should call ontological. [...] One force will reinforce or weaken another. This causality is in no way supernatural. [...] It is, on the contrary, a metaphysical causal action which flows out of the very nature of a created being” (40). “The child, even the adult, remains always for the Bantu a man, a force, in causal dependence and ontological subordination to the forces which are his father and his mother. The older force ever dominates the younger. It continues to exercise its living influence over it” (41).

Tempels substantiates these theses by referring to social hierarchy and incidences due to the colonists’ ignorance of the Bantu worldview, “The eldest of a group or of a clan is, for the Bantu, by Divine law the sustaining link of life, binding ancestors and their descendants. It is he who ‘reinforces’ the life of his people and of all inferior forces, animal, vegetable and inorganic, that exist, grow or live on the foundation of which he provides for the welfare of his people. [...] This explains what the Bantu mean when they protest against a nomination of a chief, by government intervention, who is not able, by reason of his vital rank or vital force, to be the link binding dead and living. ‘Such a one cannot be chief. It is impossible. Nothing would grow in our soil, our women would bear no children and everything would be struck sterile’. [...] Judged [...] according to the theory of forces, their point of view becomes logical and clear” (42f).

Both Bantu speaking and social practice converge, and thus seem to confirm Tempels’s “hypothesis”.

3. Tempels and the Trouble with Ethnophilosophy

What’s wrong with this procedure? Tempels was blamed for *mental colonization* (Wiredu 1980), *illicit generalizations* (Hountondji 1983), *paternalism* (Césaire 1950). *Mental colonization* means that Tempels uses terms of European thought and languages in order to formulate Bantu thinking. Concepts like “being”, “causality” and so on belong to Western thought systems and are strange to Bantu thinking; what is more, they have no equivalences in the Bantu language. Conceiving Bantu ontology, isn’t it a sublime matter to imbue Bantu culture with

European modes of thinking and to distort the relationship which African people have with their ancestral culture?

Tempels was not blind to this problem. He states, “It is because all being is force and exists only in that it is force, that the category ‘force’ includes of necessity all ‘beings’”. But he admits: “This universal concept is hardly used by the Bantu, but they are susceptible to philosophical abstractions though they express them in concrete terms only. They give a name to each thing, but the inner life of these things presents itself to their minds as such specific forces” (36). On the mere linguistic level we cannot detect Bantu thinking. Bantu language is said to be concrete, related to observable things and qualities. But this does not prove that they have no ideas of common features and principles of things they name by words. There is no parallelism between words and concepts. The category “force” can be intelligible without an exact linguistic equivalent.

The approach to Bantu thinking is first of all a question of *listening*, of empathy, and only secondarily one of linguistic analysis or ethnological enquiry. “The Bantu psychology⁴ which we are going to study is that which is to be found in the minds of Bantu themselves, not that which would result from the observation of Bantu by Europeans. It is necessary to see things from their point of view in order to understand the integration of this psychology into their general scheme of thought. [...] We must [...] make a clean sweep of our own psychological concepts and prepare ourselves to finish with a conception of man very different from that which we now accept. The best thing we can do is to listen and to analyze what the Bantu say...” (63f).

“But it is the long, tedious way of groping and searching, of conceiving an idea and soon afterwards rejecting it; in which apparent gleams of light lead only back into darkness. It is a story without end, or one which only at long last results in precise, well-defined ideas fitting into a logical system” (28). “I therefore invite the reader of this study to put out of his mind while reading it both his western philosophical thought and any judgments which he may have already made concerning Bantu and primitive peoples” (30). The latter request is less problematical, but is it possible to meet the former? Philosophizing is impossible without structural concepts (categories) providing coherence and profundity of thought. Tempels himself is doing so, borrowing Western concepts in lack of Bantu ones. He is aware of it: “The present study, after all, claims to be no more than a hypothesis, a first

attempt at a systematic development of what Bantu philosophy is. It is necessary to distinguish two quite distinct elements in it: 1) the analysis of Bantu philosophy as I see it; 2) the terminology in which I have tried to make it accessible to the European reader. Therefore, even if this terminology should appear inadequate, it should not be concluded that the object of the study itself, an analysis of Bantu thought, is thereby vitiated" (28).

These statements are logically coherent only if we can legitimately understand them in the following sense. 1. Eliminating Western concepts from our minds means openness to different forms of thinking, means avoiding prejudice; 2. Terms are vehicles of ideas (or thinking), but not thinking itself. Even if there is no distinct thinking without linguistic terms, thinking is prior to them and gives them meaning. 3. Starting from the use of terms we can reach the realm of ideas or thinking and transmit them by other terms – those which we judge appropriate and adequate. Tempels himself, being a European reader, did so. Thus we obtain an approach sufficiently trustworthy, but certainly not a total coincidence. (Is total coincidence of thinking even in the midst of the same philosophical or cultural background ever possible?).

From this perspective, there is no mental colonization of African thinking, trying to conceive it in terms of Western philosophy. Using the term "being", Tempels does not implant Thomistic ontology into Bantu thinking; he needs only a logical subject, applicable to all that is or could be, in order to predicate on it its nature, that is living force: "being" is this subject. Perhaps the general structure which his study is based on refers to classic scholastic chapters ("ontology, criteriology, psychology, ethics...") and needs to be reviewed. Nevertheless his portrayal of Bantu thinking seems to be authentic.

This opinion is not shared by all commentators on Tempels's book. Beyond intellectual colonization they reproach him for *illicit generalizations*. Indeed, speaking continually of "Bantu ontology", "Bantu thought" "Bantu sayings", he seems to suggest that all Bantu-speaking people have identical ideas and opinions, and, what is more, confronting Bantu thought and mores with those of Europeans, we might think that he wants to present Bantu philosophy as representative of all African peoples.

This is perhaps true in the latter case. For him, Bantu philosophy provides an exemplary proof that African men are in no way inferior to

Europeans, either intellectually or morally. On the contrary, he states: "I venture to think that the Bantu, like primitive people in general, live more than we do by Ideas and by following their own ideas" (17). Comparing the moral comportment of European and African ethics he is inclined to see the balance swinging in favor of black people. Consequently, his book also offers a critical mirror and a moral exhortation for Europeans, not only implicitly: "The Bantu are still sufficiently primitive to be able to recognize the relationship that exists between the canon of law and the rules of morality on the one hand, and the principles of philosophy or ontological order on the other. [...] Their whole ontology [...] reveals the world as a plurality of coordinated forces. This world order is the essential condition of wholeness in human beings. The Bantu add that this order comes from God and that it must be revered" (78). – We others, Europeans, *are no more sufficiently primitive* to see this truth which is evident for people who have not yet lost natural feelings and natural reason.

"This 'discovery' of Bantu philosophy is a so disconcerting revelation that we are tempted at first sight to believe that we are looking at a mirage. In fact, the universally accepted picture of primitive man, of the savage, [...] vanishes beyond hope of recovery before this testimony. [...] It is as if, all at once, a light of intelligence illumines, radiates from and glitters in these animal countenances that have been thus humanly transformed. We get the impression that these masses want to arise from their alleged lowliness, clothing themselves in the knowledge of their own lore and in their conception of the world; and thus standing before and looking down upon the small group of Westerners, civilized indeed, but how puffed up with pride. [...] The Gods are dethroned, the disinherited stand before us as equals" (109f).

There may be some illicit generalizations in Tempels's thought. For him, natural, unadulterated reason and feeling lead to God. Neither in Europe nor in Africa does everybody agree with him. Also while he has a realistic view on Europeans, his view on Africa seems to be rather romantic. Perhaps he idealizes only with a polemic intention, affected by the moral decline of the Christian Occident. Here he is right. Let's pardon the devout man for his zeal!

A lot of Tempels's commentators thought that he conceived Bantu philosophy as collective thought, produced and shared by the whole ethnic community, something comparable to C. G. Jung's "col-

lective subconscious". In this perspective his study on Bantu thought was called "ethnophilosophy", in opposition to doctrines developed by individuals, whom we consider as authors. However, collective thought can be hardly critical, because a collective can hardly collectively criticize itself. Consequently, some authors like Hountondji (Hountondji 1983) say that so called ethnophilosophy is not philosophy, lacking its critical and individual character. This debate involves two questions: 1° Is there a collective thinking? 2° What is philosophy?

1° Tempels never raised the question of whether Bantu thought was collective or individual. Obviously this question did not make sense for him. Formed by Christian Aristotelianism he could not conceive of thinking otherwise than individual. Each human being has an individual *logos* with innate logical habits, but without innate ideas or those inherited by society. Human beings can adopt ideas prevailing in society and tradition, but they need not do so. Tempels did not overlook the fact that, like everywhere else, there were disputes among Bantu people not only caused by personal rivalries but also about fundamental moral or legal questions with never-ending "palaver". In no way would he deny that there may be intellectual dissidence. "Bantu thought" or "Bantu philosophy" means only the aggregate of ideas and convictions adopted by the majority of Bantu people in spite of numerous variations and differences. In the same way we usually speak about Christian philosophy, but are also conscious of differences and by no means presume that it is a collective or monolithic one.

In his outstanding book on *African Philosophical Thought* Kwame Gyekye makes a statement confirming this view: "But surely it was individual wise men who created African 'collective' philosophy. A particular thought or idea is, as regards its genesis, the product of an individual mind. And also it is logically possible for two or more individuals to think the same thought or to have the same idea at the same time, nevertheless the production of the thought as such is the work of the mind of each of the individuals concerned. It is always an individual's idea or thought or proposition that is accepted and gains currency among other people. [...] What has come to be described as 'collective' thought is nothing but the ideas of individual wise people; individual ideas that, due to the lack of doxographic tradition, became part of the pool of communal thought, resulting in the obliteration of

the differences among these ideas, and in the impression that traditional thought was a monolithic system” (Gyekye 1995: 24).

2° There is no definition of philosophy which is unanimously accepted. In a wide sense we usually say, “My philosophy is...”, meaning our ideas about what to do. On the other hand many scholars insist on a very restrictive use of the term: only logically organized systems of abstract conceptual thought should be named philosophy. Their normative examples are the teachings of the great European tradition from Plato to Heidegger. Out of respect they admit that there is an Asian philosophy, but the idea of an African philosophy provokes a shake of the head.

Extreme views never conform to reality. A wide comprehension of philosophy risks eradicating its *differentia specifica*; the term has no longer any useful meaning if we put Aristotle’s metaphysics and Louis Armstrong’s songs on the same level. If we limit the term philosophy to those systems which conform with occidental models, we have to admit logically that philosophizing is a phenomenon found only amidst a very small minority of men and consequently, its impact on mankind is minimal.

Let’s resort to Plato. Philosophizing, that is *lógon didónai*, being able to give reasons for our sayings (Laches 187c 2). Ideas, views and judgments that can be cleared up by reason, are potentially philosophical, even if actually reasons are not given. If there is no other way than to seek refuge in authority (patriarchal or religious or political), ideas and views have no philosophical status.

From this perspective we can agree with Tempels that there is philosophy in traditional African peoples, because their worldviews can be founded on reasonable grounds. Tempels and his followers (Mbiti 1970; Kagame 1976; Gyekye 1995) tried to dig for these treasures, to refurbish and to develop them in order to enrich the “*philosophia perennis*” of mankind. For him, Bantu philosophy is of universal significance, like other philosophies. By no means, did he intend to characterize Bantu thought as an element of their cultural identity of which they can be proud. Tempels is not an ethno-philosopher.

The attitude of African thinkers towards Placide Tempels is extremely ambivalent. He is undoubtedly the spiritual father of African philosophy. Even his bitter antagonists cannot deny this. In his study of contemporary African philosophy the Congolese scholar P. Ngoma-

Binda states: “It’s undeniable that African philosophy, developed since 1960, had as its starting point the discussion about Reverend Tempels’s famous book. Consequently we cannot advance without this book which is still ‘blocking’ numerous African thinkers” (Ngoma-Binda 1994: 22). On the other hand, Tempels was severely attacked by others, reproaching him for *paternalism* and blindness concerning the living conditions of African people. Senghor’s colleague E. Césaire wrote: “So far as government is concerned, there seems little ground for complaint, because the Bantu, as Reverend Tempels notices with obvious satisfaction, [...] ‘have assigned us a very high level in their hierarchy of vital forces’. In other words, let the white man be accorded his place at the top of the Bantu hierarchy of vital forces, [...] and it’s OK. You will work the following miracle, *The Bantu God is the guarantor of the colonist order, and any Bantu daring to attack it would be a blasphemer*” (Césaire 1950: 38).

Indeed Tempels wrote, “The white man, a new phenomenon in the Bantu world, could be conceived only according to the pre-existing categories of Bantu thought. He was therefore incorporated into the universe of forces, in the position therein which was congruent with the logic of Bantu ontology. The technological skill of the white man impressed the Bantu. The white man seemed to be the master of great natural forces. It had, therefore, to be admitted that the white man was an elder, a superior human force, surpassing the vital force of all Africans” (Tempels 1959: 44). Tempels gave an account of it in order to show what consequences Bantu ontology had had concerning their relationship with white people, also suggesting a reason why the revolt of African peoples against the white man has been weak. By no means would he congratulate Europeans on that. On the contrary, we have seen how severely he reprimanded European arrogance.

Does the fact, that African thinkers did not emancipate *themselves* from an intellectual inferiority complex towards white people, the fact that, on the contrary, a white missionary pushed them in this direction, explain the ambivalence of feelings toward this father figure?

There is no doubt that Tempels’s book offers grounds for criticism: Indeed he attributes to Bantu thought structures of the scholastic philosophical system. His judgments are somewhat sweeping, the analyses of Bantu sayings and customs are not sufficiently accurate. Everywhere his guiding intention becomes immediately obvious: he

wants to prove that primitives are not only civilized human beings, but also that they are more disposed to listen to Jesus Christ's message than is the decadent white man.

These theses earned him much trouble from both sides. However, his zeal cannot belittle his merits, and his insufficiencies are still provoking new studies.

Notes:

1. "L'émotion est nègre, comme la raison est grecque... La raison européenne est analytique, discursive par utilization, la raison négro-africaine intuitive par participation" (Senghor 1964: 238).
2. Thomas Aquinas quotes Aristotle, *Péri Psychès I*: "Voces sunt signa intellectuum, et intellectus sunt rerum similitudines", S. Th. I, 13, 1.
3. It's misunderstanding Tempels to say that he worked out Bantu philosophy by linguistic studies. Later on, Kagame and Mtibi did so. This was not Tempels's method.
4. "Psychology" means in Scholastic teaching the philosophy of the human soul.

2. A New Discourse on Universality

Benoît Okonda Okolo

Abstract: When St. Augustine lists those peoples and those philosophers who assert that the supreme God is the real author of creation, he recognizes the universal aim of the philosophies that is shared by the Ionic school, the Italian school, the Libyans, Egyptians and so on. Regional thinking constantly recognizes the particular condition of its roots. Does this thinking therefore really differ from thinking with claim to universality, because the latter hides its unsaid roots, its foundations, its social objectives and its objects related to its origin? All thought is universal by intention, but regional by its roots. The insistence on regional and ethnic thinking is important for creating more universality within a context of freedom, equality and intercultural intercourse. **Key Words:** Culture, particularism, regional thinking, post-modern thinking, universality.

1. Doubts About Universal Reason

Regional or ethnic thinking contrasts with philosophical and scientific discourse in the search for the universal, that is, for what is valid everywhere. Aristotle conceived a philosophy aimed at universal validity, capable of getting everybody's assent; he never tried to promote *Greek* thinking. Apparently history has proved he was right (Crepon 1998: 253f.). Clearly, we may question Aristotle's thinking from many points of view, but not because it is Greek, but because it is plainly human.

Nevertheless regional thinking is in the heart of philosophy, especially when defining people's identities in a context of rivalry or competition and when looking for specific contributions. For example, the Egyptians' wisdom was well known by the Greek thinkers who considered themselves as their children.¹ Through Caesar's commentaries the Gallic Druids' wisdom became well known in many places. On the other hand, nearer to us, in a context of rivalry and affirmation of national identity, German thinkers maintained towards their thought a sort of national affiliation: this is true for philosophers like Fichte and Hegel, but also for Nietzsche and Cohen.

Insistence on regional thinking has never meant a rejection of the objective of universal thought, but claims the recognition of its specific cultural basis and its usefulness in a particular moment and place. When St. Augustine lists those peoples and those philosophers who assert that the supreme God is the real author of creation, he recognizes the universal aim of the philosophies that is shared by the Ionic school, the Italian school, the Libyans, Egyptians, Indians, Persians, Chaldeans, Scythes, Gauls and the Spaniards (Augustinus 1959: 595).

The ancients did not hesitate to call all wise men philosophers even if they differed largely with regard to their doctrines and practices. Clement of Alexandria wrote in his *Stromates*: “Since ancient times philosophy has been honored among the barbarians and spread out to the nations: only later on it arrived in Greece. Its masters were in Egypt the prophets, in Assyria the Chaldeans, in Gaul the Druids [...] in Persia the magicians. [...] Anacharis was Scythe, and he was considered as superior to many Greek philosophers” (Clemens of Alexandria: I, XV, 69-70, 7).

The triumph of modern science and thought has weakened the claim for regional or ethnic thinking. I think that the comeback of ethnic thinking, today, results from the substantial criticism applied to modernity and its rationality as its overwhelming and monolithic character no longer convinces the scholars.

Modern thought is characterized by its belief in rational progress and in man’s intellectual ability of facing his destiny. By contrast, post-modern thought does no longer believe in the total rationality of things or in the self-confident reference to a thinking subject that would be master of the individual and collective history. It seems, indeed, that rationality and rationalism no longer fulfill their promise to bring about welfare, reliability and security.

The claim of reason to universal validity is undermined: rationality seems to be a deductive procedure starting from exchangeable premises. Man is afraid of about rationalization that causes leveling, uniformity and bureaucracy. He also knows that he can abuse his discoveries and lead humanity to misery.

Until now modernity appeared to us as a monolithic reality without cracks – as an ideal that has to be realized as such, without further discussion. Until now we trusted in occidental rational ready-to-wear and were convinced of its universal validity and its pertinence. Now, suddenly, we are allowed to doubt it. Post-modernism criticizes

modernity with its lack of freedom, its dictate of styles, its uniformity, its bureaucracy, its elitist culture, and its consumer society. Instead of totalitarian reason, post-modernism suggests a fragmentary, progressing one, rooted in the immense depths of traditions and correcting itself by contact with everyday life. Post-modernism draws the image of a society authorizing real freedom and various delights without constraints.

The new modernity becomes visible by strengthening plurality, freedom, and different ways of development. The new universality has proved its worth in comparison with individual and communitarian identities, based on traditions and cultures as guarantors of free life and free choice. Modern universality, one-sided and monolithic, source of domination and dictatorship, has to be replaced by universality open to dialogue.

However, can we give up Plato's initial idea of universality and rationality? Evidently, universality is not an observable object among us. It belongs to forms that give objects their existence. The plurality and variety of objects is firmly anchored in the perfection and uniqueness of the form. Universality pertains to ideas and to forms rather than to objects. Universality is located in the form and not in the matter of the objects. "The universal is valid for every mind", Alain wrote in his study on Plato (Alain 1925: 851).

2. Illicit Generalizations

Since Aristotle there has been a confusion of the general and the universal. The general applies to several objects, while the universal applies to each mind. We get the general by abstraction starting from the observation of objects, while the universal is attained by simple intuition. The general is always approximate and reversible, whereas the universal is always valid.

A European who, when looking around, sees only white people, runs the risk of generalizing, stating that every man is white. At the moment he sees the first black man he will ask himself whether he is an animal. Or could it be a crossbreeding of man and monkey? The African, on the other hand, will perceive a phantom at the sight of the first white man he encounters because for him man is always black. The general has a tendency to exclude, while the universal is a receptacle that waits for being filled up.

Thus the universal is related to Plato's form, Descartes' innate ideas, and Kant's a priori conditions of thought. It is, at least, related to the mind and not to objects. Consequently it cannot be confused with the general.

Universality is a logical feature related to what is valid for all, whereas universalization is a historical phenomenon at work when the practice of a specific time and space is spreading over all times and spaces. Gaston Berger's considerations in *L'Homme moderne et son education* enable us to understand this phenomenon.

Berger starts from the fact that human communities preserve their differences although they are also striving for union. Two terms serve him to locate union and diversity: "civilizational values" and "cultural values". Science, technology, morals, and political structures are the central issues of civilization. They are characterized by their tendency to universalization due to universal ideas whose concrete forms they are: This concerns truth in science, efficiency in technology, duty in morals, rationality in the organization of life. By the intercourse of civilizations the strongest values predominate and civilizations tend to assimilate.

By contrast, in Berger's eyes, art, literature, theatre, and life styles define culture. These values are closely linked with individual or common sensitivity and therefore remain particular. Each cultural creation provides its particular, irreplaceable message. Cultures do not melt into each other but they enrich one another. Intercourse encourages and renews cultures.

Berger's considerations help us distinguish more clearly between life areas befallen by global uniformity and activity areas that remain always particular. It seems naïve, however, to think that cultures escape from universalization or that civilization values only strive for universality. The principles guiding the evaluation of cultures tend more and more towards generalization, whereas civilization values diversify at least on the level of significations.

Civilization values do not function in a manner different from cultural values. They all rely on symbolic forms (Cassirer). Values develop between civilization and culture. Values reach beyond the universal and the particular.

The problem is an heuristic one: in view of a given practice, how can we denote the universal that this practice constitutes and how can we denote the particular it develops? We must avoid making a cult out

of differences which sees only irreducible singularities. We must also avoid generalizing particularities claiming that the universal has just been attained. In fact, the universal and the particular are nothing but horizons constantly moving off. For example, let us have a look at traditional African's historical and intellectual facts. On account of the absence of written texts a lot of people, following Hegel, deny the existence of African history and philosophy. In their eyes, history and philosophy are singularities belonging to the Occident. Concerning Africa, the historical and intellectual facts pertain to ethnology, to wisdom or to ethno-philosophical thought but not to history or to philosophy as such. For our part, we do not conceive history and philosophy as particular phenomena of a determinate time and space: those of the Occident or of ancient Greece. These phenomena characterize the human being in his specific features, everywhere and at any time. We do not want to compare our "griots" with Herodotus or Thucydides, but we notice on both sides an equal intention and a comparable historical consciousness. Aristotle's logic and metaphysics and Plato's dialectics are historical and local singularities, but by no means do they deny the universal character of philosophy. Elsewhere, too, men created singular facts the world should know for its enrichment.

We do not tolerate the view on African art, known as extremely abstract, and African animism, which is purely monotheistic, only as simple fruits of existential instinct and not as an outcome of profound reflection. We do not want to conceal facts like our methodological limits, our incompetence of exploring the depth of history and of identifying the protagonists and the places of discussion in the context of oral tradition. But we should no longer hold them as results of our lack of history and philosophy.

With respect to this we cannot neglect Hegel. His ingenious intuition, however, is darkened by the will to power. Hegel and his fellows have a tendency to singularize universalities and to universalize singularities. Singularities are historical facts. Really, the Prussian kingdom was at the top of civilized nations at Hegel's times. Hegel is logically incoherent attributing to this fact a universal dimension (as the summit or end of history). Universalities are conditions and postulates of man's real existence. History and historical consciousness belong to these conditions and postulates.

3. The Meanings of Universality

By writing a new discourse on universality we want to eliminate ambiguity. For our methodical research we use the threefold meaning of the term of “universality” suggested by the dictionary *Le Petit Robert*². The first meaning of the term is rooted in logic and philosophy. It refers to what is considered as the most universal. So we classify a concept, a judgment, a truth as universal. Universality defined in this way seems to be the real aim of all knowledge, of all philosophy, of all wisdom. Aristotle said that there is only knowledge of the universal. Anyone who pronounces judgments about things or who affirms truths, whatever his background and his convictions, tries to proclaim universality thus asserting not only the general nature of things, but also the universal validity of judgments and sentences. The European philosopher, the African wise man or the Indian guru, they all pronounce theses of universal claim, even if their views do not cross the Purenness, the Ruwenzori or the Himalayas, the borders of their culture, religion or civilization. In other words, universality seems to be the globally most shared item.

If the first meaning seems to pose no problem, the second and the third provoke severe debates. According to the second meaning universality characterizes a quality of mind. So one can attest Voltaire’s mental universality. Beyond its interest for everybody and everything, Voltaire’s universality is in contrast with the narrow-minded and sectarian character of some of his contemporaries who find normal certain privileges and inequalities and preach the superiority of some people over others. Broadminded, Voltaire turns the equality of all men and the common relative character of their knowledge, their beliefs and their deeds into principles. These principles are based on man’s common nature and his common destiny. In his philosophical tale *Zadig* Voltaire illustrates these features in a wonderful manner. In one episode he brings face to face an Egyptian, an Indian, a Greek, a Celt and some other strangers. During a common meal they argue about their beliefs and their religions; everybody judges his belief superior to that of the others. Through *Zadig* Voltaire admits that all of them are right because beyond their divergences they all acknowledge the Supreme Being as the ultimate ground of all things (chap. XII) (Voltaire 1968: 99-104).

May we, on this background, ascribe Hegel universality? Although Hegel looked at the whole world, his world spirit seems to legitimate inequalities between men and peoples. Hegel’s world spirit reaches the

universal only at the top of its evolution, i.e. in Europe. Surely, this universality affirms man's freedom and equality. Unfortunately, however, this universal thinking seems to be sectarian, reserved for only one people. Only one people gives evidence of the universal, whereas the other peoples prove the particular character of their situation. If we reject the linear evolution of Hegel's history, we have to admit that Hegel's universality constitutes only the triumph of European particularity in all domains: rights, politics, arts, religion, science and philosophy; this universality is not only a model but constitutes itself as a tribunal of inclusion and exclusion. What a paradox: absolute thinking leads to philosophical sectarianism; by contrast, the general relativism leads to universality.

The third meaning of universality refers to the totality of mankind. For example, there are tragedies of universal consequences, throwing light on the destiny of all human beings.

Summarizing, we hold that the first meaning of universality concerns the object of judgments; the second meaning is related to the subject that passes judgments. The third meaning raises the question how to attribute a universal feature to all men. The difficulty results from the fact that the subject and the object of judgments are identical, i.e. the human being with his limited world-view and experience. Is there, beyond abstraction (often reduced to redundancy) a different method of passing judgments concerning man on a universal level? In his *Essay on the Origin of Languages* Jean-Jacques Rousseau gives us an answer: "When you want to study people, you must look around you; but in order to study the human being, you must learn to be far-sighted. First of all you must discern differences in order to discover common properties" (Rousseau 1781: Ch. VIII).

Looking around within our cultures and civilizations, we know only particular human beings, their lives and deeds; but in order to understand the universal nature of human beings we must leave our cultures and civilizations and meet other cultures and civilizations. What we see in our neighborhood, e. g. our art, religion, and philosophy, is often nothing but a screen on which we are reflected; it does not enable us to appreciate other peoples' arts, religions and philosophies, nor to have a universal idea of art, religion and philosophy.

4. Real Universality Includes Particularity

Rousseau's advice for a methodical access to the universal nature of man is *travel*. As its replacement, I propose the transcendental leap starting from a level on which particularities are imbued with universality. From the Christian point of view we can do nothing but deny the existence of religion among the others. From Aristotle's point of view, we can do nothing but disdain Ogotêmeli, Sefu, Katulishi or Tierno Bokar³ (the contrary is also possible). But based on the idea of the Supreme Being, we can say that Islam and Animism are religions too. Based on a critical insight in people's destinies, Aristotle, Ogotêmeli et Bokar share the wisdom we have named philosophy since Pythagoras. Asserting universality without the transcendental leap is dangerous and often one-sided. We attain real universality only by being open-minded towards the others and by a philosophical approach producing sense.

Rousseau's view reflects the initial anthropological purpose, before this purpose was perverted by a sectarian specification of its field of research: wild peoples, primitive peoples, peoples lacking writing. Ethnological particularities replace anthropological universality.

Finally we have to find out if there is a difference between thinking with the claim of universality and regional or ethnic thinking. Is there an essential difference between the ideas of the Gallic Druids and those of the Greek thinkers? By all appearances we should say that there is a difference, and consequently their ideas are different too. But on closer inspection we note that their thinking does not differ by nature. Their ideas are all incorporated in different social environments which back them, and their objectives are not always identical. However, nobody would say that Plato's mathematical thinking or Aristotle's biological thinking differ by nature from the thinking characteristic of the jurist Gropius and the theologian Thomas Aquinas.

There is no difference of nature between thoughts articulated by a smith master, by a fetish master or by a traditional African "griot" poet and thoughts articulated by artist circles of the German Romantic period or by Abubacer or the physician of king Fès of Morocco. Philosophy is always involved in its cultural and historical background and in an interplay of specific forms and contents rooted in a specific social environment.

Before pursuing my research on the essence of regional or ethnic thinking I think it is relevant to give some anecdotes concerning my book *Pour une philosophie de la culture et du développement. Recherches d'herméneutique et de praxis africaines* (Okolo 1986). They show

very clearly the lack of understanding concerning these questions and throw light on their seriousness and the ideological character of given answers.

In this book I intended to reflect on the relationship between hermeneutics and practice, i.e. between a philosophy taking in and interpreting elements of culture and tradition, and a philosophy aiming at emancipation, i.e. human and social development. Although it was principally aimed at the African situation, the kind of problem seemed to me universal, with regard to Marx's 11th thesis on Feuerbach, "Philosophers only interpreted the world in different manners, but what matters is that we change it". We need a coherent discourse uniting the interpretation of philosophy and the transformation of philosophy. My study was aimed at continuing the debate initiated by Marx. Therefore I wanted to entitle it *Hermeneutics and practice. Study on philosophy of culture and development*. My editor suggested that I inverted the order of title and subtitle. In view of the hermetic character of the notions *hermeneutics* and *practice* this suggestion was comprehensible. Nevertheless my editor asked me at the same time to add the adjective *African*. I did accept but only with pain. I had the strong impression that there is a tacit job-sharing: the African thinkers and scholars are confined to thinking only about Africa and for Africa, whereas the European scholars and thinkers lay claim to thinking for all men and on a universal level. Consequently, the reference to Europe or to America never appears in their titles, even if their sources are exclusively occidental.

This impression was confirmed after having given a European colleague some copies for the libraries of his university. Some years later I saw that my study was not classified under the philosophical section. My colleague answered that he sent a copy to the department of ethnology having no idea where to classify it. My disappointment was immense: my study that called ethnology and ethno-philosophy into question ended up in a library reserved for books on ethnology and ethno-philosophy.

That's not all, unfortunately. When I noticed that my book was listed in André Jacob's *Encyclopédie philosophique universelle* I was proud at first. But I was disappointed again seeing that, with my African colleagues, I had been placed into the section entitled "conceptualization of traditional thinking". In accordance with the *Encyclopédie*, all contemporary African thinking seems to develop

only in the field of ethnology and of ethno-philosophy. Many African thinkers cannot identify with this role; but obviously their contributions to universal thought are not appreciated.

The destiny of my book in the domain of edition, library and criticism is an example of the degree of disdain and prejudice concerning the general debate on the real nature of thinking named regional in relation to thinking with claims to universality. What is regional thinking really? Let us end where we probably should have started.

Obviously, regional thinking understands itself at first as different from Occidental thought, characterized as universal. This point of view is consistent only when universalizing the particular and particularizing the universal. Secondly, regional thinking understands itself as ethno-philosophy or as conceptualization of the experiences of traditional societies. Ethno-philosophy operating in the field of ethnology has been criticized very much. In my opinion it is nothing but the inverted continuation of occidental thought. We should find out the real philosophical places where concepts develop.

To my mind regional thinking constantly recognizes the particular condition of its roots. Does this thinking therefore really differ from thinking with claim to universality, because the latter hides its unsaid roots, its foundations, its social objectives and its objects related to its origin? For example, we cannot understand Aristotle's physics and ethics apart from their place of origin.

Regional or ethnic thinking is nothing but the other side of universal thought. All thought is universal by intention, but regional by its roots. The insistence on regional and ethnic thinking is important for creating more universality within a context of freedom, equality and intercultural intercourse. This is the reason for a new discourse on universality.

Notes

1. Cf. Plato, *Timeus*, 22 b.
2. *Le Nouveau Petit Robert. Dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française*. Texte remanié et amplifié sous la direction de Josette Rey-Debove et Alain Rey, Dictionnaire *Le Robert*, Paris, 2002, p. 2720.
3. Names of some African sages.

3. Alexis Kagame on the Bantu Philosophy of Be-ing, Aristotle's Categories, and *De Interpretatione*

Mogobe B. Ramose

Abstract: Kagame's exposition of the Rwandese philosophy of be-ing is a classic in African philosophy. The exposition is much more than a conversation with Aristotle's Categories and the *De Interpretatione*. This raises the question whether or not Kagame claims that the philosophy of be-ing of the Bantu-speaking peoples is conceptually similar to or different from Aristotle's categories of being. The thesis to be defended in this essay is that the philosophy of be-ing of the Bantu-speaking peoples derives from a different experience but contains some concepts similar to Aristotle's categories of being. The difference of experience does not, by necessity, reduce the philosophy of be-ing of the Bantu-speaking peoples to ethnophilosophy. Nor does it necessarily deprive this philosophy of the status of "universal". **Key Words:** Alexis Kagame, Rwandese philosophy, Bantu philosophy, African philosophy, ethnophilosophy.

1. Introduction

Alexis Kagame's exposition of the Rwandese philosophy of be-ing is a classic in African philosophy. The exposition is much more than a conversation with Aristotle's Categories and the *De Interpretatione*. This raises the question whether or not Kagame claims that the philosophy of be-ing of the Bantu-speaking peoples is conceptually similar to or different from Aristotle's categories of being. If the former is true, is it then a reaffirmation of "universal" philosophy from the African experience? If the latter is true, is it merely an ethnic philosophy that cannot attain the status of "universal" unless it abandons its ethnicity? The thesis to be defended in this essay is that the philosophy of be-ing of the Bantu-speaking peoples derives from a different experience but contains some concepts similar to Aristotle's categories of being. The difference of experience does not, by necessity, reduce the philosophy of be-ing of the Bantu-speaking peoples to ethnophilosophy. Nor does it necessarily deprive this philosophy of the status of "universal".

Blakely is a "European" who developed interest in African Philosophy. In pursuit of this interest he discovered that in Ki-Swahili, a Bantu language spoken by many communities in East Africa, the lacustrine states in Africa including many other parts of the continent,

the word for a “European” or white person is *mzungu*. It has variations in other Bantu languages, for example, *Umlungu* in Zulu. This term refers to both a female and male white person as well as to a young or elderly white person. Blakely was puzzled by the fact that in the same Bantu language the term for a human being is *umuntu* or variations thereof such as *munhu* in Shona.

Since *umuntu* is a human being is *mzungu* also a human being even though a different term is used? For Blakely the use of two separate terms suggests that the Bantu language discriminates against whites insofar as they are not referred to as *abantu*, the plural form of *umuntu*. This charge of discrimination is not sustainable if one understands the language. Without diverting into a complex discussion of the issue, it is sufficient to mention that *mzungu* is certainly understood to be a human being but with obvious physical differences and, and that it has a different geographical origin. *Mzungu* is also understood to be having a culture different from that of *abantu*. The discrimination is therefore not negative. It is a method of constructing identity. In this sense it is philosophical.

The concern of Blakely over the use of *mzungu* and *umuntu* is philosophically interesting. This is because it occurs in the context of the discussion that we propose to focus upon here, namely, the concept of being of the Rwandan people according to Kagame. Alexis Kagame was born in Kiyanza in Rwanda. He collected and studied the spoken proverbs, songs and poems of the Kinyarwanda community. He later used this as the material for his Doctoral research culminating in the publication of the *Rwandan Philosophy of Being*. He subsequently extended this to cover a wide region of the Bantu languages in Africa. This deepened the understanding of the Bantu philosophy of being. The result of this long research was the publication, under the auspices of UNESCO, of his *magnum opus Philosophie Bantu Comparée*.

We will attempt to determine the relationship – if any – between Kagame’s exposition and Aristotle’s Categories and the De Interpretatione. It is philosophically significant that Blakely makes the observation that: “Mtu (or Muntu) and Mzungu (or Mugungu) are Kiswahili terms used for, respectively, a ‘person’ and a ‘European’.” That two terms are needed poses, at the outset, an interesting problem of categorization” (Blakeley 1984: 169). ‘Categorization’ without discrimination is inconceivable. On this reasoning, the problem is not categorization as such but discrimination. The latter refers to the apparent necessity to construct boundaries of be-ing in order to identify and name entities. This construction of boundaries in the quest for

identification is what we call bounded reasoning. Our understanding of discrimination is, therefore, primarily philosophical. It is encapsulated succinctly in the famous maxim that *omnis determinatio est discriminatio* – all determination is discrimination.

The problem of categorization is, therefore, linked ultimately to the question of identification, the construction of identity. In this paper we shall not pursue this important line of philosophical discussion. Instead, we limit ourselves to understanding that it is necessary to keep in mind that in both Kagame's and Aristotle's the categories of be-ing are instances of specific identification.

Blakely also considered the possibility of establishing a “correlation” between “Western and Bantu categories”. It is in this vein of thought that he posited the following questions. “In the present instance, who is going to decide: a) what ‘Western categories’ means; b) what the ‘Bantu categories’ are; and c) how any possible correlation is to be detected or established?” (Blakeley 1984: 184) These questions were posed in 1984. By this time question b) was already answered twenty-eight years ago with the publication of Kagame's *La philosophie Bantu-rwandaise de l'être* followed twenty years later by his *La philosophie Bantu comparée*. There are numerous commentaries on these texts before 1984. The point of this observation is that contact and effective communication between Franco- and Anglophone philosophers in Africa and, beyond are yet to be achieved.

2. A Question of Method

Question c) of Blakely pertains to the detection or establishment of ‘any possible correlation’ between Western and Bantu categories. The aim of this line of inquiry is not clear. Nor does Blakely suggest a method to either detect or establish such a ‘correlation’. Whatever the case, it seems that the primary requirement is the exposition of the categories of both the West and the Bantu. This has already happened if we take Aristotle's *Categories* as representative of the West and Kagame's as representative of the Bantu. But it is possible that the expositions may exist alongside each other as parallel lines. If this is the case then they cannot meet. Comparison would therefore seem to be the logical option. A logical option is not by necessity a viable choice. In other words, it may not be necessary or desirable to adopt comparison as the method in dealing with conceptions of being explicated by Kagame and Aristotle. This leads us to Wiredu's famous essay “How Not to Compare African Thought With Western Thought”.

For Wiredu ‘non-scientific’ as well as ‘pre-scientific’ thought explaining natural phenomena by recourse to ‘spiritistic categories’ is a common feature of human history. The understanding and interpretation of nature in terms of the wishes and the activities of the ‘gods and kindred spirits’ – think of ancient Greek ‘mythology’ parading gods such as Zeus – is discernible in the history of humanity before the rise of the ‘scientific’ age. This common and changeable feature of human thought was regarded by “Western anthropologists and others besides” as an inherent and immutable characteristic “defining a peculiarly African way of thinking. The ill-effects of this mistake have been not a few” (Wiredu 1984: 150).

This misunderstanding and misinterpretation of African thought solidified into a dogma. The Afroskeptics in our time sustain this dogma as a truth that may no longer be questioned. It is not uncommon to read and hear the claim that in order to justify itself as philosophy, African philosophy must identify that which makes it “uniquely” African. The underlying presupposition of this claim undermines the skepticism of the Afroskeptics who hold that there is reason to doubt the existence of African philosophy. The presupposition is that if African philosophy is philosophy at all then it is philosophy just like Western philosophy. Philosophy is philosophy everywhere: it is universal. On this reasoning all that remains is to compare particular philosophies arising from different regions of the planet Earth. Comparison and, not necessarily dialogue, becomes the method of understanding other philosophies. The comparative method then will necessarily concentrate on identifying ‘differences’ and ‘similarities’ between, for example, ‘Eastern wisdom and Western thought’ (cf. Saher 1969). The comparative method may be a subtle manner of appropriation, for example, of ‘thought’ as the monopoly of the West and ‘wisdom’ as the special characteristic of the East. In this way the identification of differences could serve to justify the demand for the “unique”. As such it could establish and sustain questionable classifications and hierarchies.

Wiredu argues that the comparative method is legitimate only if African traditional thought is compared with...

...Western folk thought. For this purpose, of course, Western anthropologists will first have to learn in detail about the folk thought of their own peoples. African folk thought may be compared with Western philosophy only in the same spirit in which Western folk thought may be compared also with Western philosophy, that is, only in order to find out the marks which distinguish folk thought in general from individualized philosophizing. Then, if there be any who are anxious to compare African philosophy with Western philosophy, they

will have to look at the philosophy that Africans are producing today” (Wiredu 1984: 157-158)

In view of the above argument, we do adopt the comparative method here on the understanding that the ‘philosophy’ of being enunciated by Kagame is philosophy in the sense in which the *Categories* of Aristotle is also ‘philosophy’. Our project then is to affirm the ‘philosophicality’³ of both Aristotle’s and Kagame’s philosophies of being. The one to one identification of ‘differences’ and ‘similarities’ is therefore not the primary aim of our undertaking. In other words, borrowing from or imitating the classics such as Aristotle is not the route to affirm the philosophicality of Kagame’s philosophy of being. This is consistent with Kagame’s understanding of his exposition of the philosophy of being of the Rwandese people (Kagame 1956).

3. “Man is a Rational Animal”

Aristotle’s famous definition of “man” as a “rational animal” became a crucial philosophical foundation for colonialism, racism, sexism and oppression. Even after the *Sublimis Deus* declared that “all men are rational animals” the conviction still lingers on in some segments of humanity that this was not spoken of the African, the Amerindian, the Australasian and the woman (cf. Ramose 2003). It is this conviction which sustains the fallacy that Africans are incapable of doing philosophy and thus cannot engage in abstract reasoning. One of the major aims of Kagame is to challenge this fallacy and reaffirm the fact that the Bantu peoples – and by extension the Africans – were capable of abstract reasoning from time immemorial. According to Kagame,

pour philosopher, il est nécessaire de pouvoir exprimer l’abstrait, faute de quoi on serait irrémédiablement rivé au concret. Certains représentants de la culture européen-américaine ont laissé longtemps courir l’opinion que les ‘Bantu’ étaient incapables d’exprimer l’abstrait. Nous sommes à même d’affirmer, *au contraire, que toutes les langues ‘Bantu’ comportent une classe réservée à rendre les abstraits*, à savoir celle du classificatif bu (avec ses variantes régionales, bo, vu, ou, u, etc.) (Kagame 1975: 97, emphasis mine).

In this way Kagame reaffirms the philosophicality of the Bantu philosophy of being. It is philosophy just as Aristotle’s *Categories* is philosophy. In view of this we do not agree with Kagame’s characterization of the Bantu philosophy of being as an “ethnophilosophy” as in the already cited title *L’ethnophilosophie des ‘Bantu’*.

4. The Structure and Logic of Kagame's and Aristotle's Philosophies of Being

Kagame takes the view that in order to comprehend the philosophicality of the Rwandese – and by extension the Bantu (Kagame 1975) – philosophy of being, it is necessary to recognize that Bantu may not be spelled either as *Bantou* or *Bantoe* (13-14). This latter is not just a misspelling but also a misunderstanding of the philosophical import of –ntu. In spite of this crucial warning of Kagame, the spelling of Bantu, even by Africans, appears to be more a matter of taste than philosophical insight and precision.

Kagame demonstrates the logical structure that permeates the Bantu philosophy of being. This logic is indivisible from the language which express it. For this reason Kagame takes language or linguistics seriously. The point of doing so is primarily to show that language serves the function of identifying and classifying being. We hold, contrary to Masolo, that Kagame is concerned more with the ontological rather than the sociological (Masolo 1987) dimension of language. Indeed the very title of his 1956 publication – containing the term 'being' – places this interpretation of Kagame beyond reasonable doubt. Here Kagame shares the same interest with Aristotle's *Categories*, namely, the concern with being. Aristotle, focuses more on the logic of the identification and classification of being (Averroes 1983: 19-24). The 'more' here is just comparative in the sense that the linguistic concern is more pronounced in Kagame than in Aristotle. Kagame and Aristotle are focused on the (i) qualities of being; (ii) the mode of being – spatiality and temporality; (iii) the relations of being. In this sense their primary concern is with ontology, that is, the philosophy of being.

5. Ontology or Metaphysics?

The title of Kagame's 1956 publication suggests a concern with ontology or the philosophy of being. This is in order since it is widely acknowledged that there is a distinction between metaphysics and ontology (cf. Heidegger 1959: 57-87). However, Kagame understands his exposition of the Rwandese philosophy of being also as an undertaking in metaphysics (Kagame 1956: 85). This creates confusion virtually blurring the distinction between ontology and metaphysics. Kagame sinks into this confusion partly because of his definition of philosophy, namely, that "[...] la philosophie. C'est la science qui traite des êtres sous l'angle spécial de leurs causes les plus profondes; c'est-à-dire en atteignant les principes derniers des êtres" (17).

This definition of philosophy coincides with the traditional Western definition of metaphysics, namely, that, to quote Heidegger, “*Metaphysica est scientia prima cognitionis humanae principia continens*: metaphysics is the science which contains the first principles of that which is within the comprehension of human knowledge. In the concept of ‘first principles of human knowledge’ lies a peculiar and, to begin with, a necessary ambiguity. *Ad metaphysicam referuntur ontologia, cosmologia, psychologia, et theologia naturalis*” (Heidegger 1962: 9-10). The inclusion of ontology under cover of metaphysics – as stated in this last sentence – does not help to distinguish and illuminate the difference between metaphysics and ontology. The critical point here is that if meta-physics is the “science” of that which is outside or beyond nature, it really begs the question of the precise boundary between being in the realm of nature as ‘physis’ and being outside of this realm. If a boundary can indeed be established, what would be the basis for the inclusion of ontology, as the philosophy of being this side of ‘physis’, into metaphysics? Can the metaphysical be spoken of without reference to being this side of ‘physis’? If this is a rhetorical question it means at least that the definition of metaphysics as ‘scientia prima’ is questionable. This is not the place to digress into the logical positivist critique of metaphysics as a ‘science’. Suffice it to state that Kagame’s understanding of philosophy is not only coincidental but it is also consistent with the definition of metaphysics as ‘scientia prima’.

We question Kagame’s apparent acceptance of the above definition of metaphysics because of the express word ‘being’ in the title of his 1956 publication. The acceptance is also questionable in view of the widely held view that the African – read also Bantu – philosophy of being is a unitary ontology by character. It is not a metaphysics. If this is true, then why does Kagame subordinate this ontology to metaphysics? It would seem that talk of ‘African metaphysics’ is the adoption of the traditional Western classification and hierarchization in philosophy. This adoption must be questioned. The aim of the questioning should be to ensure that the definition and description of African philosophy is a matter of philosophic discernment and insight in the first place. Kagame’s coloring of the Bantu philosophy of being with “metaphysics” does not answer to this requirement. We thus remain with a question which African philosophy is yet to consider deeply, namely, in spite of the many writings on ‘African metaphysics’, is there really an ‘African metaphysics’ or only an African ontology masquerading as metaphysics?

6. Conclusion

We have suggested that it is even more important today for African philosophers around the world to forge closer links. This could be done through the translation of their works in various languages. Collaborative research ventures are also a necessary dimension of the strengthening of links among African philosophers. It goes without saying that African philosophy or, any other philosophy for that matter, would be poorer without dialogue with other philosophies. We have shown that it is not always helpful to adopt the comparative method as a way of understanding other philosophies especially African philosophy in view of its history with the West.

The philosophicality of Kagame and Aristotle's philosophies of being has also been established. In his exposition of the Bantu philosophy of being Kagame has effectively vindicated the Bantu peoples claim that they are also full and true members of *homo sapiens*. In the course of his exposition Kagame raised, perhaps inadvertently, the question whether or not there is an 'African metaphysics'. This remains a challenge to contemporary African philosophers.

Notes

1. For an extended discussion of the distinction between be-ing and being see M.B. Ramose: *African Philosophy through Ubuntu*, Harare, Mond Books Publishers, 2002, p. 41-45
2. Three examples will suffice: Mujynya N. Chiri: 'La théorie du "Ntu" ou la théorie de la nature intime des êtres. Les lois de l'univers' in Smet, A.J., (ed.) *Philosophie Africaine*, Kinshasa, Presses Universitaires du Zaire, 1975, p. 146-155. Ntumba, T.: 'La vision ntu de l'homme essai de philosophie linguistique et anthropologique' in Smet, p. 157-180. P. Ngoma-Binda 'L'Abbe Alexis Kagame: De la force au ntu' in *Revue Philosophique de Kinshasa* 1:2 décembre 1986, p. 23-31.
3. Our understanding of 'philosophicality' endorses, with the qualification that the concept of "science" is problematical and contestable, Osuagwu's explanation cited here. "The criteria are derived from the two principal determining terms *African* and *philosophy*. African philosophy is at the same African and philosophical. In and by these terms, we are searching, on the one hand, for the genuine *philosophicality*, i.e., formal scientific philosophy, of the said African enterprise, and on the other hand, for the authentic scientific Africanity of that scientific philosophy. These two basic scientific criteria make African philosophy to bear the characteristic marks of its particularity and universality. By its Africanity,

African philosophy is a particular regional contextualization, reflection and expression of the universal; and by its *philosophicality*, it is a universalization, a universal vocation, ordination, destination and determination of and in the African particular” (emphasis mine). O. M. Osuagwu: 1999. *African Historical Reconstruction*, Vol. 1 (Owerri Nigeria: Amamihe Publications, Assumpta Press, 1999), p. 28.

4. Redefining Ethnicity Within “Complementary System of Thought” in African Philosophy

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Abstract: The essay uses the principle of complementarity, as this is a dominant idea in African philosophy to re-evaluate the issue of ethnicity. It discusses the effect which the challenges of the ambivalent nature of all human existential situations can have in the use of ethnicity as a category of interaction in multi-ethnic contexts. Most central to this challenge are some false assumptions that have entered into the way we view the world in everyday life. The essay endeavors to expose the cause of these false assumptions. It shows how the principle of complementarity can be used as a higher principle of integration to redress some of the weaknesses they present. By so doing it rearticulates ethnicity as a multi-functional concept that can serve as a positive catalyst of changes in society. **Key Words:** African Philosophy, Complementary Reflection, conflict resolution, ethnicity, integration, Igbo Philosophy.

1. The Complex Nature of the Question and the Fundamental Illusion

In the debates about the nature and character of ethnicity, there is a growing tendency among social theorists to reduce it merely to the status of an artificial social construct devised for the attainment of group specific interests. This tendency is worrisome if one considers the benefits that might ensue if the concept of ethnicity were subject to multifunctional and differentiated usage. One of these major benefits is the role which the factor of ethnicity could play as one of the most important catalysts of positive changes in multicultural and multiethnic contexts. Arguing from this restricted and one dimensional perspective Ejobowah contends that “contemporary ethnic groups are socially constructed” (Ejobowah 2001: 51). On his part, Diamond points out that “in ethnically divided societies with low level of socioeconomic development [...] ethnicity is mobilized by elites as a resource in their competition for the scarce but expanding resources of class formation controlled by the state” (Diamond 1988: 326). In the case of Africa, many, as Jacquin-Berdal points out, consider ethnicity “a colonial creation” and one of those unpleasant heritages of a hegemonic capricious type of colonial mentality” (Jacquin-Berdal 2003: 67). It is in this

connection that Ouchu seeks to demonstrate, in the case of Kenya, that “both ethnic groups and ethnic identity are not necessary or a natural outcome of cultural beliefs and practices; rather, they are the creation of politics and ideology (Ouchu 2002: 4). Here he agrees with Glickmann and Furia for whom ethnicity in most African states is “instrumental rather than primordial” (Glickman and Furia 1995: 3). According to Brubaker, one of the greatest difficulties posed by this constructivist approach is the “tendency to take discrete, bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis” (Brubaker 2004: 7-27). The difficulty that Brubaker writes about can be attributed to the elusive nature of the concept itself as this is occasioned by *the ambivalent nature of all human existential situations*. One of the gravest consequences of this ambivalence is that it can delimit our perception of the world and thereby create an illusion about the nature of objects. This ambivalence creates three major illusions that are closely connected and which easily complicate issues in multiethnic matters. The effect of these illusions on our perception of the world can be expressed as they are contained in these overhaul worthy assumptions:

1. That in a given system units can attain set goals without reference to all the units involved and most especially with regard to those they consider dispensable.
2. That in multiethnic contexts, the greatest threat is always from the outside.
3. That the right to ethnicity cleavage is a fundamental natural right that entitles to absolute otherness even in pluralistic multi-state contexts.

The position of social constructivist theorists alludes to this illusion but since they did not take into account the cause of this illusion, they mistakenly conclude that ethnicity is a negative factor that is good for nothing other than that of manipulation and exploitation of people. On account of this weakness of the constructivists’ position, the factor of ethnicity is very likely to present difficulties in its usage as an operative concept. Where the very nature of ethnicity is not clearly spelled out and the cause of this illusion exposed, the factor of ethnicity will hardly attain its optimal usage in multiethnic context. Moreover, there are chances that arguments arising from ethnic sentiments will always be appealing and can always be misused since people will always assume that the right to cleavage bestows sacrosanct natural rights that can never be appropriated. In this case, all means will be adjudged

necessary to secure such rights no matter how illegitimate. In unavoidably pluralistic multi-cultural contexts, as we have it in the world today, understanding the foundation and character of this illusion presents itself as one of the most important tasks in any matter that has to deal with ethnicity.

2. The Character of the Illusion

The concept ethnicity, just like race, clan, sex, tribe, nationality, etc., belongs to those categories on which the mind relies to address ambivalent human existential situations. The human mind perceives the world in such ambivalent terms as *similarity* and *dissimilarity*, *sameness* and *otherness*, *harmony* and *difference*, *unity* and *diversity*, *good and evil*, etc. (Asouzu 2005: 409-426). What the mind does with perceived objects in relationship to these categories goes a long way in determining how a person or group of individuals act or react and the values they are capable of attaching to multi-ethnic contexts. Writing in similar terms, Kalu avers that “depending on the circumstance and situation, human interactions may breed primordial or instrumentalist tendencies” (Kalu 2001: 46). Such instrumentalist tendencies are largely controlled by our interests as cognitive blocks and this is why we tend to interpret differences and similarities in keeping with those cognitive blocks controlling them. In very concrete situations for example, the same person can be perceived variously as circumstances and needs arise. This is why Mr. Otto, a native born Bavarian is perceived differently in Munich his place of birth; in Hamburg, he may be perceived by his fellow Germans as a Bavarian; in London, he is a German and in New York he is a European. Likewise, Anna is a Hispanic in Los Angeles, an American Indian in Tokyo, a white woman in Accra etc. In ethnic matters and in most asymmetrical situations of challenge, the mind seeks to capture similarities and differences in this ambivalent mode. More often than not, it does so in a non-differentiated one-dimensional way and in view of those cognitive blocks that constitute and favor the interests of the perceiver or actor. This is in keeping with the human tendency to seek ones interests first most especially in asymmetrical situations (Asouzu 2003: 21). Over and above all, by trying to capture certain things unique with reference to persons and situations in this way, the mind always seeks to create advantages for its own survival. One can say that, the underlying tendency in dealing with most complex situations that involve differences and similarities is the human fundamental instinct for self-preservation. In this case, actors interpret situations in view of those

things and persons that enable them survive most and master situations in keeping with their advantages and interests. This fact helps us understand better the assertion that *ethnicity is a social construct*; but such assertion only provides incomplete information concerning the nature or character of ethnicity and in what way it is such a construct. In view of its complex nature, a higher explicative index is needed should we fully understand its nature and its important role in determining human action in complex situations as we have this today in multiethnic and multi-cultural contexts. Based on this higher explicative index we can all the more appreciate the role other natural factors play in an issue of this kind. To such factors belong human natural inclination for suspicion, jealousy, competition, pride, envy, hatred, human natural fascination for games and mischief. Others are memories of subjugation and conquest, of exploitation and denigration; thirst for revenge and feeling of indebtedness for past wrongs etc. In our own times, we can hardly underestimate the role which such factors as religion, unbridled quest for economic gains, extreme forms of pathological superiority complexes etc. play in a matter of this nature. Where ethnicity is seen merely from the optic of a social construct devised for the attainment of selfish ends these intricate and often more important dimensions easily elude us. There is something more to ethnicity than the constructivists make us understand.

Of all these factors, those relating to human fundamental instinct for self-preservation appear most basic in accounting for the difficulties the concept poses in multiethnic contexts. Due to human fundamental instinct for self-preservation, the mind reacts to perceived similarities and differences, in multiethnic contexts, after the maxim *the nearer the better and the safer* (Asouzu 2005: 78-83). In other words, ethnic matters are some of those decisive moments where the mind seeks to convince itself that a person or a group of individuals are better off and are safer in the midst of those that share certain common, unique or exclusive qualities. These are our kith and kin, our own tribal people, people of our race, of our nation etc. Thus in most contentious situations of life, we tend to act in keeping with this maxim. Worst still, we tend to assume that there are certain natural rights attached to its dictates in the form of an ordinance of the natural law.

If carefully observed, this maxim stems from a compulsion of a semi-rational kind as it is founded on trappings of our natural instinct for self-preservation. In this form, it easily heightens exclusivist tendencies and the desire to secure everything for the inner circle. To this feeling of intimate belongingness is attached also the feeling of

false security and these can easily reinforce the feeling that the right to cleavage entitles to certain privileges which can be reclaimed with impunity. This tendency becomes most obvious in the negative formulation of this maxim which can be articulated thus: The more removed a unit is from the world of our intimate belongingness, our ethnic world for example, the less are we obliged to it and the more can we exploit it freely with impunity for our own survival and in this case even without remorse. It is in this sense that one can shed some light on the much acclaimed misuse of ethnicity as an instrument of colonial manipulation and exploitation. The same can be said in the misuse of ethnicity for ideological purposes as we have this in various guises in Afrocentric, Eurocentric, ethnocentric, intended and unintended ethno-philosophic commitments.

What this shows is that the tendency to ethnic cleavage has a dimension that is natural to human nature but which can easily be misappropriated and manipulated. In other words, ethnicity is not a negative factor per se but one that has an inherently ambivalent dimension. In the case of colonialism and similar cases, one can say that these merely aggravated a latent human disposition to mismanage this ambivalence. Contrary to the insinuation that ethnicity in Africa is a purely colonial creation, Ihonvbere calls our attention to the fact that "prior to the advent of colonial domination, ethnic groups in Africa fought violently between and within themselves" (Ihonvbere 2001: 70). Generally, one can say that in asymmetrical conflict situations living organisms have the natural tendency to cling to those closest to them in view of securing some interests for their survival and in view of warding off external aggressors. In this direction, recourse to ethnic cleavage, in a way contrary to its full determination, is one of the most widely preferred tacit criteria for selection and reward in view of those persons and situations that we think favor our survival most. The more remote and anonymous this external-other is perceived, the more is the human mind inclined to define its interests towards this other in an exclusivist absolute manner. Such a situation must not have to do with such extreme and clear cases as colonialism if one considers the fact that even in our highly industrialized and apparently civilized world today, the factor of ethnicity has turned out to be one of the most dominant and powerful forces that help to determine the direction of legislation among law makers. The case of selective integration of non-citizens with Japanese ancestry (*Nikkeijin*) by the Japanese government in the 1990s to resolve a sensitive labor law serves as a typical example in this regard. Here, the Japanese government preferred to import over

200,000 non-citizens with Japanese ancestry, mostly immigrants from Brazil and closed her labor doors tightly “to other unskilled workers, most of whom were Asians without Japanese ancestry” (Yamanaka 2004: 166-168). The case of liberal Switzerland, in her definition of multi-ethnic nationhood, serves as another example. Here, the process of inclusion “excluded those who were not considered to be members of the multi-ethnic nation: traveling people and Jews until the 1870s and, up to the present day, immigrant workers and their families” (Wimmer 2004: 51). In complex situations of this nature, the tendency is to interpret categories of similarity and difference in a way that favors one’s interests and in exclusion of those of others who happen not to share the same intimate relationship with the subject.

3. Search for a Universal Principle of Integration

Having now elucidated why the factor of ethnicity is easily misidentified, it remains to shed some light on the limitations associated with the maxim of *the nearer the better and the safer* as this is occasioned by the challenges of all human ambivalent situations. The most crucial issue connected with this maxim is its implicit negation of the legitimizing role of a higher principle of integration. This can be very fatal in multiethnic matters.

The first illusion ensuing from this maxim is the assumption that units can attain set goals optimally, within the same system, and at the exclusion of the interests of some other units that necessarily enter into the definition of the system in question. Now, if a system is constituted of units, the realization of the interests of the units can hardly be achieved where the actors act in a way that negates the fact of a necessary link joining all stakeholders. This necessary link has the character of a higher principle of integration on the basis of which equity and justice can be guaranteed for all. Where actors pretend that such a higher principle of integration is not necessary and act in a way as to arrogate this function to themselves and thereby seek to legislate arbitrarily on matters of general interest, they invariably expose themselves to the risk of not realizing the goals they have set for themselves. The main reason for this is that in the negation or denial of the applicability of such a principle, either directly or indirectly, every unit has the tendency to secure its interests first, at the detriment of the others, and in keeping with the instinct of self-preservation. In this case, chances are that they hinder themselves mutually in the realization of their goals. In a situation of this nature, the measures needed, by any of the units to secure its interests, in utter negation of the interests

of others, are commensurate to what it takes to undermine even its own interests. In most practical situations of life, we see that most of those actions directed against the interests of others invariably attract counter measures that make the optimal realization of set goals remote and in some cases impossible.

The second assumption ensuing from this illusion is that the greatest threat is always from the outside. Here the outside is defined as all those groups and individuals whose interests are diametrically opposed to that of the group in question and against whom the group must unite to defend its interests. In the excessive sensitivity concerning external threats, most ethnic groups make themselves ill prepared for the challenges of differences arising from within their own rank and file, such that when these do arise they easily destabilizes and consumes the groups concerned. In the absence of commitment to such a higher principle, ethnic groups are exposed to incessant internal strife and to the danger of mutual annihilation. It is in consideration of this fact that Scherrer calls our attention to the fact that inter state conflicts in recent decades are “rather exceptional phenomena” when compared to the “tremendous increase of intra-state warfare and non-war types of mass violence such as genocide and mass murder” (Scherrer 1998: 8). Lack of commitment to such a higher principle of integration, can shed more light on incessant cases of genocide within apparently similar ethnic groups as the case of the Tutsi and Hutu in Rwanda or the ethnic wars of attrition in Yugoslavia stand to testify. The moment tribal, clannish and ethnic mentalities supplant the need for an overriding higher principle of integration, tribal, clannish and ethnic sentiments, in their obsession with differences, show their close affinity to racism and all its excesses since “racism involves above all an oversensitivity to cultural difference” (Hiddleston 2005: 47). What this shows is that it does not belong to the nature of units within a given system to adopt discrimination or rejection as an operative principle of action. They do so at the risk of self-immolation. Elements of discrimination, rejection, hatred, do not belong intrinsically to the conditions needed for the survival of any system. To such a condition belongs a more positive principle whose necessary constituents are geared towards maintaining the life of the system in question. Such is the character of a higher principle of integration to whose intrinsic constituents belong such elements as commitment to unity, wholeness, comprehensiveness, totality and openness to the future.

The third illusion ensuing from the maxim of *the nearer the better and the safer* is the assumption that the right to cleavage entitles

to absolute otherness and in this sense to the use of the privileges ensuing from such rights in a manner that can imperil and even negate the interests of other stakeholders without serious consequences. A typical example in this direction is the case of Nigeria as a multiethnic nation state. For many here, the impression is created that the state is the overriding principle of appropriation by reason of its natural rights to guarantee harmony among stakeholders. It is in this sense that one can assess the conflicts of attrition, in this nation, being fostered by such ethnic groupings as OPC (Oduwa People's Congress), MASSOB (Movement for Actualization of the sovereign state of Biafra), Agaba, MOSOP (Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People) APC (Arewa Peoples Congress) NDVF (Niger Delta Volunteer Force) etc. Since the right to ethnic cleavage is seen as a natural right, it is easily brought into necessary connection with the right of freedom and self-determination of a people. In this case, it is viewed as something that entitles to all the privileges associated with these rights such that all involved endeavor to use all means at their disposal to uphold and preserve their rights even when this amounts to the negation of the rights of other stakeholders within the same national framework. In such ambivalent situations, in the passionate and blind pursuance of those interests perceived as the natural rights of units, in total negation of a higher principle of harmony, stakeholders easily forget some severe consequences that go with such approach. One of the most severe of these is that "if self-determination is granted on account of good fortune, the units will be sustained while the wealth lasts" (Ejobowah 2001: 121) and this because of lack of commitment to a higher principle of integration. What this shows is that the assumption that ethnicity can serve as the sole legitimizing principle of action in multiethnic contexts is grossly flawed. It is precisely for this reason that issues relating to control and appropriation of resources (*resource-control*), in multiethnic contexts, can never be resolved on the basis of winner takes-all as we are misled to believe due to ambivalence of our situation. Such matters are best handled within the context of a higher principle of integration which is capable of guaranteeing the equitable participation of all stakeholders.

Now, as overhaul worthy as the above mentioned assumptions may appear, they turn out to be some of the most preferred action-guiding principles in most asymmetrical multiethnic situations of life. As a matter of fact, they are some of the hardly questioned dogmas of common sense experience. The result is that a maxim that is semi-rational and beclouded with illusion, is often readily elevated to the

status of a general law governing human actions. In the absence of an overriding principle of integration that regulates all interests within a given system, the issue of similarity and dissimilarity, as we have this in most multiethnic context would always remain unmanageable. To redress the difficulties posed by this illusion, the first step subsists in exposing the semi-rational nature of its foundation. Besides, there is need to create a platform for the articulation of human action on a more differentiated universal comprehensive basis far removed from the limitations imposed by this maxim. It is by so doing that the contradictions and paradoxes ensuing from adherence to such maxims become obvious. Such a universal platform must be in a position to harmonize interests resulting from differences in a way that guarantees optimal realization of the interests of all stakeholders. The principle of complementarity offers such a universal and comprehensive platform. In a given framework of action, the principle of complementarity shows why the negation of the interests of any one of the stakeholders by any of the units involved invariably leads to self-negation. It suffices now to outline some of the major aspects of this principle as it forms the idea of anonymous traditional African philosophers of the complementary system of thought. Thereafter, attempts would be made to reformulate this principle in a complementary type of reflection in view of making it concretely adaptable to more complex situations as we have them today in multiethnic contexts.

4. Complementary System of Thought in Traditional African Philosophy

Just like all human societies, traditional African societies had their deepest moments and shared much of human weaknesses with regard to human inhumanity to other beings. This notwithstanding, these societies adhered largely to dictates of the principle of complementarity in view of surmounting some of these shortcomings. The success achievable by recourse to this principle is largely accountable for what has come to be widely characterized and admired as the traditional African spirit of *universal brotherhood* and *communalism*. As a principle of integration and social progress, the principle of complementarity is firmly anchored in the thinking of most anonymous traditional African philosophers of the complementary system of thought as the case of traditional Igbo (a Nigerian ethnic nationality) philosophers stands out clearly to testify. For these Igbo philosophers, the universe is constituted of units of mutual complementary interacting forces within the framework of the whole and in view of a future which gives

full authentication to human action. In view of this future, these philosophers insist that *ihe ukwu kpe azu* (the greatest events lie in the future). This approach is very evident not only in their social theories but in their teaching about the universe in general (Asouzu 2005: 111-129; 155-208).

Commenting on elements of this complementary approach to reality, Kaboha avers that, these societies treated all areas of life “as part of an integrated whole which also include all nature”. He goes on to add: “in a traditional African mind this does not lead to confusion, but shows how the African derives his ideas and way of life from the integration that he sees in the diversity of nature around him” (Kaboha 1992: 69-70).

With reference to ancient Egyptian philosophers, Kamalu observes that for them, in matters of ethnical conduct a “moral agent always gets what he or she deserves; every deed, good and bad, returns to the doer” (Kamalu 1990: 7). This is consequent to the type of intricate mutual relationship existing between all units within any given framework.

Writing about the Igbos of Nigeria Nwala avers: “the Igbo world-view implies two basic beliefs: (1) the unity of all things and (2) an ordered relationship among all beings in the universe. Consequently, there is belief in the existence of order and interaction among all beings. [...] The gods and men live a symbiotic life, one of mutual and reciprocal relationship. Men fed the gods and the gods provide health, fertility of soil and reproduction” (Nwala 1985: 54, 57). It is in view of the principle of complementarity that one can better understand why traditional African philosophers view human relationship in terms of solidarity, togetherness, and community-centeredness. This approach stems largely from their understanding historical processes as something constituted fundamentally of insufficiency and fragmentation as aspects of the complementary determination of reality in general. For Igbo philosophers of the complementary system of thought, the idea *ibu ayi danda* or complementarity is not merely a matter of abstract theorizing. For them, this idea is something that permeates their existential living which can be characterized concretely as lived, sung and breathed complementarity.

In describing the relationship of the individual to his world, these traditional African philosophers of the complementary system of thought, took pains to point out the important role which differences play in the nature of things in general. Differences for them, can only be fully articulated within the framework of a complementary whole.

This approach comes out mostly in their practical categorization of beings. This they did in such a manner that they accord higher status to super-natural beings while recognizing at the same time the intrinsic complementary relationship joining such beings to beings of the natural order. In this way, they sought to underline the important role which the harmony of differences plays at all levels of determination. It is for this reason that traditional Igbo philosophers of the complementary system of thought while considering the Supreme Being *Chukwu* as the ultimate being, found it expedient to relate his existence to all other cosmic forces both natural and supernatural. This approach derives from the type of fascination which the complementary practical relations between all entities evoked in the minds of these philosophers.

Their understanding of complementary integration was such that in considering the units the whole was intended and vice versa. We can then understand why these philosophers were able to see aspects of the divine and the sacred even in profane objects, places, spaces and times such that, for them, it is not something contradictory or unusual should certain objects, places and times assume extraordinary significances while retaining their normal everyday outlook. In this fusion of the real and the extraordinary subsists the transcendent dimension of space and time within the framework of a complementary unity of consciousness, which connects the subject with the totality of the world in all these extraordinary moments and places. This mode of conceptualization of reality cannot be accurately depicted as *anthropocentric or human-centered* as Kamalu seems to suggest (Kamalu 1990: 14). On the contrary, it can be rightly characterized as something comprehensive, total and unified. In relationship to human beings, this understanding of reality entails that all human actions obtain their legitimacy in the measure they are capable of integrating all possible relations in the course of their execution. What this means is that human beings uphold their being if they live in harmony with all the possible relations they find in nature insofar all cosmic forces form a complementary mutual whole. In this way, one can say that within the framework of this ontology the limit of my complementary capacity is the limit of my world.

For these philosophers therefore, reality can be articulated and be understood, *and systematically too*, if and only if it is viewed as complementarity of parts within the framework of the whole in a future referential manner. Besides, for them, the subject-object tension can be addressed adequately, and the autonomy of the subject upheld, in the

most natural way, only in a complementary manner since reality in its deepest and most sublime constitution evinces itself only as a mutual dynamic complementation of parts. This infinite mutual relationship takes the most concrete form in the relationship of human beings to the world and most especially in interpersonal relationship were they conceptualize the human person as a being that concretely radiates attributes of the divine. This attribute becomes most evident in the act of mutual complementary services. Here traditional Igbo philosophers of the complementary system of thought affirm that *mmadu bu chi ibeya* (human beings are gods to other human beings). Commenting on this view, Uchendu maintains: “Human interdependence is a constant theme in the folklore of the Igbo. It is the greatest of all values for them” (Uchendu 1965: 14). Basic to this deep sense of mutual dependence between units within the framework of a whole is a form of flexibility geared towards overcoming all form of artificial barriers that human beings erect to make community life and mutual interaction cumbersome. It is in this sense that Jacquin-Berdal avers that the social systems that the Europeans, in the nineteenth century, were trying to impose on the Africans “were marked by their inflexibility” (Jacquin-Berdal 2003: 68) in comparison to the flexible and fluid social system of traditional African societies. Within this ambience, there is a striking form of complementary relationship that has a thoroughgoing ontological character. Here, complementarity is understood in the sense of dynamic complementation of services of all units in mutual dependency. That is to say, all aspects of reality are for these philosophers in a relationship of intricate mutual service such that to be is to be in a relationship of mutual joyous complementary service. This form of mutual dependence in complementarity is the foundation of the *experience of transcendent complementary unity of consciousness* as the truest expression of the moral imperative *jide ka iji* (always stick firmly to the foundation of being). The content of the demands of this experience is concretely captured in such statements of traditional Igbo philosophers: *aka nrii kwọọ aka ekpe aka ekpe akwọọ aka nri* (the left hand washes the right hand while the right hand washes the left) and *njiko ka* (togetherness is the greatest virtue). It is precisely on account of this mutual dependence that Nwala noted that for these philosophers human beings serve the gods in the hope of their returning the same services.

It is this idea of joyous service in complementarity that gives meaning and completion to this form of intricate complementary relationship. This is why for these thinkers, even if spiritual beings are

infinitely more superior to material beings, there is no contradiction in bringing them into a relationship of mutual service towards upholding the transcendent complementary unity of consciousness on which their reality is founded. In service, all aspects cohere and uphold their individuality and distinctiveness. In this way, the idea that *anything that exists serves a missing link* of reality in view of the unifying foundation of consciousness that gives ultimate meaning to reality finds full expression within the context of this ontology. Nowhere does this idea of complementarity take more concrete shape than in the way these philosophers understood the human personality and human potentialities. For these philosophers, the type of potentiality observable in human beings is not something that can be based on mere chance. For them, the human personality exhibits a very complex form such that human beings in their operation can be understood in terms of powers both material and immaterial. These interact with each other in ways that cannot be fully comprehended. This notwithstanding, these traditional African philosophers were unequivocal in their understanding of the human being as a person whose destiny goes beyond mere corporeal earthly existence. For them, human ultimate destiny subsists in the continued existence of the whole human person after death in the land of spirits (ana mmuo). This land of spirits is for them again so real that what obtains in daily life has its equivalent there. It is for this reason that this mode of existence shares fully in the mutual complementary relationship between all units. More still these philosophers opine that there is a concrete inseparable complementary link joining the living and the dead.

For these philosophers the idea of unity in complementarity is such a highly favored ontological axiom that they consider the level of success achievable in any given framework as something fully dependent on the capacity of all concerned to see themselves as beings that are necessarily dependent on each other mutually. This idea of mutual dependence is deeply founded on their understanding that fragmentation and insufficiency are necessary constituents of all historical processes. It is on account of this idea of human insufficiency that they attach much importance to the idea of toleration. In given historical situations therefore the issue of tolerance takes such a prominent place that the material no less than the immaterial, the weak no less than the strong, the spiritual no less than the corporeal combine to form a union of mutually co-existing units in complementary service. For them tolerance is a positive integrative idea of close union between beings of heterogeneous backgrounds.

Here, tolerance does not imply painful bearing or endurance of pains in silence. For these philosophers the strength of the powerful, the valor of the brave, the grandeur of mighty is fully dependent on what they undertake to accommodate the insufficiency of the weak and vice versa. They do so in the evident insight that smallest things are absolutely as necessary as the greatest considering the type of mutual intimate relationship existing between units within any given framework. Human co-existence implies therefore mutual co-existence in spite and because of human insufficiency and within a wider framework of the experience of transcendent complementary unity of consciousness. For the traditional Igbo philosophers of the complementary system of thought, this approach to the world gets full force in the acquisition of what is called *obi/mmuo eziokwu* (complementary totalizing mindset). It is this mindset that reveals to the subject that the meaning attached to any given action goes far beyond their immediate expression as to touch on wider networks of relations.

5. Universal Principles of Integration and Complementary Reflection

In complementary reflection, attempt is made to reformulate and expound the principle of complementarity more concretely as a guide towards the transformation of maxims of our action to general laws. This task constitutes the target of the work *The Method and Principles of Complementary Reflection in and Beyond African Philosophy* (Asouzu 2005: 277-285). Generally, complementary reflection uses its principles and imperative to address matters of limitation of maxims as we have them in multiethnic contexts. Here the general principles of complementary reflection as the principle of harmonious integration state that “anything that exists serves a missing link of reality and that all human actions are geared towards the joy of being” (281). This means that in any given framework or system of action all units, no matter how insignificant, enter necessarily into the definition of the system in question. To ensure that the life of the system is optimally maintained, all the units constituting it have to be considered in their insufficiency such that a typical human action, in all given situations, is understood as geared towards the joy of all concerned. This is why complementary reflection demands as its imperative: “Allow the limitations of being to be the cause of your joy” (281). By limitation of being is understood the capacity to view and accept all stakeholders in their relativity and insufficiency and the help and services rendered to

them as a part of the joy intended in one's own action. This is understandable if we bear in mind that this principle of integration is a *conditio sine qua non* for thinking about the existence of any given system. Without commitment to such categories as integration, tolerance, endurance, acceptance, readiness to forgive, to reconcile and to view the world in a comprehensive way and live the future open for the amendment of errors ensuing from inherent human insufficiency no system typical act is thinkable. These positive categories of integration belong intrinsically to the character of the principle of complementarity as its most dynamic moment. Here the idea of service as obligation, as foreseen by anonymous traditional African philosophers, plays a major role. Since all units, within a given system are necessarily related to each other, any services which they render each other turn out to be self-service. The same can be said of the denial of such services. In this sense, the idea of "mutual indebtedness and interdependence in complementarity" of all stakeholders within any given system is a fundamental axiom of complementary reflection (55). Where the principles and imperative of complementary reflection are in force, a negation of the interests of any of the stakeholders by any members of the system, is immediately perceived as a contradiction that is consequent to self-negation. In this case, the stakeholders come to the full awareness that consequent self-interest is anti-self-interest. In any given system, the units have no choice other than to adopt such a principle of action should they uphold their existence. It is based on consistent commitment to a principle of this nature that stakeholders can be aware of the illusion occasioned by the ambivalence of their situation. In this case, the measure of the level of rationality of their actions can be dependent on the measures they adopt to secure their interests which they perceive as necessarily related to those of others. Within multiethnic and multicultural contexts therefore, anyone who takes differences seriously must be committed to the legitimizing role of such a higher principle of integration as this is a *conditio sine qua non* for the existence of any given system.

Adhering to the dictates of this higher principle in our actions offers us therefore the conditions for transition to a higher level rationality insofar as it puts us in a position to break with the constraints imposed by the maxim of *the nearer the better and the safer* whose origin is the prompting of a semi-rational natural instinct of self-preservation. Adherence to the positive elements that are intrinsic to this principle as they sustain the *obi/mmuo eziokwu* (complementary totalizing mindset), as the faculty of integration, are

unavoidable for the life of any system. To these elements belong the capacity for forgiveness and reconciliation, to tolerate and to endure; the capacity to seek integration and unity as ends in themselves in view of upholding ones own survival. Sensitivity to the applicability of a higher principle of this nature is therefore very crucial in handling complex issues of acceptance and participation, integration and appropriation in multiethnic contexts. Here, stakeholders learn to see themselves as missing links that in their insufficiency are necessarily dependent on other stakeholders for their existence. In this way optimal conditions are created for the assessment of ethnicity as an enriching and positive factor in multiethnic contexts.

SOUTH AMERICA

5. Latin America Between Horror and Beauty: A Critical Approach to the Effects of Globalization

Yolanda Angulo Parra

Abstract: Throughout its history, Latin America has suffered the horrors of poverty and domination, both internal and external, which have intensified under the effects of globalization. Some analyses reflect only one side of the problem when they focus on the “negative” impact of globalization in terms of domination, exclusion and victimization. Others place hope on the beauty and the cultural richness of Latin America as a way of entering into globalization. This article analyzes relevant discourses of Latin American philosophy from a different perspective, focusing on the “productive” aspect of globalization, namely, the new issues generated by it, such as new cultural features and new subjects. The ultimate purpose of the paper is to shed some light on the new forms of resistance and subjects that have emerged as part of the globalization process. **Key words:** Latin American philosophy, cultural globalization, philosophy of liberation, resistance.

1. Introduction

Colonization and exploitation have been recurrent subject matters of philosophers and social scientists. Centuries have elapsed in Latin America since the European conquest took place, but many Indian cultures and Mestizos remain in many ways the same, unaffected by economic, political and social changes. Today, within the framework of globalization, many cultures are still waiting for an opportunity to overcome poverty and ignorance.

From the perspective of these groups, some of the problems discussed in current research show a different dimension with regards to globalization. For instance, the question of identity is not only a matter of looking for some kind of ideal self or community that has been lost or alienated during the course of history. It is rather an issue of a community overcoming its situation, either by becoming part of or enjoying the benefits of globalization, keeping its traditions and autonomy, or struggling against globalization with or without an alternative project.

Hence, a political and sociological conception of identity, understood as the search for common cultural elements to provide peoples with some distinctive mark is required for activism, for it gives

coherence and cohesion to groups engaged in different struggles. To the foregoing, one could add also a philosophical approach that interprets individual and collective identity as a creative cultural and historical process that avoids essentialist or ideal conceptions.

At the individual level, identity develops as the constitution of one's subjectivity. The way each individual internalizes the various types of codes must also be considered in order to understand how free moral subjects constitute themselves intertwined with determinant social factors. Cultural identity undergoes a similar, though long-term, process, resulting in various forms of subjectivities for, although each individual is unique, s/he shares beliefs, values and experiences with others. In order to describe present cultural groups in their political struggle and subjects in their varied cultural features, the constituting process has to be explored in its historical emergence, within the context of social practices and knowledge-power relations.

Albeit the real disadvantageous position of the majority of Latin American peoples, and without negating it, the traditional dichotomist interpretation of such peoples as "victims" facing "dominators" (regardless of their historical figure: Spanish or Portuguese conquerors, colonizers, capitalists, international markets, transnational companies and globalization), must be reviewed within the framework of a different theory of power. Consequently, the metaphysical conception of identity regarded as a fixed essence that was somehow lost in history and which must be recovered, should be abandoned.

Thus, we will be able to open the possibility of exploring the "productive"¹ side of globalization that springs when one poses different questions from a skeptical or different standpoint: What does globalization produce in the cultural sphere? What powers and regimes of truth articulate with the New World Order? What are the strategies and mechanisms used by globalization in its expanding process? What hidden forms of violence and resistance are taking place? In short, what kind of subjects are emerging?

Based on the works of Michel Foucault, the analysis will be guided by a genealogical hypothesis, according to which the effects of globalization must not be regarded only in their negative sense, i.e., as a process of alienation of peoples and individuals that erases cultural differences and traditions. This grasps only the visible and unilateral side of power, with implicit metaphysical and teleological views. Such a process should be examined from other assumptions, in different terms than those resulting from oppositions such as truth-falsehood;

authentic-unauthentic; good-evil, dominated-dominators, included-excluded and so on.

We cannot escape from an initial standpoint. Nietzsche's frog perspective conception, Wittgenstein's language games or Appadurai's "landscapes" remind us where our body and mind stand. But this does not mean we are doomed to an unsurpassable "essence". On the contrary, accepting one's idiosyncrasy is the first step in taking Foucault's challenge: "dare to think differently in order to become different". This opens the question whether to struggle against globalization in order to affirm what we are, recapture what we were, or find out what we have become. From such results a balance must be made to select what one's community finds worth keeping or must be discarded.

A resort to history is inevitable in a genealogical approach, so certain references will be made to Latin American history of philosophy, limited to four relevant stages, which I call: (1) the "critical humanism" period, which appeared during the first decades of the Colony; (2) the "identity search" period, developed on account of independence movements; (3) the "philosophical assumption and reproduction" period, which took place from the eighteenth century to the first decades of the twentieth century; and (4) the "affirming of the difference" period along with a second "identity search" developed during the 20th century, still effective.

2. The Effects of the Paradoxical Nature of Globalization in Latin American Culture

The concept of globalization, although new, has passed during the last decades through several changes, recorded in the research based on the modifications of its tactics and procedures. From the economic approach of the first decades, the focus is now centered on cultural matters. Accordingly, Alain Touraine states that "the period of illusions ended on September 11. Since then, everything has changed in such a way that critical thought is no longer possible using the same concept of globalization, without considering that it is not so true that we are in this world basically capitalistic or economical – of course we are in such a world, there is no doubt – but we are more in a period of war, and war for a sociologist means that the central categories are friend-enemy, as a Nazi ideologist used to say" (Touraine 2003: 31, my translation from Spanish). Touraine argues that the economic side of globalization is no longer the most important one, but works only as a dynamics of destruction of everything other than economy. Thus we

are talking now about an uncontrollable “postglobalization”, since no one can rule the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank or the World Trade Organization.

It is well known that globalization is understood in a threefold dimension: economical, political and cultural. Regarding the latter, equalization is carried out by commensurability mechanisms, such as the performativity and efficiency criteria to legitimate all activities, from scientific to institutional performance. As Jean-François Lyotard pointed out back in the seventies, the new companies demand performativity, that is: the optimization between input and output, with the efficiency criterion to legitimate knowledge. Anyone who does not adapt to such criteria in postindustrial societies is bound to be out of the game. Globalization also puts knowledge into circulation, homogenizing the criteria to determine the content of epistemological, ethical and aesthetical concepts, such as truth, falsehood, good, evil, beauty and ugliness.

Globalization was born in the economic field, when transnational companies started looking for better ways to increase productivity at lower costs, involving several countries in the manufacture of one product. Since then, developing countries have contributed mostly labor, staying out of the fundamental decisions and benefits of capital. These changes affect peoples’ hopes and desires, for they have been equalized. But standardization bears its contrary, since cultures and individuals are trying harder than ever to affirm their uniqueness, demanding the right to cultural diversity and respect to their race, gender, nationality and religion.

In this paradoxical context, is it possible to demand respect for cultural difference and at the same time be part of economic and political globalization? Do these claims come from the affected people or from intellectuals? An affirmative answer to the first question is the real challenge of our time, discussed by intellectuals, fought for by activists and frequently achieved by “specific intellectuals” in everyday life. Globalization, as Manuel Castells, a Mexican expert on the subject (Stavenhagen 2004: 131) puts it, is the possibility acquired by a system to operate at a planetary level, thanks to three conditions found in our time: technological, organizational and institutional capabilities. It is all about networks spread all over the world to articulate the productive system. At the same time, it is an excluding process since those networks are selective and leave aside everything not useful to its purposes. In such a scenario, ironic expressions mention a nostalgia for exploitation due to its “including” nature.

The integration of economy in the global village can lead to mistaking globalization with internationalization of the economy. However, the latter is a very old practice while the former is recent. The presence of globalization along with its benefits can also be illusory even for sectors that believe they are covered by its protecting wings. For instance, an important research institute in Africa or Latin America may be operating physically in those continents but as part of the networks of American or Japanese universities. This also applies to *maquiladoras* in Mexico because they are not national industries entangled in transnational production networks but just an example of internationalized production.

As a consequence of what Castell calls the “structural irrelevance” of those excluded, he accounts for a parallel process carried out by those not comprised within globalization, who look for the “construction of sense of the social actors” regarding individual and collective identities. Thus, opposite to globalized people, there would be regional religions, ethnics, genders, territorial identities, outside the cosmopolitanism generated by the Internet and other communication means. So, to provide themselves with an identity, those excluded by and from globalization resort to history to readapt historical materials, fulfilling the extra function of acting as refuge and defense.

Gilberto Giménez points out that Castell’s conception of identity and subjectivity is essentialist and constructivist, thus forgetting a very important philosophical tradition that emphasizes the role of unconscious psychological forces and the cultural context in the formation of the subject and its identity. This tradition comes from Nietzsche, Freud and Foucault. Giménez points out that the subject and its identity is always situated between freedom and determinism, and uses the example of Mexican immigrants to the United States of America, whose sufferings are due to bad labor conditions, lack of freedom resulting from their illegal status in such a country and loneliness. Nonetheless, they adapt to the new production techniques, but never stop thinking about what they left behind. Giménez concludes that, although the nation-state has lost its former power, most world population still identify with their national communities. So the issue of building an identity is not reduced to a free and conscious will, but is entangled in social processes and institutions as well.

3. Latin American Philosophy Facing Globalization

One of the most discussed questions about globalization is whether it tends to homogenize cultures or to fragment them. As Mexican researcher on human rights Rodolfo Stavenhagen comments, “there are those who affirm – and regret – that globalization is imposing a cultural model” while “others affirm that world multiculturalism is just a dominating strategy for the benefit of imperialism because it creates market niches culturally constructed, thus fragmenting the capacity of resistance and protest” (Stavenhagen 2004: 131).

The desperate and disadvantageous situation suffered for centuries, plus the current fear of losing identity and cultural values, deemed by many as the patrimony that Latin America has to offer to the world, has caused various responses. One of the most representative ones comes from “philosophy of liberation”, an intellectual movement that, although a recent creation, can be traced back to the Colonization period (provided we make an abstraction of important historical differences). When one of the strongest and more violent cultural clashes in Western history occurred, namely, the invasion and conquest of the Americas, the first friar-philosophers to settle in these lands found new subject matters and problems, forthcoming from the contact with different cultures, amazing new topographies and landscapes.

Friars had to deal first with the impact caused by this cultural clash, among other issues, such as the ontological problem of the Indian nature, moral problems regarding war and subjection, the political question of how could the Spanish monarchs intervene to solve the catastrophic situation of the New World and evangelization techniques. These exceptionally new events were interpreted with ethical concepts to denounce and alleviate the injustices committed by conquerors against natives in the context of the first American critical humanism.

Later on, Creoles and Mestizos took the task of denouncing the abuses of Colonial authorities and wealthy classes against the heterogeneous emerging population of Latin American countries like Mexico. The independence period of many American countries, marked by the identity search phase that comprises the years before and after the independence wars, opened debates among Peninsulars, Creoles and Mestizos. They broadly discussed the question of who were better people, accusing each other of being savages, uncivilized, uneducated, lascivious and heretics.

During the assumption and reproduction period, philosophical activity lost its creative force and was reduced to studying European philosophers and spreading their ideas, with very little to say in terms

of originality. In 19th century Mexico, the country was divided between liberals and conservatives, with a foreign Emperor as governor and with the task of building a project for the rising young nation. Philosophers turned to Europe for ideological help. The triumph of the liberals marked the path to follow: substitute old structures for new ones, changing the authority of the Church for a secular one. Inspired by the works of August Comte, Gabino Barreda made a philosophical interpretation of history and pronounced the positivist stage of humanity, which Mexico should follow. Hence, positivism was convenient for an educational project based on science and the idea of progress. Reactions against positivism came from young philosophers such as José Vasconcelos and Antonio Caso, who demanded a place for religion and art, thus initiating the second identity period.

Vasconcelos fought against North American culture and its pragmatist spirit, technique and science, opposing to it Latin American art, and other cultural manifestations. He then tried to build a nationalistic identity based on the Spanish roots that gave birth to Mestizos, the fifth “cosmic race”, aimed to become the world leader in the future. Vasconcelos, however, despised Indian culture, an attitude that attracted the critiques of philosophers like Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui, who, by contrast, placed his hopes for the future on Indian cultures that should be rescued from oblivion and misery.

Through various paths, during the course of the 20th century, the identity search period recovers the strength of the 16th century. Samuel Ramos is widely known for his inquiries about the profile of Mexican people, and Augusto Salazar Bondy posed the question about the possibility of an original Latin American philosophy. Finally, partially inspired by 16th century discourses, philosophy acquired new vigor by making poverty and domination the central subject matters of its discourse. This resulted in one of the most representative philosophical discourses of Latin America: philosophy of liberation.

In Argentina during the sixties, a group of politically concerned philosophers, in many ways, heirs of the theology of liberation, developed a philosophical discourse aimed at asserting Latin American cultural values and liberating its population from the domination suffered for centuries. Domination was attributed to Western “Rational” cultures that used their power and knowledge against Third World countries. A different cultural identity should be affirmed to face European and North American dominant cultures.

Since the seventies, Enrique Dussel has explored dominating practices, which he believes must be eradicated through a liberation

process. In recent years, he has included globalization to his inquiries and created new categories, such as “trans-modernity”, according to which Latin American peoples have developed new forms of resistance to globalization:

The thesis advanced in this essay is that modernity’s recent impact on the planet’s multiple cultures (Chinese, Southeast Asian, Hindu, Islamic, Bantu, Latin American) produced a varied “response” by all of them to the modern “challenge”. Renewed, they are now erupting on a cultural horizon “beyond” modernity. I call the reality of that fertile multicultural moment “*trans-modernity* (since “post”-modernity is just the latest moment of Western modernity). China, a privileged but not exclusive example, shows us just how recent a phenomenon European hegemony is only two centuries old and only beginning to influence the intimacy of non-European everyday life in the last fifty years (since World War II), principally because of the mass media, especially television (Dussel 2002: 221).

The hypothesis of the new cultural movements, based largely on the assumption that European hegemony is only two centuries old, and its influence on everyday life only fifty years old, leaves space for popular cultures to affirm their identity without being subsumed by alien practices. But, how is this possible? According to Dussel, some cultural practices have remained untouched by globalization. If Latin America is the result of the modernization process started by Europe and continued by North America, only peoples not reached by such processes are in a position to stand in front of modernization and value their own culture. If post-modernity emerges from within modernity, revealing its crisis, trans-modernity is used to indicate those moments that “were never incorporated into the European vision”.

Excluded cultures are thus in a privileged position to develop a new civilization for the 21st century. This insight is based on a new interpretation of the role Europe and North America have played in world history in order to “shift to a non-Eurocentric interpretation” of history. Thus, Dussel is able to destroy the long-term hypothesis of Europe exerting a hegemonic role since the rise of the Greek civilization. In brief, non-Western cultures, downgraded for centuries would now be returning to, or rather recapturing, their status as actors of history since Western culture, in spite of its economic, technical and military supremacy, has not been able to erase from the face of the earth the character and identity of cultures now emerging with new strength.

Poets and novelists place their hopes on art. Some time ago, Colombian poet William Ospina relates, Nobel Prize-winner Gabriel

García Márquez, was questioned about how Latin America was defending itself from cultural invasion, to which he answered that Latin Americans were the ones invading the world with literature, music, fine arts and gastronomy. Dussel resorts to everyday life and Ospina mostly to art as ways of asserting a Latin American identity to face globalization. Nonetheless, Ospina refers to the two faces of the god Janus:

Latin America [...] in the 20th century passed from invisibility and remoteness to being the center of the dramas of the contemporary world but also the center of its spiritual adventures. Everybody is aware that our current presence in the international realm is profoundly marked by the difficulties attached to our reality by the persistence of very ancient problems and by the emergence of very modern problems. Everyone is aware of the existence of drug traffic, terrorism, political and economical exiles. But we must not allow those facts to eclipse or annul the other great truth, the one of vigor and the growing actuality of our cultures, the way in which we are reinterpreting the tradition of the West and the unique flavor of our creations [...] Latin America has entered into equal terms in dialogue with the world in the field of culture (Ospina 2001: 1).

Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, a Cuban philosopher residing in Germany, proposes intercultural dialogue, based on cultural diversity, as an alternative response to the so-called “planet-civilized organization”. Argentinean Domingo F. Sarmiento suggests that civilization corresponds to a homogenized and universal American or European culture, and patriotism is only nostalgia. Against such approach, according to Fornet-Betancourt, the disjunctive between civilization and barbarism expresses the ambivalence of our time, as producers and reproducers of both civilization and barbarism at the same time. So, it is not the case of a historical process in which barbarism is being left behind while civilization advances.

Hence, instead of adhering to the supposedly “civilized people” in order to become their equal, cultures must keep their differences, not as a romantic return to the past, but in the variety of their respective *Weltanschauungs*. The object of Fornet’s proposal is to formulate a regulative idea to achieve an intercultural articulation of all alternative responses to barbarism in one sole strategy susceptible to being universalized.

Similar to Dussel’s approach, Fornet-Betancourt sees in cultures the reserves of humanity to face present problems. Therefore, the respect of cultures should be an ethical imperative: “The observation and fulfillment of such imperative is not, however, an end, for the ultimate purpose of such an ethical demand is not to preserve or keep

cultures as static entities bearing absolute ontological values but to guarantee the free individual realization of the subjects acting within them” (Fornet-Betancourt 2002: 3).

The ethical demand proposed by Fornet-Betancourt intends to be a resource to actually provide practical conditions for the subjects’ appropriation of their own cultural reserves grasped from their traditions as a historical and anthropological (not ontological) starting point to build their identities. Now, identity for Fornet-Betancourt means a constant liberation process that requires also constant reflection on each person’s cultural universe.

It seems that, from the contradiction free-will/determination, the emphasis is placed on the former, so even if Fornet-Betancourt deems culture as a strategic point in the search for identity, it must not be taken just as a refuge but as a constant conflict for the decision-making process of all responsible free human beings. He concludes by stating that freedom cannot be exerted without a cultural conditioning, and culture cannot exist without human free will and the reflective use of reason.

Such a Sartrean point of view is based on a dialectical conception of history, with its respective analysis of internal conflicts and contradictions, which opens another dialectical tension, namely, the one of oppression and liberation. Fornet-Betancourt resorts to Dussel’s category of victim to understand this situation. Thus, his response to globalization is the construction of an alternative program based on intercultural dialogue to integrate a new world culture that replaces current world organization. Based on ethical solidarity, cultures must then open their doors by means of intercultural dialogue as a form of life or theoretical/practical attitude that welcomes the ‘Other’ as subject. In Fornet’s own words:

Paraphrasing Ortega y Gasset, one could say that the liberating ethical option in the conflict between traditions presupposes the conviction of the subject who recognizes that ‘he is himself as well as the other, and that if he does not save the other, he does not save himself’[...] Without this intersubjective act about the installing of solidarity as reflexive ‘mediated reciprocity’ [...] one cannot explain the ‘Liberation-Principle’ since such reflexively chosen solidarity as a way of being and life is the one that trains subjects to historicize and make their freedom a fact, within a common liberating practice (Fornet-Betancourt 2003: 8).

Even though the subjects involved in intercultural dialogue may not always enter into symmetric conditions, the concept of victim does not seem to fit in Fornet-Betancourt’s proposal because he is presup-

posing active free-willed subjects. Otherwise, intersubjectivity could not take place. Curiously, Enrique Dussel's article cited here does not mention the word "victim" at all, contrary to previous writings in which it appears frequently. So in Fernet-Betancourt's article it seems rather out of place or even contradictory.

4. Philosophical Prospective: New Subjects and Forms of Resistance

Let us assume that globalization does not have within its explicit objectives the annihilation of differences, for its purposes are primarily economic and political. However, it has installed new knowledge-power networks and relationships inherent to a process carried out through control mechanisms that emerge from the dynamics of new methods in the production cycle. The whole production process is enhanced by the massive use of science and technology, as well as high-tech advertisement methods and campaigns, without precedent in the history of capitalism. Cultural homogenization is a result of the foregoing, especially in regards to advertisement and sales techniques. A widespread example is the case of Coca Cola Company, the products of which are sold in extremely hard-to-reach regions.

This is an ambiguous situation: on the one hand, subjects have abandoned certain traditions, customs and cultural habits to incorporate new ones, often with alarming consequences. Recent studies have shown that mothers in some regions of Mexico or as immigrants in the United States of America are feeding their babies with Coca Cola and chips. On the other hand, such mechanisms of control and homogenization are not always imposed without resistance. A global struggle is taking place by groups that stand before globalization and its transnational companies to hinder its practices and by individuals who occupy strategic positions in companies and organizations. However, there is also a creative resistance that promotes diversity, almost as a natural effect of globalization. According to Tyler Cowen

markets have consequently disseminated the diverse products of the world very effectively, even when those same cross-cultural contacts have damaged indigenous creative environments [...] Market growth causes heterogenising and homogenizing mechanisms to operate in tandem. Some parts of the market become more alike, while other parts of the market become more different (Cowen 2004: 16).

Resistance takes place either consciously or un-consciously, individually or collectively. Both ends of the relationship show their

effects in the production of subjects and cultural products. Suppression of cultural differences does not take place in a unilateral vertical manner, from an ethereal and anonymous entity, called globalization, absolutely invested with power (as Hobbes's concept of sovereignty), against passive and completely defenseless peoples and individuals.

The subjects of resistance play an active role at all moments of the production process, acting both as homogenizing means and means of resistance and creation. Thus, we should not be surprised by the fact that one same institution or individual may debate between the contradiction: critical/homogenizing processes that take place at the same time. The critical and creative role is active and conscious, while the homogenizing role is part of an activity that can be easily abstracted by a mechanism that functions like this: "I fulfill my job in the best way possible. In addition, when I sense trouble, injustice or similar things which I find wrong, I act consequently organizing conferences, events and other activities to attain a critical consciousness".

Transnational companies are concerned with implementing sustainable development programs and assuming environmental procedures. Companies from developing countries also show a growing interest in training their employees, not only to fit into the globalized market needs but also to promote human development programs. So, inside the plant, in the core of globalization, certain mechanisms are being triggered and discourses and knowledge are circulating as games of truth and power networks that end up transforming or producing new forms of subjectivity. One can see how producers, who stand in the first or last link of the production chain, are active subjects in the creation of a new culture.

But the main problem remains that the struggle is not symmetric, for the force of transnational companies derived from their economical strength and control mechanisms makes it similar to the fight of David against Goliath. Even if the Bible story ends up with the message that there is no unsurpassable enemy (when God, Reason, or Truth is on our side) – to be realistic, we must admit that this is not an easy struggle. However, globalization at this point would not be what it is if it were not for those resistance practices. History shows many examples of slow, silent, minor, but effective transformations.

Foucault regarded society as power relationship networks, without ignoring the metapower of the state that operates "on the basis of other already-existing relationships". To update this insight, one can relate metapower beyond national-states, to a network that operates on

a multinational level and adjudicate to it what Foucault said about the state:

The state is superstructural in relation to a whole series of power networks that invest the body, sexuality, the family, kinship, knowledge, technology and so forth. True, these networks stand in a conditioning-conditioned relationship to a kind of “metapower” structured essentially around a certain number of great prohibition functions, but this metapower with its prohibitions can only take hold and secure its footing where it is rooted in a whole series of multiple and indefinite power relationships that supply the necessary basis for the great negative forms of power (Foucault 1997: 123).

In the context of globalization, “prohibitions” cannot be “exclusions”, in the negative sense of power, since globalized markets and industrial and financial practices contribute to the emergence of new subjects. Some are regarded as “good”, some as “evil” and some as “non-existing”, in which the majority of the world population fits. But globalization does not have the same impact on all countries, for it depends on “already-existing” power relationships. In developing countries, the gap between poor, uneducated, unemployed, and rich, educated and employed subjects had been very wide long before the phenomenon of globalization appeared.

Consequently, to the metapower of globalization, the metapower of the state should be added, as well as long term domination practiced by some groups over others. Domination occurs when power relationships are less democratic and asymmetric and power networks concentrate in a few hands, forming sort of knots, which is the case of the social structure of most developing countries.

To Castell’s view about resorting to history so that social actors may find their meaning as individual and collective identities affirming regional values, a few remarks on how identities are constructed should be added. People who consciously undertake such task are not exactly excluded from globalization, for it would be absurd to oppose some kind of resistance to a force outside any relationship. One has to be inside a relationship, even if it is profoundly asymmetrical, in order to play the power game known as resistance. If we recall the Giménez example of Mexican immigrants, the very moment they start working in America they become part of the system and develop resistance practices, such as clinging to their language and other cultural traditions, not to be subsumed by the culture of a nation they need but reject in many senses.

Such resistances have not left the American people unchanged, for its influence is palpable in modifications to the legal system, art

(literature, theater, cinema, etc.), gastronomy (America is the first corn tortilla consumer of the world), language (just as English imposes neologisms worldwide, at a smaller scale, many Spanish words are becoming part of colloquial English) and so on. Finally, when immigrants return home, they are not the same individuals that left, for they have become new subjects, not only due to acculturation but to what Foucault calls the “movements of the soul”, part of the “technologies of the self”.

The technologies of the self are practices or techniques by which subjects constitute themselves, working consciously on their bodies and minds thanks to an awareness of interior and exterior elements. There are four technologies: (1) “technologies of production”, by means of which we manipulate things; (2) the “sign system”, by means of which we use meaningful signs; (3) “technologies of power” that determine the conduct, submitted to domination or objectification; and (4) “technologies of the self”, by means of which individuals transform themselves looking for happiness, wisdom and perfection.

Since the Middle Ages, according to Foucault, inner examination has almost been lost. The subjects Foucault had in mind were Europeans and Americans, but different subjects, especially those who face cultural integration, are still practicing self-examination, which has not been sufficiently explored. Chicano literature or the testimonies of immigrants could serve as an example because, even if these groups are not fully aware they are resorting to some kind of examination of the self, they are undergoing a modification process becoming new subjects and subjectivities. Collective and individual identities are changing, deciding what to keep and what to discard from culture and traditions, becoming part of economical and political debates both as actors and beneficiaries. So, the struggle for recognition and respect is not always compatible with the affirmation of cultural identity, deemed as clinging to traditions that never change, even though individuals may feel that way. What we are witnessing is the birth of new forms of subjectivity pending to be described.

From the dialectical oppositions posed by Fernet-Betancourt and Dussel, namely freewill/determinism and oppression/liberation, the latter is understood in the context of a traditional theory where power is exerted vertically. If victims are “outside the system” or “exterior” to it, as Dussel thinks, how can they subvert domination? Both our philosophers resort to an ethical choice: to aid the victims in their liberation process, by means of intercultural dialogue and by sustaining Latin American everyday life and culture. But, according to Foucault’s

theory of power, resistance and change are not necessarily opposed to domination as an ethical or conscious response but constitute a certain exercise of power, inherent to power relationships. Cultural groups and individuals have the possibility to change the network of relationships from within, in spite of the asymmetry problem.

Who are the emerging subjects? From the perspective of globalized markets, a taxonomy of subjects can be deduced. “Good subjects” correspond to what one might call the “productive-subjected-subject”, people who speak of the company as “my company”, who proudly call themselves “workaholics”. Although this category comprises employees of all levels, from executive positions to janitors, all of them proudly wearing the same “T-shirt”, strictly speaking, high-level executives fit better in it. Global executives, are frequent users of the Internet, airplanes, fancy hotels, and restaurants and belong to a global business culture as a “transnational class of service providers” (Giménez 2003: 127). To sum up, these subjects that belong to what Touraine calls a “globalized elite” live in a fast-track world.

On the opposite end of historically influential subjects (such as noble Indians in pre-Columbian cultures, Spanish Conquerors, Creoles in Colonial Mexico, high class bourgeoisies in independent Mexico and, currently, those immersed in the technologized world) lie the “non-existing” subjectivities. Their world is slow, they are not even aware that a globalization process is taking place because since pre-Columbian cultures, these subjectivities have remained in the least influential position of society. They do not have to struggle for an “identity”, for this problem is not even part of their daily concerns, which are reduced to feeding their families, buying shoes for the children and maybe sending them to school.

The identity problem and the strongest subjectivity changes lie in a central group that can no longer be called “middle class” due to the complexity of the sectors that belong to it. On the one hand, to this group belong the real excluded from globalization because, paradoxically, they are included but holding the worst remunerated jobs and performing the least interesting tasks, outside of the decision-making positions. On the other hand, one can also find the most creative subjects and the new savants or “specific intellectuals” as Foucault calls them. Specific intellectuals tend to replace the traditional “universal intellectuals”, for they are in particular sectors, holding influential positions. Due to their conditions of life and work, these savants are able to relate theory and practice. They play an important role in the construction of societies and identities, being able to change the path

globalization will take, assuming that such development can be controlled, even at a small scale.

It is customary to look for resistance and the reanimation of traditions, where it becomes more visible, namely, in the activists' struggles, in cultural manifestations or in everyday cultural life, as Dussel points out. There are also philosophical discourses critical of globalization, but are frequently developed by universal intellectuals who believe to be speaking in the name of Justice or Universal Values, of which they are the bearers. During the 19th and 20th centuries, this kind of intellectuals presented themselves as the consciousness of peoples and as their saviors.

The savant, by contrast, is found everywhere, performing everyday tasks, as doctors, technicians, social workers, magistrates, social scientists, artists, feminists, professors, developing lateral connections across different forms of knowledge, thus participating in a global process of politization of intellectuals. While the universal intellectual finds him/herself struggling against power and abuse from a privileged position beyond good and evil, the specific intellectual exerts power from his/her everyday activities, thanks to the power, inherent to his/her job, to benefit or destroy life. Specific intellectuals can perform a twofold task: they can either support and reproduce the interests of the market or change certain practices to upgrade and extend the benefits of globalization.

Building an individual or collective identity should be a creative, free process, keeping in mind the dynamism inherent to it. An identity is not a set of characteristics that define individuals or cultures once and for all, but specific features that, at a given time, differentiate one from another. The famous inscription of the Delphi Temple: "know thyself; take care of thyself" illustrates such process if we stress introspection and assume moral conflict. Philosophical research must include among its categories self-knowledge and the movements of the soul to be able to characterize the new emerging subjects.

In this sense, the re-ethnicization of our minds should be first an internal process to be carried out within the boundaries of our own cultures, with the scope each of them delineates: a cultural group, a national group or a continent. This process is not aimed at the revival of traditions (although sometimes this is necessary) but rather to boldly evaluate them. Ever since Europeans came to the New World, Mesoamerican peoples inaugurated a tradition not yet surmounted, namely, paternalism. The humanistic friars, looking at the devastation perpetrated by the Spanish and Portuguese, devoted themselves to

protecting the Indians, who were being massively killed, enslaved and oppressed. So, in spite of being five hundred years old, we are still like children, looking for protection, under the paternalistic guide or mothering arms of someone, something, be it a person, situation or discourse.

Facing such a scenario, one is urged to ask: were those authentic and effective forms of resistance not forthcoming from victims but from strong free-willed subjects? From a genealogical point of view we can answer that such resistance may take place on two fronts: one which springs from the peoples themselves and the other one from specific intellectuals. In fact, as García Márquez suggested, Latin American culture is invading the world through a quasi-natural process carried out by working people in their everyday tasks. Novelists and poets, but also immigrants and scientists, perform the important mission of affirming ethnic characteristics. Even in fields that others may find superfluous, like fashion, gastronomy and handcrafts, not only in Latin America but also in the whole world there seems to be taking place a re-ethnicization process.

So, philosophers, instead of adopting the role of the universal intellectual, should join specific intellectuals and adopt a more aggressive position in order to gain a place in the global world making use of the various cultural patrimonies. Philosophers should be working hand in hand with other savants instead of placing themselves beyond or above them, as the Kantian Judge would do.

To conclude, I would like to point out some pending philosophical tasks. Liberating discourses have been criticized due to their utopianism or messianism. As Mexican philosopher Eliseo Rabadán says, the least we need is another utopia. So, philosophy must become less speculative and nourish itself from social sciences; it must become more aggressive and positive instead of resistant and negative. Some steps have been taken in this direction that are worthy of mention: since 1994, *Subcomandante Marcos* and the *Ejército Zapatista de liberación nacional* have been making efforts to provide the Indians from southeastern Mexico with tools to fight their own struggles. Feminists are striving to define gender identities and better positions in society; intellectuals, artists and social scientists are creating a new culture and new values, as are groups of students, workers and so on.

Philosophy of liberation has not remained on the resistant side. It has also done the remarkable job of making Latin American Philosophy known all over the world. However, some categories like

“victim” and “Eurocentrism” must be reviewed in the new context of the relations opened by globalization from a more assertive position. The purpose would be to find out whether such categories are still pertinent so that philosophy of liberation may fulfill its purpose of becoming a theoretical and practical mediation towards liberation.

The second matter concerns the category of liberation. Is it still an issue of breaking the chains of domination that hinders Latin American “real” characteristics from blossoming? I have argued that there are no “real” characteristics or identities that are alienated by globalization but that there are new subjects and new cultural products that are waiting to be explained. Such an analysis would place Latin America in a better position to find a dignifying place in the global world.

Note

- ^{1.} In this context, “productive” refers to the creation of subjects, truths, powers, etc.

Three answers have been given, in our century, to the question of how we should conceive of our relation to the Western philosophical tradition, answers which are paralleled by three conceptions of the aim of philosophizing. They are the Husserlian (or 'scientific') answer, the Heideggerian (or 'poetic') answer and the pragmatist (or 'political') answer.

Richard Rorty

6. The Historiography of Caribbean Philosophy

Richard L. W. Clarke

Abstract: The dominant view of philosophy in the Anglophone Caribbean, exemplified by Paget Henry's *Caliban's Reason*, is Romantic in inspiration. Using the work of Kamau Brathwaite as my guide, I attempt to 'unpack' some of the main assumptions which differentiate it from mainstream philosophy in the English-speaking world: for example, a tendency to conceive of reason as culturally-specific, of language as a vehicle primarily for self-expression, and to emphasize the literary, the social and the historical dimensions of Caribbean culture over the sciences. I suggest that Caribbean philosophy should be rethought less in terms of its origin than its impact, that is, in terms of its intervention in a dialogue with other traditions. **Key Words:** Caribbean Philosophy, Paget Henry, Kamau Brathwaite, Romanticism, Expressivism.

1. Introduction

Though an established academic discipline elsewhere, philosophy is arguably only an emerging one within the English-speaking Caribbean where it has been relatively neglected as a *formal* field of study. Since its inception as a college of the University of London in 1948, the region's main university, the University of the West Indies (UWI), has placed greater emphasis on the development of disciplines such as Economics or Spanish which have been perceived to be more relevant to the region's developmental needs. As a result, though a philosophy major has existed for some time at the Mona campus in Jamaica, it has had a chequered history with the result that even today the program is delivered by only two permanent members of staff. Philosophy has been taught only in piece-meal fashion over the years both at the St. Augustine campus in Trinidad and the Cave Hill campus in Barbados.

At the latter, a single full-time lecturer was appointed only in 1999 and a major introduced shortly thereafter amid great uncertainty concerning how exactly the field should be conceptualized.

A similar neglect is perhaps discernible in the Francophone territories where there is no philosophy program at the Université des Antilles. However, philosophy has fared somewhat better in the Hispanic Caribbean with an established department in existence for some time at the Rio Piedras campus of the University of Puerto Rico and both a Facultad and Instituto de Filosofía at the University of Havana. Though some might argue that philosophy has suffered in Cuba from the government's strict control of the education system and the imposition of a narrow Marxist-Leninist conception of the field to the exclusion of much else, it would seem nevertheless to be fairly vibrant with several research centers devoted to Cuban thinkers such as José Martí and Fernando Ortiz and a Catedra de Pensamiento Latinoamericano, among others.

The absence in the English-speaking Caribbean of an established institutional framework of this sort is responsible, I would suggest, for the dearth of *formal* philosophical research in and on the region. This situation is complicated by the persistence of linguistic barriers that even today impede the flow of information from one sector of the region to another. As a result, where the Caribbean has produced many thinkers of international import who have identified themselves as literary writers, critics, historians and so on, relatively few have either 'self-identified' or been characterized as philosophers per se. Among the latter are thinkers such as Frantz Fanon or C. L. R. James whose work has had a tremendous impact worldwide and, more recently, a number of philosophers of Caribbean extraction located, interestingly, mainly in North America such as Bernard Boxill, Charles W. Mills, and Lewis Gordon. This small cadre of professional philosophers is supplemented by a number of others who, while not normally classified as philosophers, have produced work of possible philosophical interest: Stuart Hall, for example, who is a sociologist by training and one of the pioneers of the field of cultural studies in the United Kingdom, Paget Henry, another sociologist, or Wilson Harris whose literary works are often thought to contain inklings of an indigenous philosophical tradition. Moreover, though much scholarship in areas such as Caribbean history, literature, and linguistics has been largely empirical in nature and devoted to the practical analysis of concrete historical events, literary texts and the like (some might argue that this is the legacy of a putatively British preference for the

‘pragmatic’ and a corresponding suspicion of theory, especially the sort that emanates from Continental Europe), it is certainly true that some useful research on the theoretical frameworks informing such undertakings (what might be grouped under such rubrics as historiography, critical theory and linguistic theory) has been produced as well.

2. *Caliban’s Reason*

Though there have been a few attempts to write the intellectual history of the region by, for example, Gordon Lewis (not to be confused with Lewis Gordon) or David Benn, Henry’s *Caliban’s Reason: Introducing Afro-Caribbean Philosophy* is the first to posit the existence not just of a Caribbean *philosophy* per se but, as its subtitle indicates, a specifically *Afro-Caribbean* philosophy and to sketch a history of the field to date. It forms part of a larger project, which Henry shares with Gordon, dedicated to exploring the place of Caribbean thought in a wider African diasporic philosophical tradition. Arguing that Afro-Caribbean philosophy is divisible into historicist and poeticist strains exemplified by the work of James and Harris respectively, for example, Henry’s study is undoubtedly a groundbreaking work of Caribbean intellectual history and possessed of many strengths. Many, most often glowing, reviews have stressed the significance, from a cultural nationalist angle, of what he has accomplished for a people historically savaged by colonialism, slavery and racism and frequently denied even the capacity for reason.

However, there are also important lacunae to Henry’s argument that threaten to dilute its philosophical content and reduce it to a mere socio-historical account. Henry most often, in my view, does not take the time to ‘unpack’ and, thus, to defend many of the assumptions informing his claims concerning the existence of a specifically Afro-Caribbean philosophical tradition. First and foremost, Henry does little to enlighten us as to how exactly he conceives of the concept which is at the very heart of this study: reason. Is reason a faculty universally present in humans that transcends society and history? Or is it culturally-specific because conditioned by a variety of material determinants, including race and gender? Moreover, what conceptions of knowledge and language subtended by these two very different perspectives on reason does Henry side with? Is objectivity possible, for example, and does language accordingly function basically as a transparent lens through which the referent can be perceived? Or is truth a much more prickly affair than this might seem to imply, the

quest for knowledge being necessarily inscribed by socio-historical factors and language in a medium largely for self-expression? Has Caliban, in short, been denied a place by racists like Hegel at a common table of *Reason*? Or has he been kept in ignorance of his right to his very own table at a banquet of *reasons* attended by many different guests, Prospero and Hypanthia included?

Secondly, the conception of philosophy upon which *Caliban's Reason* is predicated is vague, marring his effort to differentiate *philosophy* per se from other forms of intellectual inquiry in the region. Does philosophy exist to clarify a universal and impersonal reason and, as such, does it have more in common with the natural sciences and the ideal of objectivity upon which these are founded? Or does it function, rather, to explore the specific forms which reason takes as a result of which it is arguably oriented towards the literary, the social and the historical and expressive of the personal? Moreover, if philosophy is to be oriented in either of these directions, what exactly distinguishes philosophy per se from these other disciplines? It seems to me that some attempt to address these divergent views on the scope and function of such a seemingly self-evident term as 'philosophy' (etymologically, the 'love of wisdom') is a necessary prerequisite to postulating the existence of a specifically Afro-Caribbean mode of philosophizing. Without such a theoretical basis, purists might argue, Henry's attempt to fashion philosophers out of a variety of literary writers, historians, sociologists and political scientists, and to posit an *explicit* tradition where possibly only one of implicit philosophizing (in the form, for example, of poems, novels, etc.) exists may lack justification. The inclusion of Harris in the canon assembled by Henry, for example, begs the question whether creative writers, whatever the nature or importance of their philosophical views, ought to be classified as philosophers per se. Shakespeare, for instance, was a deeply philosophical writer but I know of few philosophers per se who would count him as one of their own. Moreover, other notable thinkers with arguably better philosophical credentials such as Stuart Hall are simply left out of Henry's discussion.

Thirdly, though it is seemingly Henry's thesis that it is mainly the 'efficient cause' which distinguishes a specifically Afro-Caribbean form of philosophizing, the nature of identity and the precise relationship of the philosopher's identity to the act of philosophizing remain relatively untheorized givens in Henry's account. Race, for example, is often viewed as the crucial determinant upon identity in the Caribbean context and, given his sub-title, Henry would seem to be no

exception in this regard. However, he never makes clear exactly how *he* conceives what is, for many thinkers like Appiah, a problematic concept that runs the risk of essentializing identity, far less his thoughts concerning the role played by other crucial determinants such as class and gender in the construction of identity. Moreover, although some discussion of language and its relation to subjectivity would seem to be indispensable, Henry does little to enlighten as to his thoughts on this score. In short, Henry never makes clear precisely how a contingent *mélange* of geography, culture, race and class manifests itself in the theories of Afro-Caribbean philosophers in a way that earmarks these as distinctive from those produced, for example, by their white European counterparts.

Fourthly, though *Caliban's Reason* is an exercise in intellectual (or, more precisely, philosophical) history and canon-formation that inevitably consecrates some figures to the exclusion of others, Henry skirts around indispensable historical and historiographical issues. To be precise, in proclaiming the existence of an autonomous Afro-Caribbean philosophical tradition, Henry never shares his assumptions concerning the transmission of ideas from one socio-historical context to another, that is, the precise nature of the relationship linking Caribbean philosophers not only to each other but also to antecedent European, African and other traditions. He says little, moreover, about the process by which certain figures and their theories come to be canonized (while others fall by the academic wayside) and, by extension, the consequent institutionalization of philosophy as an academic discipline in the region. Thinking about such issues is vital, it seems to me, for it may lead us to examine what Raymond Williams terms the *dominant* problematics which currently inform our thinking in the Caribbean as well as the processes by which these have attained hegemonic status, to identify the *residual* frameworks concealed in their interstices, and to pinpoint those *emerging* problematics which may one day pose a challenge to those assumptions which we have accepted as self-evident truths.

Though there are other possible criticisms, it seems to me that these are the significant ones. All in all, Henry offers a vision of philosophy that is largely oriented towards the literary, social, historical and political dimensions of Caribbean culture. Though this is a conception of the field towards which many in the Continental camp might be sympathetic, it is one that seems quite at odds with the scientific paradigm which prevails in Analytic-dominated philosophy departments in the English-speaking world in general, including the

Anglophone Caribbean. My biggest regret is that Henry most often fails to make clear and defend the assumptions informing not only *Caliban's Reason* per se but what in my view is a widespread and popular view of philosophy in the region. One way in which we might remedy this is, I would suggest, by considering the point of view of Kamau Brathwaite, one of the region's most important theorists of literature and culture and whose absence constitutes a curious omission from Henry's putative canon. I am thinking here in particular of Brathwaite's several attempts to theorize the nature of Caribbean *literary history* which illuminate, I believe, many of the unspoken assumptions that inform Henry's poeticist and historicist model of Caribbean philosophy.

3. Neo-Romanticism

Having written in at least two other places of the conception of cultural identity which is at the core of Brathwaite's conception of literary history as well as of its indebtedness to the views of thinkers like Herder in particular and nineteenth century Romanticism in general, these are not issues which I propose to rehash here in any detail. (See my "'Roots': a Genealogy of the 'Barbadian Personality'" and "Root Versus Rhizome: an 'Epistemological Break' in (Francophone) Caribbean Thought?" for further details on this score.) I will content myself with summarizing some of Herder's core ideas which, as Isaiah Berlin points out, have been so profoundly influential on modern cultural nationalism, not least in the Caribbean. Within the post-Romantic context, great value continues to be placed on the importance for the individual of expressing the specificity of her identity, however this may be construed (in national, cultural, racial, gendered, etc. terms) often at the expense of what human beings may have in common.

Herder's main ideas include, firstly, the broadly externalist view that our identity is not innate or pre-given but culturally derived, that is, shaped by the particular social configuration which we inhabit and the history which we have inherited; secondly, the view that this identity is derived *initially* from (or, figuratively, is 'rooted' in) the impact which a particular natural environment had upon the ancestors who lived in that location; thirdly, the view that this defining or 'core' identity (most often figured by means of botanical metaphors, not least in terms of 'roots') is passed on from generation to generation in more or less immutable form as long as the community in question remains in the same location; fourthly, the view that where migration (forced or

voluntary) occurs, the people of a given culture are severed from their natural 'roots' in a particular natural and social environment (they are, as it were, 'transplanted') which must be recuperated at all costs if one is to be 'true to oneself'; fifthly, the view that this core identity is *expressed* or *manifested* in all the cultural practices of that people, especially its language and art forms; sixthly, the view that each social group consequently defines itself in terms of a commonly shared history and, thus, inherited cultural identity which distinguishes it from other such groups.

Another philosophical figure who often seems to lurk in the background of Brathwaite's thinking is the philosopher who is, for most, synonymous with German Idealism: G. W. F. Hegel. Any attempt to summarize the Hegelian worldview is bound to be simplistic and unsatisfactory and my effort here is no exception. Where Herder has, for commentators like Berlin, more in common with Lockean empiricism and is situated as such in the social constructionist camp, Hegel's allegiances are to the Rationalists and, thus, his commitment is ultimately to a form of idealist essentialism. Like Herder and most nineteenth century thinkers, Hegel is aware that humans are very different from each other. However, unlike Herder, Hegel contends that each culture in their outlook and practices manifests a different attribute or aspect of a transcendental principle of rationality which informs the entire universe. (At times, this Reason appears to be synonymous with and, thus, is often personified in familiar religious terms as God himself.) To put all this another way, while we are in many ways different from each other, we also paradoxically share an underlying identity in that a universal principle of rationality is manifesting itself, albeit in different ways, through the cultural identity unique to each community.

Such thinking is exemplary of the epistemic shift which many intellectual historians believe occurred around the end of the eighteenth century away from the universalism, the mechanistic thinking and the ahistoricism that were the hallmarks of Enlightenment thought and towards the particularism, organicism and historicism characteristic of the Romantics. According to Lovejoy, the "ruling assumption" (Lovejoy 1936: 288) of the Enlightenment was that...

...Reason – usually summed up in the knowledge of a few simple and self-evident truths – is the same in all men and equally possessed by all; that this common reason should be the guide of life; and therefore that universal and equal intelligibility, universal acceptability, and even universal familiarity, to

all normal members of the human species [...] constitute the decisive criterion of validity or of worth in all matters of vital human concernment (288-9).

Romanticism substituted for such “uniformitarianism” (294) a particularistic emphasis on the excellence of diversity in all areas of natural life and human culture (what Lovejoy terms “diversitarianism” [294]). Lovejoy contends that if there is one factor which unites all the various manifestations of Romanticism and which has been its most enduring legacy, for good and bad, it is the “distrust of universal formulas” (293), resulting in the “cultivation of individual, national, and racial peculiarities” (293) and the “validation [...] of originality” (294).

Such particularism was complemented by an emphasis on organicism, the propensity to focus on the basic unity of objects and events by considering the mutual dependence or common purpose of all the parts and to stress their autotelic development (organisms are living entities which develop according to patterns specific to themselves and follow the life-cycle of birth, maturity, decay, death). As Anna Davies puts it, the...

...comparison with organisms, the reference to biological processes in the discussion of all human events – from aesthetic creation to the various facets of human society and its institutions – are everywhere. The contrast is between ‘organisms’, which carry their own motivation and their own impulse for development (which may or may not be conceived in teleological terms), and ‘mechanisms’, which are formed from parts artificially added up (Davies 1998: 86).

Historicism, the tendency to define the universe in terms of dynamic change and thus to conceptualize all things via genetic explanations (i.e. by understanding their historical development) was the inevitable concomitant of Romantic particularism and organicism, both Lovejoy and Abrams aver.

4. Kamau Brathwaite

Given these emphases, it is perhaps not accidental that literary history as a distinctive way of thinking about literature comes of age only during the nineteenth century. Significantly, two of Brathwaite’s earliest attempts to articulate a theoretical basis for an understanding of an autonomous Caribbean literary history, “Sir Galahad and the Islands” (1957) and “Roots” (1963), are inspired by the hostility towards Romanticism characteristic of at least one important strand of Modernism. They are replete with gestures towards Eliotesque

concepts such as the ‘dissociation of sensibility’ and the relation of the ‘individual talent’ to the ‘tradition’. The anxiety caused by Eliot’s influence on Brathwaite is, as Bloom might put it, a subject ripe for exploration. Eliot was attempting, of course, in seminal essays such as “Tradition and the Individual Talent” to follow in Matthew Arnold’s footsteps by formulating, paradoxically, an ahistoricist and author-less approach to literary history. In many ways, Eliot could be thought of as the most important forerunner of what is today called ‘intertextuality’. Brathwaite’s views at this stage of his career need not detain us too long, however, as it is the neo-Romantic perspective that informs a later phase of Brathwaite’s thought which I find particularly germane to an understanding of Henry’s notion of an Afro-Caribbean philosophy.

In “The African Presence in Caribbean Literature” (1970), Brathwaite writes in opposition to a “persistent, established theory which contends that the Middle Passage destroyed the culture” (Brathwaite 1970: 191) which Caribbean people of African descent brought them. Such a view, based on “mistaken notions of culture, culture change and cultural transference” (193), is contradicted by the work of anthropologists such as Herskovits which proves that “African culture not only crossed the Atlantic, it crossed, survived and creatively adapted itself to its new environment. Caribbean culture was therefore not pure African, but an adaptation carried out mainly in terms of African tradition” (191-192). Arguing that religion was the main medium by which an intrinsic African cultural identity was passed from generation to generation in the Caribbean, Brathwaite rejects the views of sociologists like the Jamaican Orlando Patterson who contends, Brathwaite claims, that the slaves only brought with them a “religion already tending to fetish and superstition than to theology and ethics” (192) but “no philosophy, no military organization, no social life, no family structure, no arts, no sense of personal or civic responsibility” (192). This is untrue because African culture, Brathwaite claims, is an...

...organic whole. In traditional Africa, there is no specialization of disciplines, no dissociation of sensibilities. In other words, starting from this particular religious focus, there is no separation between religion and philosophy, religion and society, religion and art. Religion is the form or kernel or core of culture (194).

He admits, however, that it is difficult to “maintain that African continuities are as easily traced in our literature as in the socio-ideological world” (204).

Brathwaite contends that Caribbean literature “as truly native enterprise and expression” (208) really only begins with acknowledgement of the “African presence in Caribbean/New World writing” (204) and the emergence of a “literature of negritude and, with it, a literature of local authenticity” (204). Suggesting that we must “redefine the term ‘literature’ to include the nonscribal material of the folk/oral tradition, which [...] turns out to have a much longer history than our scribal tradition” (204), he contends that “much of what we have come to accept as ‘literature’ [...] ignores, or is ignorant of its African connection and aesthetic” (204). The African presence manifests itself in Caribbean literature/orature in four principal ways, he suggests, resulting in “four kinds of written ‘African literature in the Caribbean’” (211), which he lists seemingly in ascending order of importance. He characterizes the first kind as “*rhetorical*” (211) in which the...

...writer uses Africa as mask, signal or nomen. He doesn't know very much about Africa necessarily, although he reflects a deep desire to make a connection. But he is only saying the word 'Africa' or invoking a dream. [...] He is not necessarily celebrating or activating the African presence. (211)

In general, he points out, “rhetorical literature is static, wishful and willful in nature. Although it betrays a significant instinct for Africa, the instinct is based on ignorance and often [...] on received European notions of ‘darkest Africa’” (214).

The second kind, what Brathwaite calls the “*literature of African survival*” (212), “deals quite consciously with African survivals in Caribbean society, but without necessarily making any attempt to interpret or reconnect them with the great tradition of Africa” (212). Evident especially “in the folk tradition – in folk tale, folksong, proverb, and much of the litany of the *hounfort*” (216), the mode of expression is...

...intransigent un-English or, as I prefer to call it, *nation-language*, since Africans in the New World always referred to themselves as belonging to certain *nations*. [...] [T]he tonal shape of the language, its rhythm changes, structure, contours of thought and image, erupting into song/dance/movement, make it clearly recognizable as African speech-form (219).

What Brathwaite terms “considerable metaphysical life and symbolic association” (220) are “contained and hidden away” (220) in many of the folk songs and poems which, by revealing the “folk/metaphysical mind [...] working in concert with African symbolism” (221), offers penetrating “insights into our collective psyche” (222).

The third kind, “*literature of African expression*” (212), translates the “art of the hounfort” (236) into an “art of the novel” (236) by employing “often unconsciously, elements of African and/or African American style, content, vocabulary, custom/culture” (212). The fourth kind, the “*literature of reconnection*, written by Caribbean (and New World) writers who have lived in Africa and are attempting to relate that experience to the New World, or who are consciously reaching out to bridge the gap with the spiritual heartland” (212) involves a “recognition of the African presence in our society not as a static quality, but as a *root* living, creative, and still part of the main” (emphasis mine, 255).

5. Neo-Romantic Aesthetics

In all this, Brathwaite draws not only on Romantic conceptions of identity of the sort adumbrated earlier but, more specifically, on the most influential model of literary history in recent times: what M.H. Abrams would term the *expressive* paradigm bequeathed by the Romantics. Abrams, you might recall, argues influentially in *The Mirror and the Lamp* that there are four poles of criticism: the mimetic (where the focus is on what a work represents or imitates), the pragmatic (where the focus is on the work’s effect on the audience), the objective (where the focus is on its form or structure), and the expressive (where the focus is on its author). The turn towards the author, the so-called ‘expressive turn’, characteristic of late eighteenth/early nineteenth century criticism is famously metaphorized by Abrams as a function of a transition in the wider episteme of that place and time from one dominant trope, the ‘mirror’, to another, the ‘lamp’. In other words, he argued influentially, that there occurred a paradigm shift away from a tendency which had predominated since at least Plato to conceptualize things in general (and not just literature and the arts) as *reflections* of other things. (See Richard McKeon in this regard.) In this schema, for example, the physical world is often viewed as an imitation of the world of ideal forms (Plato) and literature as a mirror held up to nature. In its place, there arose a new emphasis on understanding things as the external concrete manifestation of an inner abstract essence (what some call ‘expressivism’ or even

‘expressionism’ [cf. Deleuze 1968]). From this point of view, for example, in much the same way that light irradiates outward from within a lamp or breath is exhaled away from the body, the particulars of the physical world are now thought to be the external manifestation of a universal Reason in the process of coming to know itself (Hegel), while the literary work is considered more like a lamp than a mirror in that it is thought to express the writer’s inner being.

In this scheme of things, accordingly, the literary work is thought to be inseparable from its ‘efficient cause’, the author, who is its ineluctable foundation or source. It is for this reason that Herder argued, in a way echoed by countless successors like Friedrich Schleiermacher or Hippolyte Taine, that “this living reading, this divination into the soul of the author, is the sole mode of reading” (quoted from Abrams 1953: 227). The formal particularities of the work (its choice of figurative language, plot-structure, and so on) is accordingly viewed as necessarily *in-formed* by and thus expressive of the contours of the author’s very being. The concept of literary history rides on two overlapping meanings: it can refer to the study of the chronological succession of authors, works, conventions, genres, and techniques, as well as to the study of works as products of particular socio-historical contexts. The focus of *expressive* literary histories, arguably the most popular kind, is normally on a historical succession of individual writers who are linked by a common cultural identity and language. Literature and, by extension, all art are, from this point of view, necessarily culturally-specific. To read a work of literature, therefore, is to acquire a glimpse into the very heart of a particular culture *via* an understanding of the life and point of view of the author in question. Though space does not permit a fuller discussion of the question of language here, it should be obvious that this view of literature is predicated on a particular conception of the way in which meaning is produced: to be precise, the expressivist philosophy of language, articulated perhaps most famously by Wilhelm von Humboldt, and the view especially that the speaker’s subjectivity, rather than correspondence with the referent, is the source of meaning.

This philosophy of literature is perhaps best articulated in Hippolyte Taine’s *History of English Literature* (1863-64), one of the earliest and most influential attempts to write a *national* literary history. Taine’s seminal triptych of race, place and period, which he viewed as the primary determinants of all creative and intellectual production, would seem to be as relevant to contemporary scholarship in the humanities and the social sciences as it ever was. Taine’s thesis

is that literature offers insight into the “psychology of a soul, frequently of an age, now and then of a race” (619). To be precise, each work manifests the thoughts and emotions peculiar to the individual behind it: “the choice of a word, the brevity or length of a sentence, the nature of a metaphor, the accent of a verse, the development of an argument – everything is a symbol to him” (611). The writer’s identity expressed in this way is, Taine argues, a function of three principal determinants, “the race, the surroundings, and the epoch” (613). Race, the most important of these, signifies those “innate and hereditary dispositions” (613) derived from “marked differences in the temperament and structure of the body” (614). Those who belong to a particular race form a “community of blood and of intellect” (614) unified by the particular “mood of intelligence in which it thinks and acts” (615) and which “manifests in its tongues, religions, literatures, philosophies” (614). The “regulating instincts and faculties implanted in a race” (615) are in turn “molded and modeled” (615) by the physical and social environment (one’s ‘surroundings’) as well as the times (or ‘epoch’) in which one lives.

Taine argues that all intellectual and creative production is determined by these three factors: in every epoch, a “certain dominant idea has held sway” (615) which, “uniting its effect with those of national genius [i.e. race] and surrounding circumstances, imposes on each new creation its bent and direction” (615). Taine uses a natural analogy, that of a river descending a mountainside, to describe how the “disposition of intellect soul impressed upon a people by race, circumstance, or epoch” (617) expresses itself through the dominant idea which in turn manifests itself in the “diverse orders of facts which make up its civilization” (617). The result is that all of the “religions, philosophies, poetries, industries, the framework of society and of families” (612) which comprise a given culture are ultimately “imprints stamped” (612) with the “seal” (612) of its core identity. Taine’s conception of culture, like Brathwaite’s, is clearly an organic one: all “its parts are connected with each other like the parts of an organic body” (617), he argues.

Taine figures the process by which each dominant idea necessarily cedes its place to others as the circumstances of time and place alter in organic terms of life and death, blossoming and decay: a given idea is “displayed over the whole field of action and thought; and after covering the world with its works, [...] it has faded, it has died away, and lo, a new idea springs up, destined to a like domination, and the like number of creations” (615). He also sees it in terms of cause

and effect, determination and reflection: like a plant, the “one which follows has always the first for its condition, and grows from its death” (615). He views the succession of artists comprising a particular tradition in similar terms: “the one artist is the precursor, the other the successor; the first has no model, the second has; the first sees objects face to face, the second sees them through the first” (615). For Taine, the mirror and the lamp go hand in hand: the artists that comprise a particular tradition emulate one another on the basis of a prior identification, a common identity which they each express in their works. Taine puts forward a simple model of canon formation in the light of this: the deeper the insight offered by a work into the matrix of race, place and time which spawned it, the “higher its place in literature” (619) and, thus, the more worthy of being studied.

6. Avoiding Essentialism

What Frederic Jameson terms a neo-Hegelian ‘expressive causality’ informs this model of intellectual history. This involves, he argues, the “construction of a historical totality” (27) and the...

...isolation and the privileging of one of the elements within that totality [...] such that the element in question becomes a master code or ‘inner essence’ capable of explicating the other elements or features of the whole in question (Jameson 1981: 27-8).

According to Althusser, any ‘expressive totality’ consists of...

...so many ‘total parts’, each expressing the others, and each expressing the social totality that contains them, because each in itself contains in the immediate form of its expression the essence of the social totality itself (Althusser 1965: 94).

Foucault argues in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that, notwithstanding their overtly materialist premises, expressive intellectual histories are compromised by an idealism that is not immediately obvious. The ‘essence’ which it expresses and by which it thus unified is nothing less than what Foucault, evidently gesturing towards Hegel, terms “spirit” (Foucault 1969: 22). The notion of “tradition” (21), he argues, seeks to give a “special temporal status” to a “group of phenomena that are both successive and identical (or at least similar)” and “makes it possible to think the dispersion of history in the form of the same”. The notion of “influence” refers to an “apparently causal process [...] the phenomena of resemblance and repetition” that “links, at a distance and through time [...] individuals, *œuvres*, notions, or

theories". The concept of "development" (all quotes from 21) makes it possible to "group a succession of dispersed events, to link them to one and the same organizing principle" (21-22). Each of these concepts are undergirded by the notion of a transcendental 'spirit' (what he calls elsewhere 'sovereign consciousness'): it is 'spirit' which enables us to "establish between the simultaneous or successive phenomena of a given period a community of meanings, symbolic links, an interplay of resemblance and reflection, or which allows the sovereignty of collective consciousness to emerge as the principle of unity and explanation" (22).

In other words, what unites the disparate elements that successively comprise any author-centered intellectual history, whether of a literary, philosophical, or other nature, is a common core of identity that in fact transcends that history, an ideal essence that expresses itself in unchanging form through each of the components in question. Each part resembles, reflects or repeats the others by virtue of the common essence which each manifests. It is possible to think of the relationship linking the expressive and the mimetic in terms of two intersecting axes. On the one hand, the works that constitute a particular tradition are thought to all 'express' or manifest a certain common essence, such as 'Englishness', 'West Indianness', 'Africanness', 'whiteness' or 'blackness', shared by the thinkers in question. On the other hand, the relationship of influence which particular works bear with each other is often figured in terms of a mirror-like repetition as a result of which questions of cause and effect, reflection and derivation are key. All the members of a given tradition *express* a common identity through the shared language and form of their works which, surface differences aside (due to understandable variations in genre, style and precise subject matter), are thus thought to *mirror* each other. What accordingly distinguishes one particular tradition from others is the essence of which all its members are expressive, by which they are unified, and which causes them to resemble only each other.

However, this situation is problematized in a post-imperial culture such as the Caribbean where questions of intellectual autonomy have necessarily arisen. The existence of a discrete Afro-Caribbean intellectual tradition unified by, because expressive of, a core identity that is essentially African, is complicated by the question of its relationship to antecedent European traditions of thought expressive of what some might see as a diametrically opposed identity. The heart of the tragedy that was colonialism, the argument goes, is that our

creative and intellectual productions often mimic other traditions rather than express what is innate within ourselves. United by the common essence which they express and written in a form consequently unique to itself, Caribbean works ought to only mirror other works expressive of the same identity. It is often assumed, consequently, that the two axes, the mimetic and the expressive, are often at best asymptotic and at worst mutually exclusive in the Post-colonial Caribbean context. Some have accordingly sought to efface the axis of reflection, an intertextual relationship arguably *cultural* in nature, in favor of the axis of expression, that is, the *racial* identity which a thinker is thought to 'express' through his/her works and which accordingly links him to similar thinkers. From this perspective, an Afro-Caribbean thinker is often thought to have more in common with other members of the African Diaspora, notwithstanding enormous cultural differences (albeit ones that may be rapidly eroding under the pressure of what some might call cultural imperialism), than with fellow Caribbean persons of other races. This is, in essence, the message of Pan-Africanism (what more recently has seemingly come to be called Afrocentrism) and, in Francophone territories especially, of Negritude.

United by their inheritance of a particular racial heritage but stripped of the language considered to be native to their being, Afro-Caribbean thinkers in general and philosophers in particular are often thought to be forced to function within a putatively alien vocabulary and conceptual framework whose influence, ironically, their works can often be seen to reflect even in the process of seeking to challenge such influences. I am thinking here, for example, of the many continuities between a Brathwaite and a Taine (or an Eliot), or Fanon and Freud, or, more recently, Lewis Gordon and Sartre, a recognition of which is often problematic for us in the region to deal with. This tension, if not downright conflict, between the mimetic and the expressive, the alien and the intimate, the acquired and the innate, nurture and nature, is palpable in Brathwaite especially. Notwithstanding his efforts to pinpoint the precise form in which the African presence manifest itself in Caribbean creative endeavors, he is forced to acknowledge the necessary imbrication of Afro-Caribbean intellectual production in preceding and, at least to that point, dominant European discourses. He points out, for example, in "History of the Voice" that the "forerunner" (267) of his own thoughts on what he calls 'nation language' was,...

...of course, Dante Alighieri who, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, argued, in *De vulgari eloquentia* (1304) for the recognition of the (his own)

Tuscan vernacular as the nation language to replace Latin as the most natural, complete, and accessible means of verbal expression (emphasis mine; 267)

On another occasion in the same essay, he admits that the mainstream West Indian poets...

...who were moving from standard English to nation language were influenced basically, I think (*again the models are important*), by T. S. Eliot. What T. S. Eliot did for Caribbean poetry and Caribbean literature was to introduce the notion of the speaking voice, the conversational tone. That is what really attracted us to Eliot. And you can see how the Caribbean poets introduced here have been influenced by him, although they eventually went on to create their own environmental expression (emphasis mine; 286-287).

The phrase ‘environmental expression’ is especially interesting here, smacking as it does of Herder’s views.

A dilemma thereby arises: how can the plane of mimesis (where the influence of the region’s European heritage is acknowledged) be reconciled with that of expression (where the African presence manifests itself in particular ways that are possibly at odds, in the view of some, with the European heritage)? At times, Brathwaite seems to posit an uneasy coexistence between these competing racial and cultural legacies in the form of the notion of ‘creolisation’ which he famously championed. In, for example, “Caribbean Critics”, he takes an English critic, Louis James, to task for reducing the intellectual and creative output of the region to “part of the English/European tradition” (112). He responds that the Caribbean, “in spite of the operation upon it of ‘the European system’, in spite of – indeed because of – ‘the peculiar circumstances’ of its history, contains within itself a ‘culture’ different from, though not exclusive of Europe” (114). In place of the monologic view that culture is “some kind of unified, articulate system with a clearly defined and identified ‘voice’” (114), Brathwaite advances a polyphonic model: there is “no ‘one West Indian voice’” (115), he says, because Caribbean culture is a mosaic, a...

...complex of imposed ‘establishment’ tongues (Standard English, French, Dutch, etc.) and the mainly submerged patterns of the ‘folk’ – the peasants and illiterates who carry within themselves a transformed but still very real and essentially non-European tradition of Africa, Asia and the Amerindians. (115)

West Indian culture, Brathwaite argues, is the “*expression* of these *interacting* traditions, making their way out of a broadly ex-African base” (my emphases; 115).

The expressivism informing even this view of Caribbean culture ought to be obvious. That is, the various groups that comprise the Caribbean are distinguished by their respective racial inheritances which are consequently expressed in their particular worldviews and cultural practices. Caribbean culture, from this vantage point, seems less a 'melting point' of the sort envisaged by a Harris or a Walcott, that is, a synthesis emerging out of a dialectical fusion of prior identities, than a precarious and uneasy concatenation of discrete racial groups tragically thrown together by an accident of history and inherently at odds with each other by virtue of their respective core identities that are threatened by this merger and which must accordingly be held on to at all costs. Hence, Brathwaite's tendency at other times to see Caribbean culture in essentially univocal terms and to distance himself from the notion of creolisation by emphasizing the importance of recuperating an underlying African essence. In "The African Presence in Caribbean Literature", for example, he lambastes those who raise, in opposition to the Afrocentric project advanced here, what he characterizes as a "multiracial howl" (199) designed to keep Africa "diluted, even submerged, and certainly safely out of the way" (200). The goal in so doing, he claims, is to "salvage from the cultural wreck the multiracial (creole) notion of 'Caribbean'; not totally European, nor is it purely African" (200). The recognition of cultural syncreticism sometimes seems to be in conflict with an intense nostalgia for racial purity on Brathwaite's part.

By contrast to Brathwaite, Fanon appears much more wary of the residual Romanticism which seems to dog Brathwaite's views. In the chapter "On National Culture" in *The Wretched of the Earth*, his famous attack on the essentialism that he believed both undergirded and undermined the politics and poetics of Negritude, his focus is on the difficulties inherent in recuperating a pre-colonial identity as the basis for the development of autonomous intellectual traditions in a Post-colonial context. Such histories often consist of at least three principal phases. The first consists in a period of "unqualified assimilation" (Fanon 1961: 179) during which the "native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power [...]. His inspiration is European and we can easily link up these works with definite trends in the literature of the mother country" (178-179). This is a feature of early West Indian poetry, for example, which Brathwaite himself has also mocked. In the second stage, the native intellectual such as Senghor "decides to remember what he is" (179):

Past happenings of the bygone days of his childhood will be brought up out of the depths of his memory; old legends will be reinterpreted in the light of a borrowed aestheticism and of a conception of the world which was discovered under other skies [...]. We spew ourselves up (179).

However, in the third and “fighting phase” (179), such limitations are seemingly transcended: the native intellectual...

...turns himself into an awakener of the people; hence comes a fighting literature, a revolutionary literature, and a national literature. During this phase a great many men and women who up till then would never have thought of producing a literary work, now [...] feel the need to speak to their nation, to compose the sentence which *expresses the heart of the people* and to become the mouthpiece of a new reality in action (emphasis mine; 179).

However, even at this stage, he...

...fails to recognize that he is utilizing techniques and language which are borrowed from the stranger in his country. He contents himself with stamping these instruments with a hallmark which he wishes to be national, but which is strangely reminiscent of exoticism (180).

The inclination to turn towards the racial homogeneity of a pre-colonial past ignores the complex cultural heterogeneity of the post-colonial present: native artists may...

...turn their back on foreign culture, deny it and set out to look for a true national culture, setting great store on what they consider to be the constant principles of national art. But these people forget that the *forms of thought and what it feeds on, together with modern techniques of information, language and dress have dialectically reorganized the people's intelligences and that the constant principles which acted as safeguards during the colonial period are now undergoing radical changes* (emphasis mine; 181).

What the native artist consequently embraces are the “cast-offs of thought, its shells and corpses, a knowledge which has been stabilized once and for all” (181). Fanon’s express warning that a “national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people’s true nature” (188) is one to which we ought to be more attentive in the Post-colonial context.

Fanon’s notion here of ‘dialectical reorganization’ points towards what I think is a much more useful view of literary and, by extension, intellectual history: Bloom’s notion of the ‘anxiety of influence’. Bloom offers a psychoanalytically inflected model of literary history that avoids the principally Romantic essentialism which

bedevils the views of literary historians like Taine or Brathwaite. Each poet, Bloom writes in *The Anxiety of Influence*, experiences “melancholy at his lack of priority” (Bloom 1973: 417) and is consequently afflicted by what he terms, in *A Map of Misreading*, a “*psychology of belatedness*” (Bloom 1976: 1187), a sense of always arriving too late on the scene. In other words, there is an anxious sense that it has all been said before. The relationship which writers consequently bear to their predecessors is Oedipal in nature: each ‘strong’ writer strives to carve a distinctive niche for himself by ‘dethroning’ influential predecessors through a process of what Bloom labels ‘misreading’. Hence, Bloom’s characterization of the ‘poetic tradition’ as taking the form of a ‘dialectics’. In short, originality, so prized by the Romantics, is an illusory ideal, the writer’s debt to his precursors constituting the *latent* level of meaning of his/her *manifest* text.

Bloom gives us a way of thinking of all cultures, the Caribbean as much as Africa or Europe, are haunted by an ‘anxiety of influence’, a belief in and a futile yearning for a prior-ity and, ultimately, an originality which can never in fact be attained in the light of the give *and* take of intellectual history. Belatedness may be the affliction that plagues all intellectual endeavors as a result of which the almost oedipal desire for Caribbean philosophy to ‘usurp’ the place of some putative original European philosophical paternity. A harmful obsession with denying which is the ironic consequence, is quite understandable. Any quest for originality may ultimately be doomed, any assumption that intellectual activity proceeds in a vacuum illusory, resulting ultimately in the hallucination that Bloom terms ‘metalepsis’ or ‘transumption’ in which the process of repression and revisionism finally culminates: the “illusion of having fathered one’s own fathers” (340), Bloom argues, is in fact, paradoxically, the ultimate act of implicit recognition. When I first read Bloom’s thoughts on this, I could not help but think that many Trinidadians view, rightly or wrongly, the claim that Barbadians invented the calypso in this light.

I have argued that the dominant view in the Caribbean of philosophy is marred by a residual essentialism derived principally from the Romantics. I have suggested, too, that it may be possible to think of Caribbean philosophy in other than expressivist terms, to be precise, less in terms of its cause than its impact on a dialogue that necessarily precedes it but which will in turn be altered by its intervention. If such a model is embraced, a very different and, I suspect, much more productive paradigm of Caribbean philosophy will

begin to emerge, one not stifled by, because not mired in, an obsolete and problematic conception of identity and its relation to language.

7. Globalization and Alienation of Mentality in Brazil

Antônio Sidekum

Abstract:

Key Words:

1. Introduction

A new universal alienation of mentality is part of the fundamental features of the present. This phenomenon touches all aspects of human life. If we want to present the cultural behavior of present-day Brazilian people, we must consider the consequences of the major historical facts of the last centuries, which coincide with modernity and are reflected in the avant-garde trends of art as well as in the revolutionary movements of postmodernity.

On the one hand we presently see the phenomenon of technological innovation, the manipulation of plant and animal life which, together with the recent globalization of the economy, creates and imposes a new way of mental domination and impacts the creation of new social movements as an expression of rebellion and resistance. On the other hand, new left wing parties often feel condemned to failure because they are unable to manage the impacts of the economy and politics of the new world order, which for the most part are imposed by a fundamentalist hegemony.

Regarding its cultural past, Brazil has been perfectly inserted in the international political scene, strongly related to the mindset coming up with the beginning of modernity. Brazil has been “discovered” or “found” by Portuguese navigators in the beginning of the 16th century, an event that must be considered a globalization process. This feat of the “discovery” and colonization is strongly accompanied by the belief of having discovered “the island of happiness”, so much dreamed of and looked for in the mythological and utopian mindset of the Middle Ages. However, since the discovery and subsequent establishment of colonial régime in Brazil, the culture of this paradisiacal land has

always been marked by the superposition of various political and spiritual components. These elements can be listed as the basic features of the expansionist plan for the Spiritual Conquista undertaken by the Iberian Peninsula.

Catholic Christianity provided the élan behind the expansionist ideal, playing a sacred role in the new salvationist mission of the Catholic Church (cf. Ribeiro 1978:). This mission was then used to justify the establishment of an economical system based on slavery serving as a foundation for the European civilization of modernity. The establishment of Brazil as a colony is a fundamental response to the model of European spiritual globalization, which then begins to be established by means of juridical and political powers.

This new world order originates in and is sustained by the Counterreformation, which supplies an ideological framework leading, on its turn, to mercantilism and later to the Industrial Revolution and capitalism. The history of the enterprise called *Brasil-Colônia* is marked by historical contradictions inherent in colonialism and has become known for transposing conservative socio-juridical elements of the Iberian Peninsula. This guaranteed and consolidated the process of domination and domestication of the minds throughout centuries; still today it favors the atmosphere of recolonization of the minds. It is known as a renewed process of universal domestication of thought by means of the globalization of the economy and by an exclusive way of thinking.

This mentality is considered by some thinkers as one of the legacies of the old Roman Empire, which gave the Iberian Peninsula the status of a faraway colony in the last frontier. The Iberian Peninsula on its turn had a privileged geographical position within the Roman Empire: it was considered the fringe of the empire. This condition gave rise to a peculiar mindset. Its frontiers were distant not just by their geography, but because they were far away from the Forum and from the Law. The Iberian Peninsula was also far away from the center where the strategic, political, and military decisions were taken.

The Iberian Peninsula was very far from the stage of insidious intrigues of power. This frontier condition allowed for, above all, the collusion of corruption and impunity (cf. Chauí 2000). People did not live under the implacable eye and control of law and power, but lived as if in a state of grace. This was something like a state of firstlings, where everything is still to happen and to be done. In this sense even today one can chant: “There is no sin below the Equator”.

Philosophy enters Brazil's cultural history through the back door. Philosophy needs a thorough understanding of the scenarios that gave rise to the culture of impunity, of corrupt political mentality, domestication through cordiality habits and little seriousness cultivated by the new citizens: Brazilians. This cultural status quo has the *venia* of a corrupt and immoral juridical system.

Philosophy in Brazil has always been far removed from its true social dimension, just like justice and human rights. Philosophy was not able to develop a basic questioning of the moral mindset developing in the country. It was unable to try a criticism of the system or to do self-criticism as an instrument of thought. Total dependence on the dominating ideological power is one of the features of the colonial legacy still present today. The history of philosophy in colonial Brazil is marked by Thomism that was taught in colleges and seminaries created for the education of the Catholic clergy under the auspices of Counterreformation. Only in the first years of the republic, philosophical production gets started, mainly under the influence of Auguste Comte's positivism and of Hegel's philosophy of right.

From the point of view of the history of ideas and of educational institutions, there is a special feature to Brazilian history: different from Hispano-American countries, universities existed neither in colonial Brazil, nor during its time as an empire. At the end of the 19th century one created a few higher education centers. These were law schools and technical colleges, which later gave rise to Brazilian universities. Universities were founded in the first decades of the 20th century and underwent restructuring during the military régime since 1964 when the North American university model was introduced.

Since then there was a rapid growth of private universities, many of them of exclusively mercantile nature, usually with low academic quality, very little scientific research, if at all. Chaos and penury in Brazilian universities have been heavily criticized, under the branding "university in a state of barbarism" (cf. Giannotti 1986). Today most universities in Brazil are private, almost all of them are adapted to the total market model and to the principles of economic globalization. Under the tutorage of *mission* and *belief* inspired by the totalitarian and exclusive way of thinking they gather all of their personnel in management and academia for strategic planning under the ideology of total quality announced in a frenzy of sophisticated and fascist marketing.

However the colonization project for Brazil (cf. Bosi 1992) consisted not only of Portugal's expansionist policy for the overseas

provinces and territories but also of the evangelism of the Gentiles and of the *retrieved Ethiopians* (Suess 1992), often leading to a difficult cultural synthesis. Cultures are confronted with the expansion and globalization of the West. The globalization process brings about a new boom of the economy by means of mercantilism, which characterizes the onset of modernity that lasted for centuries.

In colonial Brazil a conservative mentality reigns supreme in politics, based on an obsolete notion of the State and on a Catholic Church determined by Counterreformation and by the clergy under the *patronage* system. These political and religious elements will contribute to the psychosocial traits still at work in the era of globalization of the economy, in the loosening of work rules used in large companies, in the new industrial development, in the systems of technological interconnections which transform the values of daily life without a critical appraisal of the projects of Modernity which are already entering postmodernity.

We must however consider the phenomenon of social stratification: while part of the Brazilian people is already making its first steps towards postmodernity, most people have not even assimilated or fully enjoyed the universal breakthroughs of modernity. A typical example is the absence of the Enlightenment in drafting human rights, because the whole country was lacking schools, colleges and universities. Without an educational project in the classical sense of the Enlightenment it was difficult to create and sustain cells with emancipationist ideals in the full sense of the word.¹

Contradictions emerge and become sharper regarding the rights of the native peoples,² the countless indigenous nations. The paradigm of social and political exclusion was well emblemized at the year 2000 festivities, when political and ecclesiastical authorities celebrated the fifth centennial of Brazil's discovery by Portugal. Indian representatives were prevented from taking part in the political banquet and the Eucharist celebration, only managing to participate after breaking the official protocol of the religious ceremony.

The original native people, erroneously called Indians, are the true owners of Brazilian land. But from the first years of the Conquista they were forced and condemned to live as strangers in their own native country; their religious practices were considered superstitions and polytheism as well as their languages were prohibited for being barbaric and primitive. This situation presently is even more extreme.

Besides not recognizing the human dignity of indigenous peoples³ (which means denying the other's alterity), which is

expressed by the Eurocentric imperialistic project of “I conquer, therefore I exist”, another chapter is added with no less tragic consequences, motivated by Eurocentric imperialism, which must be read as a historic violence, a crime against humankind. It is an authentic Holocaust: the slave trade from Africa to America.

Many liberation movements resulted in clandestine *quilombo* settlements, like those which constituted the Palmares Republic. The Afro-Brazilian population suffers most of social exclusion, civil society showing hypocrisy that still nourishes racism with sophisticated nuances of dissimulation and philosophical justifications.

Besides these constitutive ethnic and cultural facts, so present in the circumstances in which Brazilian cultural ethos developed with indigenous and Afro-Brazilian people, we find on the one hand countless further elements of globalization starting with modernity, like miscegenation and emerging peoples (cf. Ribeiro 1978). This miscegenation is present all over art, architecture, language, culinary, popular culture and mainly in music: in the artistic diversity of samba as well as in the rhythm of capoeira dance-fight and Carnival, which shows a peculiar spatial dimension for the representation of popular imagery in its very existential reality.

Carnival is always a great philosophical page for those who can read the way people express their worldview in the face of endless daily suffering, of the joys of life and of the other way of being, worshiped in the imagery of life. This philosophical view of truth and of the language of the people remains distant from the activities of philosophers of absolute thought and of the exclusive way of thinking reigning in higher education. Philosophical contents of Carnival parades are very expressive, representing and dealing with life as it could be without oppression and violence. In this perspective there always are samba schools known as *Acadêmicos do Samba* in a response of ethical appeal motivated by social exclusion.

Carnival is made up of schools, but in real life a large part of the Brazilian population has no access to the luxury of a real conventional school. People belong to *identity tribes*, because in real life they have no political participation in actions deciding over life. Carnival is governed by what is “serious”. It deals with the deeply serious, that, which is serious in everyday life, not the “morbidly serious” handled by doctors of philosophy, like those followers of a certain tragic philosopher to be found in philosophy courses in universities. It is the “serious” which can only be captured by the irony present in Carnival’s rhythm. This is the aesthetic source of the joy of living and of the

erotic, which is the requirement of Carnival: for at least one day every year people have the right to a period of time for simulating the image of the “serious” as if it were their time to do philosophy. Socrates’ irony in its fullness parades in majesty and luxury through the tropical avenues, free of malice and sin. For only one moment this brightness of grandeur and richness of life glows, for which the Carnival reveler prepares a whole year long. This moment will be celebrated in “luxury and joy”, because people, even being poor, though happy during the Carnival parade, love the luxury of life and know that “only intellectuals love misery”.⁴

In Carnival there is a world of ideas more perfect and better represented than “Plato’s world of ideas”. The language of samba is the epiphany of the inner world of each human being manifesting his and her mysteries, almost as in an experience from philosophical language: “You must keep silence about things you cannot talk about”, not because this is part of analytic philosophy, but because it is Carnival, or the song *Samba do Nego Maluco*, the samba of the mad black man.⁵

These fragments interact in the outskirts of the Empire and are maintained by trade and visions coming from other Portuguese colonies in Africa or Asia. They are not the result of plain superposition or syncretism, but regional elements inserted in the universal aesthetic concept.⁶ All through the age of Modernity, this composition structures Brazilians’ national identity, whose philosophical elements are not always systematically formulated, but can be excavated by reading the inscriptions of history as well as the countless fragments composing the mosaic of present-day cultural identity.

Throughout its historical development the composition of Brazilian culture has been bipolar. This aspect has not been sufficiently studied and discussed under the aspect of ethics by philosophers and historians. In this cultural complexity we can find a new philosophical mode facing today’s globalization of the world.

Modern history of Brazilian culture shows a constant alienation of philosophy and thought in general. Eurocentric thinking is installed in all social and political institutions. Classical philosophy is the philosophy of the “identical”, the philosophy of the “same”, of the totality permeating the history of Western philosophy from the pre-Socratics to Hegel (cf. Levinas 1961).

2. Philosophy and Ethical Challenges

Education, social psychology and philosophy undergo a new process of alienation. The exclusive way of thinking of the total market is imposed on all layers of individual and collective life. It is the new philosophy trying to justify what has been called the “world system model” (Dussel 2005).

However, the imposition of the exclusive way of thinking by the new imperialism has met with reactions from the people. They emerge from critical reflections on the absurd character of the human condition created by the world system. What happens is not simply a new expansion of the West in a colonialist process of civilization, but the domestication of individuals and communities by social changes and by technological changes that bring about a new way of life. Social yearnings and collective imagery are affected by comfort, which gives each individual a false experience of freedom and the illusion of independence.

The media, substituting the role of traditional schools and churches, spread these new features of human life. The spread and consolidation of the new way of life are taken care of by powerful media able to transcend all frontiers (cf. Montiel 2003). The media make people believe that an easier life free of the hardships is possible. The only requirement is money for consumption and power.

In Brazil, traditional culture has widely been eroded through a very ambivalent process. The social structure has been changed by the classical domination systems of neoliberalism and recent imperialism under the banner of economical and industrial modernization. However these new circumstances of violence make, on the one hand, that many groups begin to call for emancipation. With this emancipation new areas of peace are being called for, for instance on the countryside, on the global level in the new social forums, in order to think the utopia of a different world. On the other hand, traditional authorities try to preserve their privileged positions, taking advantage of large industrialization projects of transnational companies and of the IMF policies. Not just traditional elites take over conservative power, but also the emancipated groups themselves. They present revolutionary proposals, but once in power they adopt completely reactionary attitudes, surrounded by corrupt people, because the old values of oppression hide behind progress and social change. Every politician will be corrupt in this situation.

Philosophy attempts a criticism of the alienation of thinking; many social movements arise as a reaction to the domestication of

identity of their own mentalities. Some specific ethical aspects have to do with a democracy that can encompass all ethnic groups overcoming marginalization and social exclusion suffered for centuries of colonialism and imperialism. As a reaction to the circumstances of globalization they trigger deeper philosophical reflections.

Many philosophers in Brazil and Latin America in general are committed to cultural changes and accept the ethics of liberation. The issue of the oppressed people has been raised in philosophical seminars and congresses. Although some thinkers maintain a dictatorial discourse similar to what was common at the time of military dictatorships (when philosophy was always close to the tribunals to justify totalitarianism in the universities), a great number of philosophers work on the issues of social exclusion, liberation, and interculturality. The main debates deal with national identity, human rights and political philosophy. Some issues have been revisited in studies like the precariousness of democratic life in our countries. Democracy faces new challenges in the demands forwarded by indigenous people, like the Chiapas.⁷ This is a remarkable fact: the people, i.e. the *demos*, begins to understand and think critically about democracy. Although the exclusive way of thinking imposes tough justifications on the world system of market and consumerism, a new political awareness arises with new prospects.

What could perhaps best highlight this philosophical reflection in Brazil is the discussion on how to integrate groups that are historically excluded from the political and economic system. Let us take the example of the African people and their descendants. This has often been the subject of Liberation Theology, mainly under the aspect of evangelism and acculturation.⁸ The discussion about the ethnical issue lies within the tradition of Liberation Philosophy, which in Brazil gathers a significant number of professors and students of philosophy. According to Márcio Bolda da Silva it deals with the attempt to link the threefold base of the following assertion: “Liberation philosophy based on the historic social context establishes the possibility to ground and characterize a way of doing philosophy built on a horizon of understanding which is already given” (#Silva 1998: p. ?). This means that the reality given is incorporated and articulated as the starting point for philosophical reflection. According to Bolda da Silva this intrinsic link gives rise to a philosophical mode that is strictly conjugated with the reality of the situation, an imperious link which gives it the prerogative of substantially being a “re-linked thinking”, making philosophy “in context”. For this reason, liberation philosophy

must be understood as a peculiar way of philosophizing about contextual historic reality. Liberation philosophy does its thinking starting with the situational, social, and historic sphere it comes from. Philosophy must be embedded in its horizon of contextual understanding; otherwise it would lack its foundation. The task of liberation philosophy is determined by a preliminary setting, the historic reality of the people, which is its object. Some of the main themes in the program of liberation philosophy are the premises of awareness building (cf. Freire 1976), of liberation ethics, of social justice and Human Rights in the era of globalization and social exclusion, as well as the dialogue with European philosophers of Discourse Ethics (cf. Sidekum 1994) and of interculturality.

3. Black Consciousness, Affectivity, and Reason

Bringing ethnic identity into philosophy implies raising the subject of how to recognize alterity of the other that is so often denied in western philosophy. This philosophical debate can be traced back to the first years of the Conquista. Within Brazil's colonial culture, however, there has been another development related to the metropolis' hegemony and authoritarianism, later continued by the reactionary and totalitarian elites in power. It has to do with the African ethnic groups and their descendents. We find few debates that express the ideals of Enlightenment in Brazil. It is known that the discussion of the ideas advanced by hegemonic philosophy in Brazil⁹ was used to justify the inferiority and negativity of black people.¹⁰ One needs to reread classical philosophy and the philosophy present in contemporary thinking to understand how racism coins and molds our subjectivity and that an intense philosophical work of deconstruction is needed to establish a positive identity of ourselves. This deconstruction is particularly difficult because since our birth we are subject to racist tenets and racist social reality. Philosophy will introduce new paradigms like alterity and the condition of being excluded. Gislene Aparecida dos Santos says that oppression and discrimination of black women has been studied in many anthropological studies investigating violence suffered in colonial society, all the way through violence in present-day society in the form on sexual exploitation of young black women, forced sterilization, frequent rape, and economic exploitation. According to this author it is necessary to think about constant violence against women and about how all the fancy ideas around black women came up during slavery and continued today. This pain permeates all social classes. Not only the poorest ones refrain from talking about

violence but also the not so poor, “intellectualized” women who will not talk about it.

Both racism and subjectivity do not have a significant forum in academia because many thinkers consider them to be non-philosophical issues; therefore one can say that there is a kind of exclusion also regarding the debate on the phenomenology of national identity. The great challenge is to think the ethnic issue starting from philosophy, because in this field philosophy and pedagogy have the possibility to construct and dismantle the whole theoretical structure that support racist principles. In all of its history Brazilian society has been marked by social inequalities, not just in education, although school is its foremost instrument to reproduce and sustain the unjust status quo. Ethnical identity is not thought of as something preconceived and given in a fixed.

In this perspective, Liberation Philosophy contributes greatly to the development of a new reflection starting with the paradigm of ethnical alterity centered in eroticism, pedagogy and politics. Liberation Philosophy tries to redimension the debate on human rights in the face of globalization and the exclusive way of thinking. Philosophical reflection as liberating praxis is inspired by the pedagogical and philosophic method of Paulo Freire (Freire 1967) and pervaded by reflections on popular wisdom. Freire’s conscientization method and the paradigms of liberation philosophy were born during the authoritarian régimes in Latin America and are today of unique significance. They represent the foundation for a critical stance against the new alienation of philosophy through contemporary rapid cultural changes.

4. Globalization and the New Alienation of Mentality

Cultural change is an irreversible process in Brazilian society, because Brazil is an important player in the international scene. Cultural change brings about enormous transformations in the way of thinking and general social behavior. This can be seen mainly in consumerism and social relations, in criminality, trivialization of evil and the superficial treatment of fundamental human values. This process results from rapid globalization. When the intent to safeguard traditional values is counteracted by new “universal” values, human fragility becomes evident. Political philosophy curiously develops a new theory of solidarity based on the Theory of Dependence (cf. Marini 2000). It is not meant as a return to the past, but as a way to think future prospects, recovering popular wisdom and the chances to establish programs in

order to overcome common problems: hunger, lack of housing, health and education systems.

In modernity, philosophy has been marked by a process of identity maintenance based on the *cogito* and on subjectivity, which could be made explicit by egology and egocentrism. This concept touches the issue of what constitutes Greek thought: the discourse on *logos* and barbarism (Zea 1987). Another process derived from this egocentrism manifests itself in what we can call Eurocentrism. For centuries of cultural domination, egocentrism destroyed the principle of identity in other civilizations, excluding all those who did not think through the Western *logos*.

Confronted with these phenomena, philosophy becomes tradition and faces cultural diversity. Before, philosophy has been the transposition or transplantation and domestication of Counterreformation and maintained a distance from people's reality. Still today, *officially* philosophy revolves around a "neutral" *Dasein*, lacking both hunger and eroticism.

Cultural Diversity is now recognized in the academic debate. This happened through developments in anthropology and education. The main hermeneutical reformulations about the sources of these areas happened in the last decades thanks to a new method of historical research. On the one hand there are the countless challenging dimensions of using oral history and, on the other, the introduction of the concept of alterity in philosophy and literature, so often discussed in the tradition of hermeneutical philosophy. These categories are mainly used to justify the various forms of recognizing the absolute alterity of the Other.

If the absolute alterity of the other person and his/her cultural tradition were not recognized, ethical experience would be a chapter of the ontology of dialectical materialism or of economical ontology. Meanwhile the goal has become to overcome dialectical materialism by historical materialism. The subject recognizes the other as an equal, as somebody more powerful or less skillful; depending on that, s/he establishes the kind of relationship that appears most convenient. Power is like an agreement and a form of submission. However, interculturality, due to the paradigm of Cultural Diversity as a hermeneutical method for understanding the cultural *ethos* of the historic subject (i.e., due to subjectivity as such and the object of historical research), deals with understanding that *which has not been said yet*. In teleological perspective, actuality is understood as the continuous presence of the relationship of unity and multiplicity in the construction of a

protagonist subjectivity. It is understood as a conscious agent transforming history. The difficulty lies in a safe interpretation, because the hermeneutical method as such involves extreme subjectivity and a lot of relativity. Cultural Diversity is guaranteed by Human Rights:

The defense of cultural diversity is an ethical imperative, inseparable from respect for human dignity. It implies a commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms, in particular the rights of persons belonging to minorities and those of indigenous peoples. No one may invoke cultural diversity to infringe upon human rights guaranteed by international law, nor to limit their scope (Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, Art. 4).

There is an awareness derived from practical knowledge about the historic deficit suffered in the traditions and in the philosophy of cultural diversity. This is one of the frequent experiences we make in daily life within the historical praxis in which we share life and historic worldviews through ethical relations with the other. One should cultivate this practical knowledge in a reflexive manner and with the aim to organize of our cultures mutually. The vision of Cultural Diversity and interculturality implies the affirmation of the human being as a historical being, who expresses him/herself in cultural spaces and differences. This concept denotes an indispensable historical conception of culture. Culture is developed in a space with definite contextual conditions as open processes containing interaction and trade with the other. Cultures are always processes at the frontier. This is not a frontier marking off one's own territory, drawing the limit between the own and the alien as a limit marking the end of the own and the beginning of the alien, thus leaving the alien at the other side of the frontier. This is not the role of philosophy facing today's globalization. The frontier is established within the consciousness of our cultural identity. The other is within, not outside our cultural context. This is the fundamental principle of recognizing Cultural Diversity in ethics and education.

Recognizing Cultural Diversity requires a fundamental hermeneutical instrument in order to understand the grasp of present-day globalization and will serve as a proposal to face the great problems of retrieving our identity and guaranteeing respect for Human Rights. The fundamental impact has to do with politics and economy. This impact is found in the social structures and in the values of present-day society, which is always changing, either really or virtually.

5. Cultural Change and the Exclusive Way of Thinking

International relations based on diplomacy, respect, and recognized self-determination are replaced by economic alliances dictated by the International Monetary Fund without creating and respecting a more democratic culture of economic policies. International politics suffers the imposition of the free market doctrine supported by the ideology of the exclusive way of thinking. This same discourse is based on the free trade doctrine and has been promoted by rightist ideologues, now being completely assimilated and used by left politicians. The right finds ever better possibilities of loosening state functions and laws, directing economic policy to the benefit of the great transnational capital.

In all public administrative layers and universities a new neoliberal ideology is introduced whose method is a definitive discourse on strategic total planning with the fallacies of the discourse of total thinking. The totalitarian line of the exclusive way of thinking is spun under the mantle of tendencies called postmodern or neoliberal and has universal influence, being present in all facets or shambles brought about by postmodernism, in which the human being is no longer understood by his dimension as carrier of historical conscience. This limits the possibilities for a greater number of alternatives for political action in order to overcome the great challenges imposed upon by misery and unilateral nature of the new worldwide political economical model also called world system. Much beyond the discourse of strategic planning the new model builds up its efficacy on top of conservative techno-scientific postulates conceived by philosophers obliged to the world system.

Popular culture intuitively notices new processes of transformation in civil society and makes explicit the limitations of rationalist and scientific culture in the face of pluralistic manifestations. Transformation of civil society requires methodical innovations in the analysis of the concrete historical situation. The economic model will be challenged by interests which are not concentrated in the producers of the global market. A rational political economy concentrated on studying the interests of the global and totalitarian market as producer of a dialectics of rationality and irrationality, also as it considers the individual in its analysis, never takes into consideration the structures and multiple interactions of human groups and their influence in the development of society.

6. Conclusion

New socio-cultural bases will be needed which enhance development and bring about new structural and strategic changes which, on their turn, allow for innovative creations and strategies for the dynamics of social structures. We need a civil society that takes into consideration the aspects of its historical tradition and the new processes of social change. An example would be to widen local political participative budget communities as well as creating a social audit that would allow for a greater political co-responsibility both on the side of those governing and on the side of the citizens. This is how one conceives the establishment of citizenship. This new social structure can produce a new political critical thinking that can be adopted by the collectivity as it is in search of alternatives for a new human society based on convergence within diversity. It would be a culture of solidarity with which one can encounter the new domestication of the minds triggered by the total thinking of globalization.

In the new Brazilian social movements one can highlight the attempt to build an alternative model to the neoliberal hegemonic project by means of strategies and practices of resistance like the solidarity networks, in order to accept cultural and ethnic diversity and create a social policy aiming at social justice. Social movements are decisive for social balance, pointing to political justice in all dimensions. Information and communication technology are strong instruments for social, economic and political change in emerging societies. These resources make possible the creation of permanent communities and social forums for the discussion of social reality. It is fundamental to know how the media can be used to help create new means for social change and a critical conscience.

The new social movements in Brazil develop rather like networks of ethical interpellation, not so much as organizations aimed at claiming rights. Thus the new social movements create informal networks between individuals and social organizations and constitute a new social identity. From the point of view of political philosophy, the new social movements act like forces resisting systemic pressures. The alternative cultural codes are opposed to domination.

These movements take into consideration the great differences within the social composition. They claim fundamental human rights and the right to cultural diversity. Therefore some philosophic institutions begin to deal with the whole range of fundamental human rights. The role of philosophy is to develop a historical consciousness as it considers the political elements in social movements. Political changes

start with the pressure of many social movements. Social movements create a new form of political and cultural philosophy based on sustainable development. Intercultural philosophy takes into consideration the study of gender and ethnics demanding the right to self-development and self-realization. This sustainable human development requires a policy for the creation of jobs and for the maintenance of social welfare as a form of social justice. This widens the concept of Human Rights, which deals not only with political and civil demands, but also with economic and social transformations. A cultural revolution is necessary in order not to simply accept the rules of new capitalism threatening society through neo-liberalism. This transformation is necessary in order to rebuild the communities' identity through mechanisms of self-management and in order to produce solidarity based on sacred moral values which can be respected in the fullness of human dignity, thus giving new life to communities.

Translated from the Portuguese by Walter O. Schlupp

Notes:

1. This may be one of the reasons for the success of Comte's Positivism in Brazil, both in politics and the juridical sciences, as well as in the motto of the national banner, *Ordem e Progresso*; it even developed to a religious cult, as can be seen in the positivist temples in Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba, and Porto Alegre. With Positivism an important step was made towards secularization of politics and the establishment of colleges in the first decades of the 20th century, which gave the start to Brazilian universities.
2. One example is the *Requerimento* [requisition]. See Paulo Sues, *A conquista espiritual da hispano américa*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1992.
3. See Pero Vaz de Caminha's letter. *Carta a El Rei D. Manuel*. São Paulo: Dominus, 1963. "Brown, naked, without anything to cover their shame. They had bows and arrows in their hands. They all came tense towards the boat ..."
4. Joãozinho Trinta, famous carnival creator in Brasil. "People love luxury; only intellectuals like misery".
5. Translation of "Mad Blackie": *I was playing cards; a mad blackie appeared; had a big radio with him; playing a loud samba; and told the people this samba were mine. Tight skirts appeared in the saloon; because of that Pharisee; I gave it to him; take one, take two; take this: that samba is yours. I belong to jazz people; the tambourine never got to me; I don't know this guy I have a family, and this is not my samba.*

(Chico Buarque) <http://chicobuarque.letas.com.br/letras/121679/>.

Carnival's language has also the *samba-enredo*, the story told in the song to be danced to, it can be found in the school where all are scholars, and has metaphysics flowing in the unsustainable lightness of Carnival. Therefore samba is a philosophical fragment chanting and dancing that, which philosophers cannot express, and about which not even analytical thinkers can utter anything; but samba philosophy permeates this structure of *Dasein* and talks about "existentialism" and "historicity". And this is what is "serious" in it. However all these elements are new and created out of control by the power of the metropolis over the colony, and are created apart from present-day totalitarian State.

6. The most common examples are those of baroque art, where we find Asian and African elements in church paintings, or images styled according to cultures brought by intercultural trade. The concept of syncretism in cultures should be seen as a dynamic process of interculturality, which are fundamental to define the frontiers of identity. Philosophy thus becomes contextualization.
7. There are now new movements in Ecuador and Bolivia, and there is also the movement of the landless workers (MST) in Brazil (cf. Gogol 2002).
8. Besides the debate between liberation theologians, traces can be found in the CELAM documents of Medellin, Puebla and Santo Domingo.
9. According to Gislene Aparecida dos Santos from the Universidade de São Paulo (UNESP). I follow some of the ideas she expresses in her book: *Mulher negra. Homem Branco: um breve estudo do feminino negro*. Rio de Janeiro: Pallas, 2004.
10. A classical example would be Hegel's remarks in his first writings. Cf. 1986 and 1996.

ASIA

8. Social Darwinism, Liberal Eugenics, and the Example of Bioethics in China

Ole Döring

Abstract: This chapter discusses the concept of “cultivation” in bioethics, as an area of practical philosophy, with its impact on the viability of “ethnicity” as a lens to study cultures. Focusing on the example of China, cultivation is elaborated as a normative idea that integrates cultural diversity within a universalistic and systematic approach. Responding to tendencies to instrumentalize “culture”, “ethnicity” is dismissed as a strong normative category in ethics. **Key Words:** Bioethics China, Normative Culturalism, Eugenetics, practical cultivation, hermeneutics.

1. On Cultivation

What does it mean, why is it necessary, and how can we achieve to *cultivate* practical philosophy? The concept of cultivation bears a *normative* element which can be approached in terms of cultural diversity, or in terms of universally shared ideas of improvement, such as basic elements of the concept of a “good life”. In this paper I attempt to elaborate, from a philosophical perspective, how it is a misunderstanding to expose these views in such a way as if they were contradicting one another. I propose a theory that integrates cultural diversity within a universalistic, (and it should be noted here instantly, not a uniform and closed), systematic approach. It responds to the obvious challenges from undue influence of conflicting interests such as economic and other powers, which bear the tendency to corrupt science and turn this idealistic venue into an instrument to manipulate cultural and individual identities. The price to be paid for this advancement of theory is the dismissal of “ethnicity” as a strong normative category in ethics.

This integrated approach aims at the meta-level of reflection and conceptual language that is obligatory if we hope to find a common (meta-) language to frame and foster understanding about globally relevant areas of practical philosophy, such as bioethics. Evidently, such a theoretical language cannot be bound to the specific grammar and semantics of any closed system of philosophical reflection or cultural practice, such as in the life sciences. In order to be prepared to

function as a bridge builder and facilitator between different cultures, it must connect with the respective cultural structures that support transformation, according to the overarching heuristic idea of science. Strictly closed systems and structures that are purpose-built to shun trans-cultural interaction are immune or mute, as far as the possibility of such a common language is concerned.

It is the capital advantage of a normatively laden venture, such as ethics in medicine or bioethics, that it includes a predefined normative *spin*. We cannot even address “ethics” or “medicine” properly, as distinct from “strategic argument” or “health-related services”, respectively, in a meaningful manner, without presupposing that it is fundamentally reasonable to aspire for some counter-factual “good”, as distinct from mere formal “success”. This heuristic assumption can be taken as an axiom in the form of a regulative idea. (For reasons of philosophical soundness, this transcendental approach should be related to a corresponding de-ontological theory.)

Such a perspective is instrumental for our capability to appreciate the *meaning* ascribed to “medicine” or “ethics”. Without it, it would be impossible to argue for the cause of advancement in philosophy as a normative venture in the first place. Thus, there would be no justification for any ambition to cultivate ethics.

2. Moral Muteness of Ethnic Belonging

From this perspective, tendencies to re-ethnicize the mind appear to be problematic, because, fundamentally, they bear a tendency to fall short of conceptual depth and analytical acumen, by restraining “the mind” to frameworks of “ethnicity”. Ethnic belonging can only be regarded as a non-accidental constituency for moral identity if we accept essentialist metaphysical notions of blood relations or shared traditions. Consequentially, such narrow concepts might lead to an alienation of the individual, especially in her nature as a social being. In particular those ventures of ethnicization that argue in support of non-individualistic and communal frameworks thus open the vicious slope of performative self-contradiction, because they surrender the individual *a priori* under the authority of a numinous entity.

For example, ethnicizing the mind in order to fight against erosion of an assumed national or communal consensus, under the label of “Confucianism”, can be appreciated for expressing a romantic sentiment for belonging and as a strategic means to create spheres of protection for populations, against hegemonizing trends brought about by globalization of markets and ideologies. However, in reality, this

line of argument can play into the hands of interest groups with the power to define ethnic or cultural identity and to ordain certain correlated standards for their target group. Thus they substitute one form of imperialism by another, by shifting the dominating rationale and related rhetoric from alleged national toward assumed collective's interests. When promoters of the re-ethnicizing program claim that they would reanimate traditional wisdom in order to keep the moral and spiritual wealth of a culture, they have frequently proven to "invent traditions" for the sake of a particular social moral or political or ideological or religious agenda (Döring 2006). The "Asian Values" debates during the 80s and 90s of the 20th century in relation to human rights and democracy have shown this exhaustively (Yu 2003). It should be noted that the fair treatment and participation of ethnic groups and cultures actually works better (if only) under a different concept of culture, which depends upon a contained plurality of practices.

The German research group *Culture-transcending Bioethics* studies since 2002 the empirical and normative diversity of the development of bioethics in different regions in Asia, with a particular interest in the correlation between culture and normativity. It presented first preliminary findings which corroborate the complexity of the matter of moral cultures while sustaining the perspective of a universal level of understanding (www.rub.de/kbe). It is investigating the discourse about normative core concepts of the human being in relation to political, institutional, social and moral responses to bioethics and the life sciences, together with the reverse impact of these pressures on the formation of culture.

Whereas the different historical shape of national conditions and traditions has, being a matter of factual significance, no immediate ethical implication, the practices of dealing with biomedicine vary between cultures according to different conceptual frameworks, historical experience, institutional and economic circumstances or perspectives on chances and risks. These factors establish different specific configurations for the conditions of the health sector, research policies and the related markets. However, there is no good reason why such clusters should be referred to in terms of ethnicity.

3. Science in Society

Ethics is of paradigmatic import for the sustainability of science in society because of the existential and pragmatic concerns it raises, on different levels, concerning humanity, cultivation and the improvement

of human life. Philosophy, together with the critical social sciences, is challenged to strengthen science on behalf of society. It focuses on the interface of theory and practice, that is, it explores the mutual implications of conceptual reflection, institutional structures, legitimacy of authority, interests and power issues and the relevant purposes, such as, in the context of bioethics, the people's well being.

It namely explores the conceptual and practical conditions of trust, as a basic requirement for a socially sustainable science. This means to address the trustworthiness of key actors and to strengthen independent as well as informed public scrutiny. Under conditions of globalized market economy, cultivated science keeps herself visibly independent and emancipated from secondary interests. This foundation of legitimacy stands in question, when sciences, with their particular theoretical and methodological mindset and strong economic alliances, are advertising in an aggressive manner, their claim to guide and aid society towards a better life. Critical thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas refer to this ongoing scenario as a shift of modern societies towards "liberal eugenics" (Habermas 2001).

Similar problems arise from a reduced concept of medicine, namely from an unreflected *geneticization* in medicine that challenges scientists to reconsider the cultural intricacies and contingencies of any science (Ten Have 2001) as well as their problematic dependence on economic interests. The life sciences with their basic dedication to medical applications in particular can benefit from a re-examination and rehabilitation of a critical concept of science as one "Wissenschaft". It reminds researchers of their embedding "culture", the related responsibility, and the larger theoretical and methodological implications of the pursuit of knowledge.

Thus a cultivated bioethics is a powerful generator of criticism and trust between science and society. Scientific influence on policy making in this fuzzy area is randomized. Often the scene is dominated by those who offer plain and simplistic answers to intricate questions. Systematic modification or geneticization of "health", and other indicators, such as "liberal" legislation on euthanasia or eugenics, are symptoms of a crisis at the roots of science and trust.

However, as of today, culture, though it is in fact omnipresent in medicine (Payer 1998, Unschuld 1986), is hardly accounted for in the governance of medical research and the related ethics. One may expect greater engagement from the side of the humanities, especially from critical cultural philosophy and cultural anthropology in these issues. Still, how is it possible to assess such an endeavor as a comprehensive

research program? A key to this question could be derived from the common core of discourse, namely from claims to meaning and understanding.

4. The Scope of Bioethics and Sustainable Life Science

A cultivated approach from practical philosophy to life sciences and society raises hermeneutic questions. How can we understand the matter of life sciences and bioethics and how can we, in the same vein, understand each other, in our normative moral claims, across cultural borderlines? Recent advances in science suggest approaches that systematically integrate disciplinary diversity. For example, a pioneer in biological semiotics, Thomas Sebeok, explains, how the human mind can not be internally partitioned but, in all his operations, relates to a unified meta-structure: “The signs, texts, codes and metaforms that humans create, no matter how strange they might at first seem, have universal structural properties that allow people everywhere to solve similar life problems” (Sebeok 2000: 163, 167). This implies a strategy, how cultures of sciences, including ethics, and science in cultures should be assessed. It is crucial to appreciate the role of different cultures of humanity for bioethics, and what they share, as an existential special area of interdisciplinary science in society.

Another example is the German biologist and philosopher Gerhard Vollmer, who introduced in the 1980s an approach to overcome the alienation between philosophy and biology, at least as far as biology is concerned. Vollmer argues against the split between human and natural sciences, somewhat anticipating Sebeok (Vollmer 1998). The key to understanding is that we are using, generally speaking, the *same mind*, with the same fundamental structures in all our operations, be it accidentally Chinese or German. Our existential interests, which influence moral deliberation, are basically the same for all humans. This corresponds with the universal general structures of human reason. First of all, Vollmer points out that sciences can provide a solid basis for a sound anthropology, which, in turn, is required in ethics. On the other hand, it is the virtue of philosophy to help natural sciences sort out value claims and avoid the naturalistic fallacy.

Third, a century ago, Georg Simmel has submitted a heuristic foundation for a *philosophy of culture*, which explains the dialectic structure of culture in terms of an emerging, “tragic” duality between self-symbolization and reaction to external or manifested symbolic patterns. This approach serves us in our efforts to understand the ambiguity of culture, the perplexities of relativism and universalism or

individualism and communalism. It considers the requirement of moral diversity and an ethical discourse, together with the possibility of a reasonable *telos*, such as moral progress, advances of humanity and cultivation of humankind in all individuals (Simmel 1998).

Moreover, from the view of anthropology, Paul Rabinow has reconsidered a “Third Culture”, originally introduced by Snow in 1959 (Rabinow 1996). It does not propose an alternative to the *cultures* of human sciences “versus” natural sciences, but a systematically integrated approach, on a higher level of reflection.

The respective sciences continue to depend on reductionism as a *method and theory* (that is to say, *not* as a philosophy!), namely, as a way to delineate the known and the unknown. However, this part of the work of science should be distinguished from “explanation”, which attempts to clarify something known (e.g., a theory) with the help from a new theory, generating a new hypothesis (that is, again, another unknown). As far as the synthetic activity of explanation is concerned, reductionism must be surmounted. This is a shared task for all sciences. Science with her holistic and ethical destination makes this synthesis more than merely a “sum of parts”.

Within such a multi-theoretical scope, a shared meta-culture of normative orientation as the basis for *trust* can be drafted, as a unifying task for any globalized civil society, leaving freedom and space for a variety of different life styles, morals, and cultures. It generates added mutual benefit for all stakeholders in the long-term view, such as social stability, responsible and accountable conduct, acceptance of science, self-critical advancement of sciences, substantial “two-way”-communication and modern education. In sociological terms, it offers an antidote against tendencies towards a corruption of science by economy and other powers and the associated erosion of credibility.

In sum, society should be treated with due respect, as mature consumers and affected humans, with a right to be taken seriously, not only for moral reasons but because this corresponds with a reasonably inclusive understanding of science. The public’s lack of or hesitation towards scientific understanding, together with the reductionism of science, should motivate all sides to develop a *mutually intelligible language* and practices of interaction, rather than inspire strategies or attitudes of cheating and hostility. People in developing countries in particular, who live in situations of transformation and emerging new structures, are highly vulnerable to adverse impact from marketization and technicization, in addition to more traditional forms of social or political calamity. Within the process of “globalization”, there are

obviously more appealing options than “MacDonaldization” versus “MacDschihadization”.

5. Assessing Eugenics and Social Darwinism in China

Above, I have explored the possibility and scientific as well as ethical acceptability of assessing bioethics in a “foreign country”. How can a foreigner appraise the relevant cultural and normative meaning, without stepping into the pitfalls of relativism or hegemonism or being charged with “normative cultural imperialism”? The suggested strategy in principle goes back to the operation of any science. In particular, the importance of including a self-critical mode in the methodology and performance of such research is highlighted. Moreover, it is an ethical requirement not to claim a privileged authority to judge on cultural grounds. Bioethics should facilitate the discourse by taking the respective claims to “make it better” seriously in light of their arguments.

One such claim is that medicine can support the Chinese family planning policy. The aim of China’s population policy by regulation of births is twofold. First, the quantity of newborns should be reduced, ideally to an average of one child per couple, for a limited period of time. The key strategies are: late marriage and delayed births. The second aim is to improve the “population quality” (*renkou suzhi*). These regulations are enforced with the help of incentives, such as access to higher-quality housing and support for schooling. However, in many cases peasants and members of ethnic minority groups are exempted from these restrictions (Zhou 2002).

The interpretation and implementation of “improving the quality of the population” is conceptually ambiguous, socially problematic and stirs controversy (Yang 2002). Whereas abortion as a means for birth control is criticized (to some extent) inside China and (regularly) from abroad, most Chinese are unaware of the international acclaim for the success in reducing population size, especially as compared with other developing countries. Articulated concern about unacceptable means to this end or consequences thereof, such as sex-selective abortion or eugenic elements, evidence of corrupt and discriminating practices, are sometimes mistaken for criticism of this policy in general, and as an unfair “Western” bias against China (Nie 2005).

The main purpose of “*Yousheng*”, the Chinese term translated as “eugenics”, is to *improve* the quality of health, with an expressed focus on the health of mothers and infants (Wang 1999). The health situation of mothers and infants receives particular public attention in China

because it relates to major economic interests in terms of quality of future human resources.

The *means* to achieve this goal, namely whether they may include discrimination, coercion or harm against undesirable individuals (e.g. through sterilization), and the feasibility of the conceptual, legal and administrative frameworks, especially concern about a Social Darwinistic agenda, are as controversial as they are crucial and unsettled in China. Mere rhetorical reassurance of the policy makers' best intentions seems to indicate a shallow comprehension of the problem matter itself. Assessment of the appropriateness of chosen means and agenda, require proper education in the history and ideology of eugenics, as well as in the societal mechanisms and the theory of science and the political resolve. It also must be accompanied by critical scrutiny of new eugenics trends in society.

However, the first national Marriage and Family Planning Law, enforced since 2002, defines a civil duty to engage in family planning. The imperative to improve the "quality" is re-confirmed. This law emphasizes above all the *responsibility* of individual couples (Elbern 2002). This emphasis is strengthened in the regulations currently finalized for the implementation of the Marriage Law on the provincial level (Schucher 2003).

Chinese medical ethicists call for greater attention to issues of public health. They highlight *justice* in the allocation of medical resources, *fairness* of access to medical services, *reforms* of the public health sector (reinforced by the crisis of SARS). Occasionally, they connect these demands with the issue of political *legitimacy* (Döring 2003). They put little weight on "improving" the population beyond strengthening public basic health and conventional measures of prevention. These medical ethicists rather use "yousheng" in its literal sense of "healthy birth" (Knoppers 1998). On the other hand, however, perhaps they seem to underrate the real impact of eugenic concepts in "modern" societies, especially the individualized "liberal eugenics", as it has left its marks already on the (im)balance of the sex ratio (Hudson and den Boer 2004).

Eugenics legislation and practices in China have, in the past, not been promoted by a strong state, with advanced biomedical science and technology, or have been systematically organized by a rational central bureaucracy, and an aggressive policy of biological discrimination. Discrimination has become structural, individualized and internalized through the hearts and minds of the people who want "nothing but the best" for their offspring. Mass media indoctrination and moral

education reach out for the core of the *individual*. The influence of state power shifts to an unquestioned imperative of enhancement and fitness. As a consequence, the strong state is not required, the strategic key to eugenics is subtle yet powerful individuation. Major players are the anonymous pressures of market economy and economic rationality, together with a libertarian, night-watch state. China's social and cultural resources and historical memory do not appear to be prepared to deal with this major challenge in a critically enlightened manner.

In view of the enormous need for fundamental education and basic health and preventive medicine there appears to be a disquieting imbalance in the political priorities. Whereas great efforts are undertaken so as to enhance technical and medical standards in the sense of quality control and reduction of risks, thus enhancing the ambivalent means with a propensity for eugenics applications, much less pains are invested to monitor and check their implementation. The human factor is neglected under the new horizons of pragmatism. Altogether, a new form of the "technical imperative" seems to promote biological reductionism with irrational fears or expectations towards the *magic* of bio-engineering (Dikötter 1996). In the absence of a critical discourse, the unleashed competition on all levels of society supports Social Darwinist ideology. Notably, however, no evidence suggests a return to traditional state eugenics in China. The controversial "Eugenics Law" of 1995 has not been implemented.

Nevertheless, a common readiness to accept the promises and the bio-reductionist worldviews of eugenics can be seen in the population, among celebrities (in their notable function as role models) and policy makers. There is much common talk about "bad genes and good genes"; some "elite sperm banks" flourish. Reports about biomedical achievements are frequently hyped, fashioning "pre-natal training and education", and following a related tide from the US. Symbolically, the "DNA" is often referred to in advertisements and topical in pop songs.

On the other hand, the same indicators, notably accompanied by the pressures of a "one-child-policy", suggest the presence of the major objective and subjective requirements of a "liberal eugenics" (Habermas), albeit with particular Chinese configurations. In China, as in other countries, "liberal eugenics" draws from the increasing impact of economic powers of markets and stakeholders on citizens' lives.

Chinese politicians and scientists had early and clearly rejected comparisons of Chinese *Yousheng* policies with Nazi eugenics (Döring 1998). It should be emphasized that China has made no serious efforts to study and learn from the eugenics policies in other countries in the

past, including the examples of the German Nazi's and Japanese Imperialistic atrocities in the name of "medicine" (Nie 2001).

It should be added that, granted the obvious differences between, e.g., Nazi Germany and China, on the conceptual, political and the structural levels, eugenics policies and practices share familiar patterns all over the world. This situation should suffice to alert Chinese scientists, ethicists and policy makers, together with their "Western" counterparts, to take the fundamental problems of eugenics more serious. This proposal has been confirmed in principle at the 18th IGF World Congress in Beijing, in 1998, without much impact on the activities of bioethicists (Döring 1998).

6. Eugenics as a Lack of Cultivation

The case of China shows us problems of eugenics in a society that fails to reinforce humanity, on two levels. Conceptually, in the way we understand the human being beyond biology and medicine; and socially, in strengthening solidarity and justice. Cultivation of people and re-emphasizing the larger picture of "what is a good life" (Arendt 1958) belong here. The project of Enlightenment as an avenue of emancipation and maturity of humanity should be strengthened.

In contemporary China, there are no culturally established frames of reference that would determine an attitude of eugenics. More generally, no representative position can be discerned for a "culturally Chinese" concept of what the human being is, how much of being human can be explained in terms of biology, and what we may or ought to actively change in our biological set up. These basic questions are hardly ever discussed on a reflected level, such as among life scientists and professionals in genetic counseling (Wertz 1999). It seems fair to say that, at this point, in deliberations about moral values and good medical practice, there is a widespread inclination to reduce moral concepts according to pragmatic considerations.

China's scientific progress mostly follows "Western" models, in particular the research culture in the life sciences in the USA. We cannot discuss eugenics in China without taking into account the omnipresence of modern "Western" civilization in the streets and labs in urban China. Culturally, China has firmly become an integrate part of the fabric of global society. The biomedical sciences have made major contributions to this acculturation. China should be supported in the attempts to cope with the downside of this globalization as well.

Searching for the ethical problem of eugenics in China is partly a task for thorough empirical analysis. There is still very much study-

ing to be done so as to permit a fair assessment. An interesting challenge lies, however, in understanding eugenics in China as a particular context for expressing a general *inherent dilemma of medicine herself*, and as reflecting the new global situation of eugenics.

Cultivation of practical philosophy with a global perspective does not tolerate shortcuts. We have to face reality, that is, engage in the vast areas of empirical scrutiny, with opened eyes and open minds. Thus there is no future for culturally biased or stereotyping approaches. Philosophy should appreciate this opportunity as a chance to descend from the ivory towers of crude objectivation of peoples and people. For example, experts should depart from the paradigm of “China-watching”.

Cultural and ethnic particularities can be assessed on the basis of proper empirical description and practiced respect for the people; such as by ways of participatory research, for example in international sociological and economic studies of attitudes and behavior patterns among patients, in view of concrete matters, such as ethical problems. Explanatory models and a sophisticated concept of culture will naturally evolve from such scientific research projects.

The political impact of a refined philosophy of culture that leaves false ethnic preoccupations behind is obvious. It supports the development of an enlightened global civil society, with clear democratic and pluralistic patterns. Thus, it prepares the grounds for both citizenship and research of a kind that would be scientifically enhanced, critical, and less ready to be abused by interested parties, because it encourages analysis of actors, interests and the rhetoric of power. It will send culturalist (and other) myths back to the deeper layers of culture, were they can function more constructively than if they were taken as organizational elements in political affairs.

Note

1. Both terms are used here in the classical sense of Kant's ethics, that is, “transcendental” (“transzendental”, as distinguished from “transzendent”) means the meta-methodology which aims beyond any possible practical experience, exploring the condition of the possibility to address a normative concept as being reasonable in itself; and “de-ontological” is that which is not given in matter or facts (ontology), thus accounting for the Humean imperative, to ground that what *ought* to be not in what there *is*.

9. Overlapping Identities: “Brain Circulation” in South Asia and the Concept of “Rational Irrationality”

Peter Saeverin

Abstract: The chapter examines the emergence of new identity models in India, rooted in the traditional caste code and influenced by global changes and the resurgence of traditional values as counter reactions to global trends of synchronization. The paper attempts to elaborate a philosophical model of describing current transformations in national and transnational ethnicities in the Hindu-World. The emergence of so-called ‘Anglo-Saxon castes’, ‘Hindu-cosmopolitan castes’ or ‘westernized castes’ as part of the traditional caste system can be explained by the system-competition of global, economic values on the labor market, and local, traditional values in the cultural background. The theoretical frame is applied to introduce the work of the contemporary philosopher Chaturvedi Badrinath. **Key Words:** Identity, South Asia, caste system, migration, rationality, liminality.

1. On the Connectedness of Philosophy, Culture, Religion and Socio-Economic Life in India

When it comes to South Asia and the Hindu-culture one has to keep in mind that the Western concept of distinctiveness and analytic specification is not adequate to capture and comprehend south Asian complexity of what has been described as ‘unity in contradiction’. Holistic belief systems and cultural representations therefore cannot be described from a merely philosophical, indological, sociological or economical point of view. This also implies taking religious elements into account when dealing with Indian philosophy. From an analytical point of view it would be an inaccuracy in a scientific monocultural temper as we still face it in the West.¹

From the south Asian point of view there simply does not exist a limit to Hinduism. At least as far as geographical or mental limits are concerned. Speaking of ritual limits touching the sphere of impurity, there certainly is a threshold which cannot be crossed. Radhakrishnan – probably the most influential philosopher in India in the last century – states in his ‘opus magnum’ named ‘Indian Philosophy’: “Hinduism is not limited in scope to the geographical area which is described as India [...]. There is nothing which prevents it from extending to the uttermost parts of the world” (Radhakrishnan 1947: 102). In this

context it is worth mentioning what has happened in the last 55 years since Radhakrishnan stated the potential ubiquity of Indian philosophy. Indian culture such as music, film and religious teachings indeed is spreading over the world and is getting more and more powerful and influential. It is in this sense that this paper addresses Indian philosophy as a cultural element which also is part of the concept of philosophy in general (Sequeira 1996).

It has become accepted to understand theories and semantic fields as landscapes such as “ethnoscapes, technoscapes, mediascapes, finanscapes [and] ideoscapes” (Appadurai 1990: 296). The Hindu-World has to be understood as unlimited ‘hypernated-scape’ contributing to all other ‘scapes’. Nevertheless its scope is limited by a) its members and b) non-members who are committed to the idea or to elements of the idea.

As a consequence of this holism we have to state that distinct boundaries do not make sense here. Speaking of ethnicity from a philosophical point of view demands an integrative approach, where philosophy, religion, politics and socio-economic factors converge to a transitional state. In the following it will therefore be required to also look at findings that do not fit into the classical model of philosophy from a strict scholarly point of view (Panikkar 2000).

2. Local and Global Identity Patterns in India and their Observation

Caste still matters. Traditional identity patterns still dominate south Asian culture inside and outside South Asia. Nevertheless the commitment towards the traditional order has weakened over the years. Especially concerning the individual’s choice of profession, the caste system has lost its imperative governance. The major trend represents a successive shift toward the private and ritual sphere, where caste still is of major importance.

More and more Indian citizens migrate around the globe following worldwide job offers from the global labor market. The involved denial of inherited identity imposes new rules and new environments to their lives. To illuminate consequences for a resurgence of local caste consciousness and the traditional values and philosophies it is required to analyze the socio-economic background of the cultural change first.

The Indian Government recently started granting dual citizenship to NRIs (Non Resident Indians) from the U.S., Great Britain, Australia, Canada, Finland, Ireland, Italy and the Netherlands, although those

citizenships include only limited citizen rights: "They would not have the privilege of voting rights and would not be allowed to hold constitutional offices or jobs in the Defence services" (Hindustan Times: 6.5.2003).

The negative connotation of Indians leaving the subcontinent that has been propagated since Indian independence is not valid anymore. Besides the dual citizenship the Indian government plans an official holiday honoring successful NRIs and intends to establish an office for NRI's affairs to make transnational migration more convenient. At the same time where educated Indians and their concerns were promoted in a way that is congruent with global trends, the parallel existing masses of Indians who do not participate in the globalized India begin to re-concentrate on discriminating xenophobic tendencies of the caste system. "It is known that many Indians, particularly among the educated, privately worry about the resurgence of caste consciousness" (Kuran 1995a: 323).

The question dealt with here is not about socio-economic or sociological consequences of transnational migration as the outline might suggest. The question is: How does culture (seen on a global and a local level) affect identity patterns that are rooted in worldviews and attitudes competing with each other? What is required is a theoretical approach of how to describe subliminal changes, invisible to empirical methods. Philosophy offers insights and methodologies how to describe immaterial structures and textures. The method chosen here is an advancement of classical dialectics enriched by game theory (Aoki 2001). It is called 'transitional synthesis' and aims to describe the development of two equilibrium paths converging into a saddle point of coexistence without extension. It is a philosophical model that is able to reconstruct and explain changes that are empirically indiscernible but nevertheless at hand and effective. To pursue this plan it is required to construct two equilibrium paths. One path can be seen in traditional Indian Philosophy and history and its long-term effect on identity. The other path can be seen in the rule set of globalization which follows short term economic rent seeking and contract thinking irrespective to traditional entanglements. 'Transitional synthesis' analyses ambiguous arrangements where two rule sets coexist and thus bring about instability and uncertainty as well as change and novelty.

3. The Caste System and its Gradual Erosion

“The notion of caste has [...] formed the framework for the material life of all the peoples in the subcontinent” (Lal 1988: 27). And it has to be added that it also forms the framework for many people outside South Asia concerning material and immaterial matters of life. Its significance has been pointed out repeatedly and the caste system has been given allegoric names like ‘steel-frame’ or ‘the world’s greatest cultural creation’ (Eisenstadt 1984: 342).

The name ‘caste system’ (given to South Asia’s social fabric by the Portuguese) refers to Latin *castus* which can be translated as ‘chaste’ or ‘undiluted’ (Michaels 1998: 178). Marc Galanter, who has presented a study on the caste system, speaks of a “compartmental society” (Galanter 1984: 7) in South Asia. The ‘chasteness’ of the caste system can be seen in the proscription of leaving or transgressing the compartment, one is born into.² But if that was true, the caste system must have been degenerating during the last centuries. Therefore it is required to analyze the caste system in a multidimensional perspective: The caste system generally is described as consisting of four different casts plus the rising amount of *dalits* or *pancamas* (impure castes or casteless people). In Purusha-Sukta of the Rig-Veda, there is reference to the division of Hindu society into four classes. It is described there that the Brahmanas (priests) came out of the face of the Lord, the Creator, Kshatriyas (warriors) from his arms, Vaisyas (merchants) from his thighs, and the Sudras (craftsmen) from his feet. The classification into four, respective five castes is known as *varna*-scheme, which is generally referred to as background of the caste system. But next to the general, predominantly ideologically orientated classification of society, there is a second much more differentiated classification of South Asian society. The *jati*-scheme, which is a genealogical classification differentiating Indian society into many thousand sub-castes by the criteria of birth, profession and geographical region. “Caste may be taken to mean a *Jati*, an endogamous group bearing a common name and claiming a common origin, membership in which is hereditary, linked to one or more traditional occupations, imposing on its members certain obligations and restrictions in matters of social intercourse” (Galanter 1984: 8). The term ‘sub-caste’ for the *jati*-scheme is misleading, because it does not represent a hierarchical relation between the two schemes. Axel Michaels marks the difference between the two schemes by their social function. *Jati*, he writes, stands for the organizing principle within the family-structure and thereby constitutes an empirically accessible status. *Varna* on the other

hand, stands for a theoretical function rooted in classical principles and philosophical teachings (Michaels 1986: 42). The *varna*-scheme, Michaels continues, helps communicating relations between strangers by their hierarchal position.

But the most significant difference, which is of outstanding importance for the identity-constituting interdependencies, is the fact, that the *varna*-scheme is a static scheme, whereas the *jati*-scheme is a dynamic and alterable scheme, that adapts to changes.³

Besides the political intention to abolish the caste system it is mainly socio-economic pressure which undermines the caste system. Traditionally choice of occupation was determined by caste affiliation, which was determined by birth. But due to a global labor market which is self-organizing by the principle of competition, members of formerly traditional castes find themselves in all sorts of occupations all over the world.

The caste system – although it still matters – continuously erodes. In his renowned masterpiece *Hindu Equilibrium* (1988, 1989) Deepak Lal describes the changes as follows: “We may next consider migrations flows, as these are important in integrating otherwise compartmentalized and localized labor markets, and in determining to what extent and at what speed any expansion of labor demand at one or other of the newly emerging industrial, mining, or plantation centers was transmitted to a wider area” (Lal 1988: 212). By the extension to a wider area the closure of the different caste levels is not given anymore and a process of circulation started, which still is spreading.

In recent times (especially in the urbanized agglomerations) the trend of re-orientation becomes manifest. Galanter describes the trend as follows: “The turn away from the older hierarchic model to a pluralistic participatory society has proved vigorous and enduring” (Galanter 1984: 562). While legal constraints on caste employments have disappeared and there are even legal preferences for some castes, the ingrained social norms have not fully passed. “Therefore, the possibilities for greater productivity from better use of talent are undercut, to the special detriment of those who are excluded” (Hardin 2001: 219).

4. Open Competition on the Global Labor Market and Retaining Ethnicities

Open competition on the global labor market is the logical antipode to determination of occupation as constituted by the caste system. “The competitive labor market institution rewards agents possessing indi-

viduated functional skills that are valuable across competing organizations” (Aoki 2001: 233). It is not affiliation or membership that qualifies agents on the global market. The only criterion is efficiency in comparison to price with the effect of a global mobility. One of the identity constituting consequences is the ancestry-independent chance for ‘upward mobility’ (de Soto 2001: 80). As an after-effect transnational mobility leads to cultural change within the community (Hirano 1999: 103).

A. Saxenian has recently introduced the term ‘brain circulation’ which replaces the common language term ‘brain drain’. J. Bhagwati already indicated the outdatedness of the term when he introduced the term ‘diaspora model’: “The poor countries (including myself in the 1960s) primarily used to worry about the ‘brain drain’. But this view has correctly been replaced by what I call the ‘diaspora model’: having your own people in the rich countries works to your advantage in many different ways whereas holding on to your people against their wishes in conditions that are not conducive to their full development as scientists and professionals is not helpful” (Bhagwati 1999). In comparison the term ‘brain circulation’ is much more appropriate to describe the present consequences of transnational migration and its effects on contemporary philosophy.

Transnational migration according to ‘brain circulation’ results in uprooting individuals from their traditional entanglements or as Chittiwatanapong points out: “The final impact of globalization is the erosion of the local” (Chittiwatanapong 1999: 74).⁴ But at the same time, as Hirano points out, people move around “retaining their ethnicities and tend to hold on to them even while residing or staying in other societies” (Hirano 1999: 103). Another consequence he ascertains is the multilayered structure caused by transnational migration: “The multilayered structure of international society and the multiple identities of the individual person are more apparent” (ibid). Ethnicity here appears as a function of stabilizing turbulent identities and thus boosts life in a non-ethicized environment.

5. Transitional Synthesis: “Liminality of Caste” and “Brain Circulation”

Within a global perspective we are now about to cross the threshold back to a local context from a non-local point of view. Looking only at the local phenomena does not seem appropriate for understanding local phenomena. But looking at local phenomena having the global context in mind, is what is required to understand current phenomena. The

example chosen here is transnational migration and its effects on local culture and philosophy. But is there anything to be contributed on migration from a philosophical point of view? “What we can clearly say, however, is this: the hallmark of migration is its ambiguity. Even as migrants struggle to transform themselves and their families, they are torn between competing ideals: to separate their families and gain access to the power and resources of new places, or to remain together; to retain links with their villages or to break away from their often constrictive and burdensome obligations; to return or to stay” (Gardner/Osella 2003: xxiii).

Gardner/Osella present two competing objectives. In the following I will concentrate on ‘symbolic resources’ which are represented by local factors such as faith, philosophy, norms and values or – to put it in more up-to-date-language: symbolic resources which are represented by individual mental models. What effects are to be expected when local identities change over time within the frame of a transnational circulation?

Deepak Lal, whose major contribution ‘Hindu Equilibrium’ has been mentioned here before, explains in a very personal way the effect of transnational circulations: “As a Hindu member of a Westernized ‘caste’, I write this book [Hindu Equilibrium] as one infected by the agnostic, liberal, and egalitarian ethic of the European Enlightenment. But I am deeply conscious of the fact that I am only a member of what is at best a small ‘caste’ in this Hindu system, and that, whilst tolerating my ethical prejudices, the system as a whole may be unresponsive to my prescriptions” (Lal 1988: 73f).

As early as 1988, when the potency of globalization has not been discovered yet, Lal coins the term of a ‘Westernized Caste’. If we go back to what has been described above about the two levels of the caste code, the concept of a ‘Westernized Caste’ does not fit into the predominant system. The concept of a ‘Westernized Caste’ is an empirical indication for the emergence of a new caste that – as Lal points out with ostentation – is unresponsive to his personal position whether or not he himself wants to be part of the Hindu-system. The description can be understood as an empirical demonstration of a logical ambiguity which is characteristic for migration phenomena.

How can we comprehend this emergence methodologically? The concept presented here is called ‘transitional synthesis’ and attempts to explain hybrid and paradoxical phenomena such as the case of D. Lal. ‘Transitional’ refers to the state of change and ‘synthesis’ refers to the emergence of new ways. The concept can be described metaphorically

as being on-the-threshold, being in-between, being at two places at the same time. Mitra and Singh in their book on 'change in India' give an explanation under the headline 'liminality of caste'. Liminality describes the characteristics of a transition phase where the liminal entity is neither here nor there. Caste as a philosophical system organizing individual lives does fulfill the criteria of being liminal: Thanks to its liminality, caste appears as the "quintessential Janus of Indian politics, with a *jati* face, turned towards the *varna* scheme and through it, to Indian tradition and identity, capable of moving people in ways and areas beyond the reach of modern institutions; and, an associational face which links it with the institutional fabric of the modern state" (Mitra/Singh 1999: 267).

The cultural paradox we find here is the paradox of dynamics and stability. Caste as a system is simultaneously essence and instrument, which makes it complicated to be approached theoretically. The most appropriate way to do so is by specifying the contradictions which constitute the paradox. Concerning the adaptability Kuran points out: "Some students of the caste system are impressed not by its rigidity but by its flexibility in the face of changing conditions. [...] Also, new castes will emerge from time to time through the fission and fusion of existing castes" (Kuran 1995: 131). Axel Michaels ascertains the same when he alludes to the stabilizing capacity by creating new castes within a static framework (Michaels 1998: 193): "Although it stressed ideals of stability and fixity, the caste society did have mechanisms for incorporating new groups, accommodating changing practices, legitimating changes in group standing to accord with [...] and socio-ritual attainment [...]. In the compartmental society permitted some individual mobility within these communities as well as the slower movement off whole communities" (Galanter 1984: 12).

Due to the ability to adapt and to preserve at the same time, the caste system succeeded to survive for at least 2000 years. The permanent state of 'liminality' as described here must be seen as inevitable precondition for long term stability. What represents itself here as a logical contradiction however is one of the explanations for the yet unanswered question for the caste system's persistence. *But how does globalization affect the 'liminality of caste' and vice versa in respect to a transitional synthesis?*

As mentioned above the effects of globalization will be taken into consideration here only with reference to their consequences on human mindsets caused by transnational mobility. Therefore I now will concentrate on the phenomena of 'brain circulation', which evolved

out of the so-called 'brain drain': "In India by comparison, brain drain was no problem. In absolute terms, of course, there was more of it. And the quality of some of the emigrants was extraordinarily high. But they were not really that much missed. They continued to visit" (Lewis 1995: 44). The description made here by Lewis points at the Diaspora and the effect the Diaspora has had on the place of origin. The fact that people continued to visit is a fundamental condition for the process of circulation synthesizing local and global identities. The most important contribution to this issue comes from Saxenian, who introduced the term 'brain circulation': "The 'brain drain' from developing countries such as India and China has been transformed into a more complex, two-way process of 'brain circulation'" (Saxenian 2002: vi).

For Saxenian 'circulating brains' rooted in their local mental models, are the essential boosters of globalization. Not only in the socio-economic dimension, but also in the philosophical and cultural dimension: "Foreign born entrepreneurs are becoming agents of globalization by investing in their native countries, and their growing mobility is in turn fuelling the emergence of entrepreneurial networks in distant locations" (Saxenian 2002: v).

The advantage of 'circulating brains' in comparison to immobile ones is their connectivity and their ability of binoziation.⁵ Besides economic consequences the new emerging networks have effects on policy and intellectual property rights: "The scale and decentralized nature of these transnational activities have important consequences for economic development elsewhere in the world, as well as for the formulation of policy regarding trade, immigration, and intellectual property rights in the United States" (Saxenian 2002: v). Nevertheless there are significant problems in establishing ties between the two systems by circulating brains.

To solve problems like bureaucracy, political uncertainty or corrupt legal systems several multinational networks have been established. Some of the most important are: SIPA (Silicon Valley Indian Professionals Association), TIE (The Indus Entrepreneur), NETSAP (Network of South Asian Professionals), the IACPA (India Abroad Centre for political Awareness) or "Indo-American Political Foundation". To underline the importance of those multinational interlinking networks Lewis points out already in 1995: "If India does not wish to remain a social technically lagging economy, it must promote technological intercourse with the rest of the world. Partly, this can be achieved by continued movement of people and ideas" (Lewis 1995: 33).

The so-called ‘drain’ represents the first step out of three steps. The process of circulation is only possible by visiting and returning and those who have been accused to be opportunistic and unpatriotic now turn out to be honored as boosters of progress.⁶ But it is only a small segment of the population we are dealing with here: Educated people: “Higher education is such a labor-intensive industry, that it could be to India’s continuing comparative advantage to export a considerable variety of trained professionals” (Lewis 1995: 44).

The disadvantage of the process described here is blinding out Hindu-specific elements. The perspective chosen by Saxenian is a unilateral perspective. The question dealt with here is: How does the caste system respond to the process of ‘brain circulation’? In the literature we find different positions. Deepak Lal speaks of a “small westernized caste” that emerges out of the unresponsive Hindu-system. I will come back to this point later. Chelliah on the contrary postulates an “intellectual revolution”, “which will question and demolish every superstition including the superstition of caste which is now becoming an important stumbling block to progress” (Chelliah 2001: 282f).

The position to be elucidated here is the first one, which integrates global tendencies with local identities like the ones manifest in the caste system.⁷ Chelliah’s position addresses the inefficiency of the caste system, which can be confuted by a point E. Schlicht has made: “This code [caste] is assumed to be inefficient in the sense that everyone would be better off if everyone were ostracized. It would thus be preferable jointly to abolish the code. Yet it is in the best interest of each member of this society to observe the code, even if he dislikes it. In this way, Akerlof argues, an appalling stage of society may be perpetuated in spite of widespread opposition. It seems thus, that this is a model of an adaptive yet self-stabilizing custom which is entirely inefficient and reproduces itself none the less” (Schlicht 1998: 63).

Maintaining the caste code constitutes a common but fluid identity for its members. An identity that ensures stability while being in flow. Hardin highlights the interrelation of caste rules and transnational mobility: “Because status groups are grounded in exclusion that is enforced spontaneously by norms of exclusion, they are inherently communal. Their norms therefore cannot survive outside the relevant community. Economic development that brings geographic mobility undercuts them” (Hardin 2001: 219). ‘Brain circulation’ thus strengthens mobility and at the same time strengthens locality by circulating between places and creating a transitory space.

6. Chelliah’s Concept of ‘Irrational Rationality’

How can we as a next step describe the effect of a brain drain on the individual and how is it, that the transitory space creates new models of local ethnicities? As with all syntheses we have to face a paradox. In our case it is the paradox that can best solve Chelliah’s description of a ‘rational irrationality’: “Although a proportion of the educated population has absorbed the scientific temper, many of them often indulge or participate in what they consider to be harmless irrational practices, procedures and customs. In that way, they minimize conflict or disagreement with the immediate family, caste groups and the traditional society. We may call this rational irrationality” (Chelliah 2001: 281). Without entering the rationality debate as urgent topic in a variety of different disciplines we may conclude here that different mental models interact in a way contradicting each other and thus reveal a different position of understanding. Timur Kuran mentions a certain ‘flexibility’ of the caste code (Kuran 1995a: 131) and Halidé Edib coins the term of a ‘mental elasticity’: “Hindu thought will assimilate without disturbing its pattern of life” (Edib 2002: 164f). The concept of ‘rational irrationality’ reveals quite well in how far traditional entanglements lead to a new consciousness of redefining old identities by an new mode of reflexivity, where contradictions and hybrid forms become valid.

7. Contemporary Indian Philosophy

When it comes to contemporary Indian philosophy it is complicated to identify dominant trends. This is basically for two reasons. Academic philosophy is deeply acquainted with Western philosophy and addresses mainly the same issues and methods. Therefore it does not have very much in common with ancient Indian philosophy. On the other hand, the Indian intellectual environment beyond universities, inside and outside India, continues India’s spiritual philosophy in rituals such as mentioned and characterized as ‘rational irrationality’ above.

Fostered by transnational migration we face an equalization of Indian philosophy in the sense that contemporary contributions broach the issue of globalization or secularization⁸ as an ubiquitous phenomena. At the same time traditional values find their way in philosophical reflections. In this process of re-ethnicization, two trends dominate the field of Indian philosophy: Sanscritization as a dogmatic reference to ancient traditions and thoughts within the frame of religious domi-

nance; and Hinduization as a backlash to global economization on a populist political level (Shulman 1989).

Both trends signify discontent with the global paradigm of felicity. Coming back to the observation of brain drain the presumably conclusion is that re-ethnicization is a trend for those who do not benefit from the material upcurrent of globalization or those who do not find their way out of overlapping identities as they emerge out of the circularity of migration. Therefore re-ethnicization in India can be understood as an occurrence of critique as well as an occurrence of discontentment.

8. Introducing the Re-ethnicized, Non-Populist Philosophy of Chaturvedi Badrinath

As far as contemporary Philosophy is concerned there are only very few examples of non-populist scholars outside academia who contribute to the field of re-ethnicized thinking. One of them is Chaturvedi Badrinath (born 1931), a philosopher who works on the contemporary meaning of *Dharma*. His work includes essays on 'Dharma, India and the world order' (1993), as well as a monograph on 'Finding Jesus in *Dharma*' (2000). Currently a revised edition of the Mahabharata in three volumes is to be published by him as well as a biography on Swami Vivekananda, one of the most important Indian philosophers. Badrinath has also published in the magazine 'resurgence' which is dedicated to an alternative approach to 'free trade politics' and researches in the direction of a 'new paradigm to emerge'.

In the following some of his major claims on the concept of *Dharma* will be presented to give a vivid impression of how re-ethnicized Indian philosophy may look like. The most important question in respect of *Dharma* is the mutual connection of philosophy and India, where the identity of a culture becomes an integral part of philosophical concepts. Badrinath's philosophy considers *Dharma* to be "the very heart of inquiry into India" (Badrinath 1993: 33). Thereby the concept of *Dharma* and Indian identity become interlinked and appear unified in a philosophical concept. *Dharma* as a concept is even more important than the religious connotation of Hinduism, which is a Western category: "The question: 'what is Hinduism?', was an impossible question already; for there was no such thing as 'Hinduism'. There was only *Dharma*; and *Dharma* was not religion" (Badrinath 2000: 35).

Dharma being a distinct Indian term therefore stands for a concept of philosophy with a universal scope. Going back to what Radhakrishnan stated on Indian philosophy and its geographically non-existing limits (Radhakrishnan 1947: 102), we find in the concept of *Dharma* a philosophical as well as religious approach.

But what is *Dharma* besides the trivial translation of 'order', or 'law'? For Badrinath *Dharma* resembles "a unified perception of life" (Badrinath 2000: 8) that rules out any dichotomy between ideas, faith, and social structures.

Indian philosophy, as it is described for example by Halidé Edib (2002), can be distinguished by its 'mental elasticity'. Therefore the concept of *Dharma* being universally true as presented by Badrinath can be seen as Hindu-centric worldview which is entitled to contribute to the global level of culture from a distinct Indian perspective.

Compared to western philosophic approaches, *dharmic* philosophy is based on several contradictions which make it attractive on a universal level. First of all it is a religious concept as well as a secular concept and it is none of them at the same time. Second is has a spiritual and a practical dimension. Above that, it governs cosmology as well as everyday life decisions of individuals. As Badrinath points out, *dharmic* culture "is simultaneously rooted in history and in transcendence" (Badrinath 1993: 32). This contradictory quality makes a philosophy based on the principles of *Dharma* attractive even for those, who shielded away from traditional entanglements and are involved in the process of brain circulation.

In the case of Indian philosophy it is observable that local countercurrents emerged due to the turbulences caused by globalization. As a reaction these countercurrents proliferate and boost Indian specific ideas and teachings. If global culture becomes more and more synchronized, Indian specific philosophies will regain strength and fortitude.

But one question remains unanswered: If synchronization and re-ethnicization are upcoming trends that contradict each other, will there be a peaceful way of coexistence and untroubled acknowledgment of each other or will the contradiction lead to unsolvable conflicts in the long run?

Notes

1. Although it also has to be stressed out here that monocultural approaches become more and more substituted by inter-, trans- or multidisciplinary approaches.

2. “The Hindu caste system is in many ways almost an ideal example of the autarkic separation of various groups from each other. Each caste has its own proper moral and social code and there is no presumption that there is a correct, universal code for all – other than the universal principle of adherence to the norms of one’s caste [...]. Because status groups are grounded in exclusion that is enforced spontaneously by norms of exclusion, they are inherently communal. Their norms therefore cannot survive outside the relevant community” (Hardin 2001: 219).
3. Nevertheless it has to be mentioned that the caste system has formally been abolished by the Indian constitution: “Article 17 abolished untouchability and its practice in any form, while Article 15 outlawed discrimination based on religion, caste, race, sex, or place of birth” (Montgomery 2001: 187).
4. It is especially the U.S. that keeps the process of circulation running, as Parikh points out: “The US attracts the best and the brightest from all over the world. Culturally it cherishes diversity and avoids sectarian or ethnic discrimination. Finally it has a unique financial system, which is able to award resources to good projects” (Parikh 1999: 27).
5. “Chinese and Indian immigrants have a wide range of professional ties to their native countries. Many return to their native countries regularly for business purposes and exchange technologies and labor market information with colleagues and friends. Some also advise companies, invest in start-ups and venture funds, and meet with government officials in their native countries” (Saxenian 2002: v).
6. “‘Brain drains’ are perhaps better thought of as opportunities. They can become a net welfare enhancer for the Indians remaining in India” (Lewis 1995: 333).
7. One reason not to agree with Chelliah is the ignorance towards conflicts his position implies. Hardin points out: “Social autarky for religious groups need not have economic consequences, but, if coupled with norms of exclusion, it can [...]. In India ethnic and religious affiliations commonly determine the leadership of economic enterprises, so that there are Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh firms” (Hardin 2001: 217).
8. See Maya Warrier (2003) and her paper “Processes of Secularization in Contemporary India”.

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To think non-nationally, outside the background of a national philosophical tradition means to think unnaturally. Russian philosophy is closer to us just because it is the motherland of our conscience, because it is self-awareness and our spirit – even if we do not know it or do not wish to know it. **Valerij A. Kuvakin**

In my opinion, national philosophers are impossible. **Merab Mamardashvili**¹

10. What is Russian About Russian Philosophy?

Evert van der Zweerde

Abstract: Russian philosophy is usually treated, in scholarly literature, as a special case: it neither fits into the model of ethno-philosophy, because it has its roots in classical Greek philosophy and Byzantine patristics, nor can it be included in an account of Western philosophy, because it obviously took a different course of development. Additionally, it contains a tradition of claims to specificity and superiority. During the Soviet period, the imposition of an official Marxist-Leninist philosophy, with its own claim to superiority, led to the intellectual isolation of philosophical thought in Russia. It is argued, in this paper, that the best way to approach the phenomenon of Russian philosophy is through the notion of “philosophical culture” as the space where a plurality of philosophical traditions coexist, depending of course on political, social, and economic circumstances. **Key words:** Russian philosophy, philosophical culture, national vs. ethnic philosophy, globalization

One of the candidates for recognition as a specific philosophical tradition, within the broader scope of European philosophy, is Russian philosophy. The claim to singularity of Russian philosophy is usually expressed by the notion of *samobytnost*, translated as ‘originality’ (an alternative would be ‘autochthony’), literally meaning ‘being-in-one’s-own-way-ness’; containing ‘self’ [*sam*] and ‘way of being’ [*bytie*], the concept connotes uniqueness, non-derivativeness, and irreducibility.² Also, there is, in academic philosophy, a small but established niche for the study of Russian philosophy; there are monographs, translations, conferences, and journals. Since the end of the Commu-

nist period scholarship in Russian philosophy has become global, engaging considerable numbers of Russian and non-Russian specialists. So, apparently, Russian philosophy exists, it *is* something – the question is, however, what *kind* of something, and, also, *why* is there Russian philosophy? The first aim of this paper is to get closer to an answer to these questions.

These questions are linked to more general questions about the possible national and ethnic dimension of philosophy. The other aim of this paper is to address these general questions. In order to do so, I introduce the notion of a philosophical culture as the concrete space of philosophical thought, with a national or ethnic ‘determination’ as one of its possible dimensions. Secondly, I discuss the ways in which Russian philosophy does and does not fit into this notion. Finally, I try to assess the place of Russian philosophy in a globalizing philosophical culture. On the whole, I will argue that there is a particular Russian – including “Soviet” – philosophical culture which accommodates, among many others, a Russian philosophical tradition that can be regarded as ethno-philosophical. My general background hypothesis is that meta-philosophical conceptions help to reproduce philosophical culture.

1. The Concept of Philosophical Culture

The question of the specificity of national traditions in philosophical thought typically occupies the minds of participants *within* those traditions. It is a question which particularly concerns participants of traditions that feel misunderstood, marginalized, or underestimated: an analytical philosopher from the University of Oxford is not supposed to wonder about the Britishness of his or her philosophizing, but one is not surprised to find a discourse on the Africanness of African philosophy in Africa, or on the Russianness of philosophy in Russia.

However, there are Western philosophers who wonder about the specifically Western traits or determinations of their thought: the renowned historian of philosophy Frederick C. Copleston (1907-1994), for example, raises the question about the relation between philosophical traditions and the cultural and historical settings, that is, the “extra-philosophical factors” such as “economic, social and political conditions [and] also religion and science” (Copleston 1980: 5). Western philosophers, sensitive to reproaches of ethnocentrism or eurocentrism, will seek to uphold the truth-claims of Western philosophy against the onslaughts of relativism and provincialism. Non-Western philosophers, aware of the existence of a national tradition in philosophy to which

they feel committed, will seek recognition for that tradition. Western philosophers will recognize their non-Western colleagues who identify themselves as non-Western as belonging to ‘one among many different traditions’, while non-Western philosophers will tend either to assert the equal value of *all* traditions or to claim their own superiority. These are general features of the problem of recognition in a situation of plurality. However, in the case of philosophy, an additional problem is created by the fact that philosophical thought entails, at the level of its intention, a universal truth-claim that is hard to reconcile with a relativistic understanding of a plurality of philosophies: philosophical truth may be hard to find, but it is even harder to conceive of it as Russian, Indian, or Western.

It is clear that philosophical thought has to do with universality in the sense that whatever a philosopher holds to be true, (s)he holds to be true for every rationally thinking human being. Even the claim that “truth” is something different for every thinking being is a claim that, itself, is held to be true for every thinking being. At the same time, philosophical thought is absolutely individual: even if two people can think *the same thing*, they cannot think *together*. The question is whether this individuality must be interpreted in terms of singularity or of particularity. Universality and particularity are not mutually exclusive; singularity and universality are. As Machiel Karskens has put it, “[...] the latter entails particular characteristics having a relationship with a general principle, whereas the former denies this relationship and underlines the (monadic) uniqueness and self-sufficiency of the characteristics that are at stake” (Karskens 2004: 264).

A first hypothesis is that philosophical thought as such, being the attempt to understand reality by rational means only, is the same for every human being. Consequently, any differences in ‘way of thinking’ are to be considered accidental or due to ‘extra-philosophical factors’, and there cannot be such a thing as an national or ethnic determination of philosophy. There is a strong tradition in philosophy which holds that, once liberated from all prejudices and ‘idols’, human reason will ultimately and necessarily arrive at the same truth.

The question about the specificity of a particular philosophical tradition, i.e. the question ‘What is x-ish about x-ish philosophy in X?’ is thus preceded by the question what *can* be specific about a particular philosophical tradition. And this question presupposes an answer to the question what is a philosophical tradition, which, finally, presupposes

an answer to the first question of meta-philosophy: ‘What is philosophy?’

At this point, two approaches conflict: one is an ‘empirical’ approach which states that philosophy is what is *named* or *considered* philosophy within a given context (this ‘empirical’ approach is exemplified most clearly by Randall Collins); the other one is the ‘meta-philosophical’ attempt to grasp the nature of philosophy by those who know it from direct experience, often in terms of particular capacities of the human mind (speculation, dialectics, contemplation, abstraction, etc.). Philosophers, from Socrates and Boëthius’ *Consolatio philosophiae* to Karl Jaspers’ *Was ist Philosophie?* and Merab Mamardashvili’s *Kak ja ponimaju filosofiju?* [How do I understand philosophy?], who have addressed, in a reflexive vein, the question ‘What is philosophy?’, usually think that they grasp its essence. However, the free and unassisted individual mind that, in its meta-philosophical endeavor, seeks the truth about philosophy is *somebody’s* mind.

At one end, therefore, I place what Soviet philosophers, aware of the dangers of collectivism, have aptly called the ‘personality principle [*lichnostnoe nachalo*]’ of philosophical thought: thought, however universal its truth-claim may be, is necessarily *individual* (Motroshilova 1991: 15). At the other end, I place another, equally obvious principle, that can be labeled the ‘situation principle’: philosophical thought never takes place in isolation, but necessarily within a setting which, although it can change and be changed, is *given* when thought is taking place. The *situation* of philosophy is the set of conditions (political, social, cultural [including religion], linguistic, historical conditions), which determine the *place* of philosophy. This includes institutionalized places such as academies, gardens, universities, but also apartment kitchens and street corners, of philosophical *culture*, as the *space* in which philosophical *thought* is expressed and developed. Philosophical *culture* thus is the socio-economically, politically, and historically determined space where philosophy is “done”. Within this space, given its more or less stable existence, philosophy develops in the form of a greater or smaller number of philosophical *traditions*.

Strictly speaking, philosophical thought does not need philosophical culture in order to exist – which is why philosophical culture can emerge even within the Gulag or in the smoking room of the Lenin library in Moscow (Pjatigorskij 1996). However, philosophical culture comes into full existence when it reaches a certain degree of stability. From that point onwards, philosophers reproduce philosophical culture: they both express and internalize its standards,

criteria, goals, paradigmatic forms, etc. Once established, philosophical culture becomes a *fact* and a *norm* for those who aspire at philosophy themselves. They can question or reject any element or aspect of this given philosophical culture, but in doing so, they not so much annihilate as develop and differentiate philosophical culture. From a certain point onwards, then, philosophical culture is both the mental and symbolical, and the economic and socio-political space for philosophical thought, which philosophers produce and reproduce, and which they also “maintain” and cultivate.

However, while philosophical thought and tradition are the exclusive affair of the philosophers themselves, the place and situation of philosophical culture are not. Philosophers play a role in determining philosophical culture, but there are many factors that escape their control, such as political decisions, a constitution which may or may not warrant academic freedom, and economic parameters that determine the degree of leisure required for a sufficient number of people to engage in philosophy. In some cases, for example in liberal democracies, philosophers can, as citizens, try to influence the situation and place of philosophy, and they can, as members of civil society, organize themselves in order to foster the case and the interests of philosophy and of philosophers. These activities are only one among many factors, and often not the decisive ones, but they do enter philosophical culture itself as objects of concern or reflection. Like any form of socially embedded human activity, philosophy is always also a matter of spending time and energy, i.e. it has an *economic* aspect, and it inevitably also has a *political* aspect: the presence of unassisted free human thought can never be approached neutrally by the existing political order. Therefore, philosophical culture relies on the presence of meta-philosophical theories *about* philosophy that simultaneously motivate philosophers to participate in philosophical culture and legitimize the existence of philosophical culture within society at large and the spending on it of public money.

Although meta-philosophy is philosophy inasmuch as it answers such questions as ‘What is philosophy?’ or ‘What is x-ian about x-ian philosophy in X?’ and assesses the nature of the philosophical culture in question, its main purpose is to (re)produce a discourse that helps define, demarcate and, if necessary, defend a given philosophical culture. Its main function thus is ideological in the sense of legitimizing a status quo and/or motivating the participants within the culture in question. Meta-philosophical discourse, largely yielded by the philosophical community itself, thus is part of the way in which a

philosophical culture attempts to establish or preserve itself, and can be properly called the *ideology* of philosophy. In contemporary neo-liberal democracies, philosophers have to prove the scientific character of their endeavor and its usefulness; in other situations they may have to plea allegiance to a political system or they may have to stress their ethnicity. Leaving aside the first alternative, I focus on the second and third ones, introducing the hypothesis that while philosophical culture can be national, only philosophical traditions can be ethnic.

At this point, it is relevant to invoke Anthony Smith's systematic distinction between *nation* and *ethnie*. Smith has proposed *ethnie* as "the more generic concept", opposed to the nation as being "more specific", allowing, however, for the nation to become "more inclusive, more complex and less tied to the original ethnic base", due to a "transformation of the relationships between ethnicity and culture, and between culture and politics" (Smith 2001: 13f). Quite rightly, Smith does not conflate nation and state into nation-state: "Most students of the subject have, nevertheless, agreed on two points: a nation is not a state and it is not an ethnic community" (Smith 2001:12). In the case of the nation-state, polity and *ethnie* imply each other, but this is a specific situation, limited historically to "Modernity".

Understanding nations as those *ethnies* which are connected, either effectively or in terms of their aspiration, to polities, we can state that, with the rise of the nation-state as the primary form of political organization, philosophical culture became predominantly national. Regulations of philosophy teaching, including a gradual shift from Latin to the vernaculars, were, among many others, part of the nation-state as a project. But if philosophical culture can be, and has been, determined nationally, this must be seen as a transient situation. Historically, national philosophy is an effect of the rise of the nation in European and, through colonization and imperialism, world history. Philosophically, a national or ethnic determination of philosophical culture is one out of many possibilities: philosophical thought seeks universal truth, departing from a concrete situation and from a philosophical culture, located in that situation. This situation can also be "global": the relative retreat of the nation-state under present-day conditions renders this determination less prominent and, perhaps, obsolete.

The literature on nationhood and nationalism differs in dating the beginning of the nation in late medieval and early modern times (Adrian Hastings), or focusing on nationalism as a 19th century ideology (Eric Hobsbawm). However, it is clear that both have a

beginning. Arguably, they also have an end: the widely stated decline of the nation-state that we witness in the present era of “globalization” might in this respect also put an end to any *national* determination of philosophical culture. Most non-Anglophone countries today are marked by attempts to preserve a tradition of philosophical thought and publication in the national language, while professional philosophers know that to publish in a way that “pays” means to put forward the products of one’s thought on a virtually global market, i.e. through publications in English. If, however, national philosophical culture is on its way out together with the nation-state, the question is where this leaves us with respect to *ethnic* determination. When nations disappear, do *ethnies* reappear?

While it is easy to deconstruct the idea of the nation, a procedure which may not render it less effective politically, but certainly less respectable intellectually and philosophically, things are different with the *ethnie*. We can reject any “realist, substantialist understanding of nations” (Brubaker 2005: 14), and unmask the nation as a “unique socio-historical construct” (Hastings 1997: 25), an “imagined political community” (Anderson 1983: 6), i.e. treat it as an ‘ideologeme’ (Gusejnov 2000; Jameson 1981: 76), but the *ethnie* somehow seems to be more natural, and substantial. One’s national identity can be inescapable in socio-political terms, but one’s ethnic identity seems to be undeniable. It cannot even be a priori excluded that a difference in DNA accounts for a difference in way of thinking, so that it is possible that women think differently from men, or Russians differently from Dutchmen. So, if the idea of a *national* philosophy is clearly an artificial construction, depending on a national(istic) political agenda (which, of course, does not keep its adherents from firmly believing), the idea of an ethnic philosophical tradition is not absurd (though it may still be untrue), since the *ethnie* obviously has a natural, genetic basis. The distinction between nation and *ethnie* is of particular relevance for the topic of Russian philosophy, if we take into account the peculiar relation between nationality and ethnicity in the Russian case. Arguably, when Kuvakin claims that “to think non-nationally... means to think unnaturally”, he has in mind the notion of *ethnie* rather than of nation (Kuvakin 1994: 136).

2. The Specific Nature of Russian Philosophy

In a recent translation of an important Russian philosophical text, B.P. Vysheslavtsev's (1877-1954) *The Eternal in Russian Philosophy* [Vechnoe v russkoj filosofii] the translator introduces the book under the heading 'Russian Philosophy without Apology' (Vysheslavtsev 2002: vii). The introduction is sympathetic and convincing, but, claiming that Russian philosophy does not need an apology and that it rather is Western philosophy that should apologize for neglecting Russian philosophical thought, it confirms the very prejudice it fights against. If there really were no need to introduce a text by a Russian philosopher in an apologetic manner, then why write this anti-apologetic introduction? Why is there not an introduction simply on Vysheslavtsev as a thinker, mentioning in passing that he was a Russian émigré? Who could possibly think of a text by a German contemporary, say Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945) or Max Scheler (1874-1928), the English translation of which was preceded by an introduction entitled 'German Philosophy without Apology'? German philosophy does not need an apology, Russian philosophy apparently does.

The problem is underscored, moreover, by the title of the book: why (in the original) *The Eternal in Russian Philosophy* and not rather *The Eternal* – the more so since the book is indeed about the eternal, and not about Russian philosophy? It is rather unlikely that there is anything particularly Russian about 'the eternal'. Would we not be surprised if Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) had written *Sein und Zeit in der deutschen Philosophie*? Where does this need to defend Russian philosophy come from? Why are Fëdor Dostoevskij and Josef Brodsky automatically part of world literature, but Vladimir Solov'ëv, Boris Vysheslavtsev or Merab Mamardashvili not part of world philosophy, despite the fact that no one who knows their work will deny their significance? What is there in or about Russian philosophy that explains these facts?

There are, in philosophy world-wide, two main groups of people who pose themselves the question 'What is Russian about Russian philosophy?' The *first* consists of those specialists in the West who have become acquainted with the thought of Russian philosophers and have realized that, while their thought is less exotic than, say, African or Chinese philosophical thought, there still is something peculiar about it. They may wonder, for example, why Russian philosophy rarely occurs as a chapter in global accounts of philosophy, which usually limit themselves to Western, Arabic, Indian, or African

philosophy, rarely is part of general histories of Western or European philosophy, and seldom is the subject of comparative analysis.³ Russian philosophy seems to fall between two stools, and a historian like Copleston, whose separately written *Philosophy in Russia* was included as vol. 10 in the latest edition of his overall *History of Philosophy*, is a rare exception. More representative is Ninian Smart, whose widely acclaimed *World Philosophies* contains an ‘interlude’ on Russian philosophy of four pages (on a total of 370).

Departing from the perfunctory 19th Century opposition of Westernizers and Slavophiles, Smart states that “one of the main issues” that concerned Russian philosophers was “the question of Russian identity” (Smart 1999: 255). This certainly is a feature of Russian philosophy, as appears from the fact that the *second* group consists of Russian philosophers themselves, who have persistently asked if and how philosophy in Russia must be considered as specifically Russian. The ‘question of Russian identity’ has occupied Russian minds to an extent that cannot be imagined by people raised in a West European philosophical tradition. The question of a specifically Russian philosophy was put on the agenda in the 18th C by Grigorij Skovoroda (1722-1794), where it has remained ever since, and the conscious founding of Russian philosophy *as* Russian, i.e. in a self-conscious manner by Russian philosophers and as ‘ours’, took shape in the first half of the 19th century with thinkers like Chaadaev and Kireevskij (Goerd 1995: 150-188; Florovskij 1991: 235f). This is roughly around the time when Russia entered the European scene as an important player, and when it saw itself confronted with European states that defined themselves in terms of ‘nation’: “The cultural question of Russian national identity arose in the nineteenth century in part of the Russian aristocracy’s social and psychological search for its own identity” (Billington 2004: 9). Coming late on this scene, “No nation ever poured more intellectual energy into answering the question of national identity than Russia” (Billington 2004: 12). Liah Greenfield relates the rise of the idea of a national identity in Russia to the reign of Peter I, i.e. the 1st half of 18th C (Greenfield 1993: 192).

This quest for national identity, which later in the 19th century turned into often aggressive nationalism and coincided with a russification policy within the multi-ethnic and multi-national Russian Empire, was something that engaged philosophers, too. Even those who, like Vladimir Solov’ëv, were highly critical of nationalism, still thought and argued within the national paradigm (Van der Zweerde 2003: 229-237). Following the general course of Russian (including

Soviet) history, Russian philosophy never developed in complete, but nearly always in relative isolation. The reception of Western philosophical positions and currents has generally been partial and was often impeded by censorship and restrictions on teaching and publication. At the same time, Russian philosophers have always been very much aware of the connection of their philosophical tradition with European philosophy: sharing Greek philosophical roots and a Christian background, the first was limited, largely, to Neo-Platonism, and the second marked by the split between Western Christianity and Eastern, Orthodox Christianity. From Christian Neo-Platonism, Russian philosophy inherited the idea of the *universal* character of philosophical thought. This explains the tension between a stress on national and ethnic characteristics on the one hand, and universal pretensions on the other. The predominance of (Neo-)Platonism in the Russian philosophical heritage comes in two variants here: one is the “essentialist” idea of a plurality of different cultural traditions, the other is the “modernist” idea of a single development of philosophy.

If we follow Buonanno and Deakin’s distinction of “four distinct explanatory theories on identity formation: primordialist/essentialist, postmodernist, postnationalist, and modernist”, then the meta-philosophical discourse about Russian philosophy largely falls within the first and the last variants (Buonanno 2004: 85f). Discussions have largely turned around an essentialist, “Herderian”, versus a modernist, “Hegelian” approach. Within the first paradigm, represented by Valerij Kuvakin, Russian philosophers can claim a tradition of philosophy by and for Russians that is of no concern to other philosophical traditions, just as the latter are of no concern to it: “Russian philosophy is neither better nor worse than any other” (Kuvakin 1994: 135). This position is repeated in the official information of the department of history of Russian philosophy at Moscow State University, where Kuvakin teaches (<http://rf.philos.msu.ru/info>). The second paradigm culminated in the claim by a leading Russian historian of philosophy, Arsenij V. Gulyga (1921-1996) that “since the 1860s... the philosophical center *of the world* has transposed itself to Russia. And this has lasted until the 1920s... (Gulyga 1990: 185, my italics).

Both Kuvakin and Gulyga emphasize the indeed undeniable “extremely high concentration and diversity of Russian philosophical thought at the [previous] turn of the century” (Kuvakin 1994: 135), but Gulyga seems to presuppose that there is such a thing as a singular world-historical philosophical development, in which Russian philosophy was leading, while Kuvakin assumes the existence of a plurality of

singular ‘philosophies’ with equal rights to existence. Absurd as Gulyga’s statement may seem to a Western reader who could easily produce a list of philosophers between 1860 and 1920 that (s)he considers more important than the few names of Russian philosophers that (s)he has heard about, his and Kuvakin’s diagnosis point to two alternative conceptualizations of Russian philosophy.

The greatest Russian philosopher, Vladimir Solov’ëv, struggled with precisely this problem. On the one hand, philosophy for him was obviously about universal truth and essentially individual: “Philosophy, as an enterprise of free thought, by its very essence cannot confine itself within such limits, and strives from the very beginning for unconditional or absolute validity” (Solov’ëv 1965: 102), and “philosophy, being a work of personal reason, has always formed the views only of individual persons” (Solov’ëv 1996: 162, cf. 13). On the other hand, he held strictly to the idea of national specificity, even up to the point where he assumed that God thought something about every nation: ‘L’idée d’une nation n’est pas ce qu’elle pense d’elle-même dans le temps, mais ce que Dieu pense sur elle dans l’éternité’ (Solov’ëv 1978: 83). This idea leaves two positions open, one singularist, the other particularist: in the first case, it is only at the level of God’s general plan with creation that philosophy is one; in the second case, it becomes the task of humanity – starting with individual philosophers and local traditions – to make philosophy one. The latter is Solov’ëv’s position. It was Solov’ëv who diagnosed a *crisis* in Western philosophy and who set out to accomplish, as a Russian thinker, what Western philosophy was unable to do, namely to restore the unity of scientific, religious, and philosophical truth. If anyone, it was Solov’ëv whom Gulyga had in mind.

Is, then, Russian philosophy a separate case with possible claims to singularity, or is it part of a broader tradition? In fact, it is a *mixed* case: the first Russian philosopher who applied the label to himself, Skovoroda, not only accepted the *word* as an adequate description of what he was doing, but also the *concept* as an adequate inscription in a known tradition:

In Russia there are many men who would be Platos, Aristotles, Zenos, Epicurus; but they do not stop to think that the Academy, the Lyceum, and the Stoa developed from the thought of Socrates... So long as we do not have a Russian Socrates we shall have no Russian Plato or any other philosopher. Our Father who art in Heaven, wilt Thou sent down a Socrates to us soon, one who will teach us first of all to know ourselves, so that, knowing ourselves, we may then develop out of ourselves a philosophy which will be our own, native and natural to our land? (Edie 1965: vol. I, 17)⁴

Skovoroda thus is the initiator of a *Russian* tradition of European philosophizing. John C. Plott, in his unfinished *Global History of Philosophy*, intended to include Russia, starting with Mikhail Lomonosov (1711-1765) and Skovoroda.⁵ Lesley Chamberlain, in her *Motherland: A Philosophical History of Russia*, starts her “Comparative Chronology of Russian and Western Philosophers” with Aleksander Radishchev (1749-1802), a contemporary of Lomonosov and Skovoroda (Chamberlain 2004: 285f).

There have been attempts to reach back beyond Skovoroda to the roots of a less Western philosophical tradition (Zamaleev 2001: 19f), but this tradition, as Wilhelm Goerdts has shown in detail, is equally determined by its Greco-Christian background: Russia obtained its very definition of philosophy from Byzantine Patristics, notably from *Pègè gnôseôs* by John Damascene (ca. 675-749) (Goerdts 1995: 317-324). There has never been a tradition of philosophical thought in Russia which was not deeply rooted in the Greek philosophical and the Christian religious background. At the same time, the differences are vast, and they are explicable in terms of Russia’s uneven and discontinuous interaction with Western Europe. As a result, Russian philosophy can be claimed to be a *particular* tradition within the whole of European philosophy, but it cannot claim singularity.

In many respects, the focus, in Russian philosophical culture, on its specific nature as *Russian*, is a counterpart to the ‘invention’ of Eastern Europe by enlightened West Europeans in the 18th century (Wolff 1996). Russia was not only ‘invented’ by Europeans, it was also ‘envisaged’ by Russians. The Russian aristocratic thinkers who, almost without exception, considered their own country backward, uncivilized, or even *tabula rasa*, and who, also almost without exception, either chose to modernize and westernize Russia as quickly as possible or, alternatively, claimed its status as a civilization of the future, ready to replace a decadent, secularized and materialist Europe, where copying quite exactly the opposition of Enlightenment optimism and Romantic authenticity that characterized Western Europe. In this respect, they were unoriginal in their claim to cultural originality.

The difference between national philosophical culture and ethnic philosophical tradition can be highlighted with the two words, in Russian, for “Russian”: *ruskaja* en *rossijskaja* (Bykova 2004: 43, Van der Zweerde 2004: 277). While the second of these refers to the poly-ethnic Russian Federation [*Rossijskaja Federacija*] and can thus be

called a *national* notion, the first relates back to the earliest name for Russia, Rus', and is an *ethnic* notion, excluding, for example, Tatars. We can now answer the first question, posed at the outset: what is Russian philosophy, why is it there, and what is Russian about it? There is nothing Russian about Russian philosophy qua philosophy, and it is fully accessible to the average European philosophical mind: Russian philosophy is part of European philosophy, just like Russian music is European music. In this sense, the expression "Russian philosophy" simply means "philosophy done in Russia(n)". There is, however, something like a Russian (*rossijskaja*) philosophical culture, determined by such 'extra-philosophical factors' as an oppressive political system and relative intellectual isolation during most of Russia's history. Free exchange between Russian and non-Russian philosophers has been limited to relatively brief historical periods, notably the first decades of the 20th Century, plus a few rare birds such as Vladimir Solov'ëv in the late 19th or Merab Mamardashvili in the 2nd half of the 20th Century.

Within this culture, marked by the selective reception of Western philosophical ideas, limited interaction with West European philosophical culture and a relative predominance of political, ethical, and religious themes, a philosophical tradition has taken shape which understands itself as specifically Russian (*russkaja*), both as a fact and as a task. Now that, in a situation of increased communication and information, *rossijskaja* philosophical culture offers a space for a plurality of philosophical traditions and currents, this tradition of consciously *russkaja* philosophy comes to the fore as a form of ethnically determined philosophy which, however, is permanently confronted with the fact that it shares its roots and sources with all other European philosophical traditions, including their branches in Russia. Moreover, these branches, such as phenomenology, post-Marxism, analytical philosophy, post-structuralism/post-modernism, or hermeneutics, seem to have greater relative weight, at least in academic and university philosophy.

3. Russian Philosophy in Times of Globalization

In philosophy, as in other fields of cultural and intellectual activity, the end of the Soviet period in Russian history has had a decisive effect on philosophical culture. This is less perceptible from the perspective of Western philosophical culture, which continues to develop into the direction of a global philosophical culture. But it has an enormous impact on philosophical culture in Russia, where the disappearance of state protection has put many philosophers in less than ideal social and economic conditions, but where the newly acquired academic freedom, the possibility to travel (limited by resources, not political decisions) and to read and publish on the basis of philosophical, rather than ideological criteria, has changed the artificial unity of Soviet philosophy – with a lot of ‘countercurrents’ – into a situation of plurality and competition. What are the effects of this situation on Russian philosophy?

A first answer is that, in Russia as in most other countries, large numbers of people are doing something that is recognized by, for example, Western colleagues as “philosophy”. Suppose there is, in human beings, a capacity for abstract thinking that comes to the fore more strongly in some individuals than in others, but occurs in different ethnicities, cultures, civilizations, and that is recognized, wherever it occurs, in its specificity. Each cultural situation develops a concept for this kind of thought and will develop an awareness of the specificity of this cultural activity, a tradition (oral or written, depending on the general traits of the culture in question), an idea about its “use” and, gradually, an explicit conception. As cultures spread and communicate, they recognize the presence of such a thing in each other and in themselves: the “discovery” of African philosophy is arguably the latest case in point.

Because Ancient Greek culture and its European continuation, which labeled this activity “philosophy”, came to dominate the scene, the word, as well as the conception that took shape within that tradition, became the normative standard for other cultures. Hence the persistent dilemma of either measuring “local” philosophical cultures by the standards of philosophy as developed in the West, or applying a “democratic” principle according to which any self-identifying philosophical culture has an equal right to be included. This dilemma is contained in the Western position and, probably, limited to it: it must decide whether it claims to represent universal philosophy, or conceives of itself as one among many. All other philosophical cultures, local by definition, face a division into a part that fits into the

universalist model and seeks to be included in global philosophical culture, and a part that resists this inclusion. From this angle, the phenomena of ethno-philosophy and of national philosophy can be interpreted as *resistance* against a process in which *global* standards are being set which determine what 'counts' as (good) philosophy. World congresses and journals with global spread are among the places where these standards are being developed.

A second effect is that the traditions of Russian philosophical thought, well-known in the first part of the 20th Century, are not strongly present in philosophical culture world-wide today. This cannot possibly be due to lack of access, since key texts by Russian philosophers are available in excellent and recent translations. The explanation seems to lie rather in a peculiar combination of exoticism and familiarity: on the one hand, the arguments of Russian philosophers often strike the Western reader as outdated, but at the same time they are well-known. The persistent critique in Russian philosophy of Kantianism, for example, strikes the Western reader who, whether of "continental" or "analytical" orientation, takes the substance of Kant's critical assessment of the limits of rational human thought for granted, as arcane. This limits the acceptance of the essentially pre-Kantian agenda of much of Russian philosophy (Oittinen 2003), and it also explains its appeal to marginal pre-Kantian positions in Western philosophical culture.

A third effect, finally, is that, in spite of the inclusion of Russian (*rossijskaja*) philosophical culture in global philosophical culture, philosophy in Russia is almost exclusively done in Russian, while outside Russia hardly any philosophy is done in Russian. Under conditions of academic globalization, thinkers like Valerij Podoroga, Mikhail Ryklin, Sergej Khoruzhij, Boris Groys, Mikhail Epstein, or Oleg Kharkhordin, however different in their outlooks they may be, find their way to Western audiences. They, however, are not appreciated for their 'Russianness', but for the originality and significance of their ideas. However, even today, philosophy in Russia is largely done *in* Russian, by Russians, and focuses on Russian questions and problems, including the question of the specificity of Russian philosophy. Russian philosophy largely is a local phenomenon.

The question of the 'Russianness [*russtkost*']' of Russian philosophy, and the idea of a philosophy of and for Russia have undergone a remarkable revival since the end of the Soviet period (1986), most of all in the idea of a Russian religious philosophy. At the same time, the national and ethnic overtones of this revival contrast with the

universal pretension of its central idea – a traditional Russian ‘messianism’ always shines through. Paradoxically, even the official Marxism-Leninism of the Soviet period, pretending to be the most universalist philosophy ever (contrasting itself as ‘philosophy of the future humanity’ with its bourgeois-capitalist counterpart), displayed these characteristics: its provinciality was compensated by an ideological discourse that presented it as the vanguard of Marxist-Leninist philosophy, i.e. of the right version of Marxist philosophy (dialectical and historical materialism), which, in turn, was the developing true philosophy that emerged from twenty-five centuries of philosophical development (van der Zweerde 1997).

The resurgence of the idea and practice of ethnically determined philosophy is a *global* phenomenon which displays analogies with reactions against other forms of ‘globalization’. This “dialectic of the global and the local” is sometimes labeled ‘glocalization’: originally a marketing term denoting the adaptation of a global enterprise to local conditions, it also denotes the simultaneous occurrence of analogous local reactions against a single global phenomenon (Outhwaite & Ray 2005: 132; Robertson 1998). No philosophical tradition is immune to the effects of globalization on philosophical culture, but it can react very differently. Globalization of philosophical culture is a fact in at least the following ways: all philosophical cultures, traditions, and schools know about each other’s existence; if they reject each other’s claim to be philosophy, this is not a matter of ignorance, but of meta-philosophical position; and the realization of the world as a common object of thought and action, aptly labeled *mondialisation* by Jacques Derrida, has become a philosophical fact (Borradori 2003: 121m and 191, n.19). Local philosophical traditions have reason to feel threatened by ‘globalization’ and ‘mondialisation’ alike: the first destroys the conditions of independent existence, while the second is at odds with their focus on their own, local reality. This is why we can gather the idea of ethno-philosophy under the notion of ‘glocalization’.

There is, over and above globalization, something intrinsically problematic about the alleged existence of a plurality of philosophical traditions. While we can accept that some people like Picasso’s *Guernica* or Youssou N’Dour’s music and others do not, we cannot accept a philosophical tradition that does not see, say, the difference between the concepts of singularity and particularity. Philosophers from different traditions may disagree, and fundamentally so, but they can only disagree about what they both understand. However, although philosophy cannot be Russian, any more than it can be female, it can of

course be ‘russianist’ as it can be feminist: it can adopt a specific position in favor or defense of things Russian. Like the feminist philosopher who claims that there is something feminine about her or his thought, the Russian philosopher who claims that there is something Russian about her or his thought, is *mistaken*: philosophical thought as such is universal and, hence, “neutral” in ethnic as well as in gender terms. At the same time, however, the point of departure of philosophical thought is a concrete situation, including ethnic, racial, political, sexual and other determinations. One of the first decisions that any philosophizing mind faces is to deny, suppress, or acknowledge this ‘fact’. In this precise sense, philosophy *can* be Russian: its existence in a Russian philosophical culture and/or as a Russian philosophical tradition can be its point of departure from which it aims at ‘universal truth’.

The litmus proof in the end is whether or not I – any ‘I’ doing philosophy – have to be Russian in order to *really* understand Russian philosophy. Certainly, applying the standards and parameters of ‘your own’ national or ethnic philosophy is always a possibility, but this, your ‘ethno-philosophical’ opponent will argue, is an external approach that does not grasp the essence of the philosophical ideas in question. Kuvakin argues that Russian philosophy “is closer and more appealing to a person naturally connected with it through his background”, but he adds that “to feel that way it is not absolutely necessary to be Russian”, and he himself is “personally acquainted with some Germans, Americans, Japanese and Arabs who express far greater understanding of Russian philosophy than many ethnic Russians” (Kuvakin 1994: 135). One can engage in endless discussions with the advocates of ‘national’ philosophical traditions. These are literally insoluble, because both the dispute and its solutions have to be articulated in (meta-)philosophical language: two philosophers, a Russian and a non-Russian, arguing about the exact meaning of *sobornost*, have no independent way of finding out whether they attach the same meaning to the concept, hence they must *decide* whether they do or not.

Linking the idea of national philosophy with the historical phenomena of nation-state and nationalism suggests that Russian philosophy might soon come to an end. Is not the nation-state in decline in an era of economic, cultural, social, and political globalization? While this does seem to apply to a *national* determination, it certainly does not apply to the idea of an *ethnic* determination. If we link the idea of the nation to the concept of statehood, we end up with a

catalogue of nations who do, and nations that do not “possess” a state in the modern sense of the term. However, if we link the concept of an *ethnie* to a homeland, but not to statehood, i.e. the *occupation* of that homeland as the territory of the nation (Smith 2001: 13), then it becomes clear that an ethnically determined philosophical tradition does not, contrary to a national philosophical culture, depend on the existence of the nation-state (or of any other polity).

The fact that there is something artificial about the idea of a *national* philosophy and something natural about that of *ethno*-philosophy suggests that while national philosophy is a “modern” phenomenon, rising and declining with the nation-state, ethno-philosophy, like the *ethnie*, is pre-modern. It now emerges as the more permanent phenomenon, comparable to the return of such notions as *Heimat* (Safranski 2003: 24f) or *rodina* (the land where one is born – one might call it *Matrie*-, as opposed to *otechestvo*, the Fatherland or *Patrie*). The meta-philosophy that accounts for the possibility of ethnically determined philosophy can either, in a “reactionary” spirit, stress its pre-modern or eternal character, or it can, in a post-modernist vein, emphasize its specificity and defend its right to existence on grounds of plurality and difference.

From a global perspective, there is a *single*, differentiated philosophical culture in which, with few exceptions (the People’s Republic of Korea?), all philosophical traditions participate. This global philosophical culture houses a limited number of mainstream philosophical traditions, such as analytical philosophy, phenomenology, hermeneutics, post-structuralism, and post-Marxism, all of which – with notable exceptions such as Karl-Otto Apel – partake in the universalist claims of “European” philosophy. They contrast with a large number of explicitly local, nationally and/or ethnically determined philosophical traditions. Some of these can be qualified as post-colonial, others are post-imperial. Russia, unlike many other centers of ethno-philosophical activity, does not have a colonial history, but an imperial one, in which Russians have been the leading ethnicity. Russian history is marked by strong tensions between, on the one hand, imperial glory, superpower status, and cultural highlights in, for example, literature and painting, and, on the other hand, social backwardness, authoritarian government, and prolonged periods of intellectual isolation. As a result, Russian culture is marked by extreme oppositions between megalomania and self-depreciation, and Russian philosophical culture, more specifically, by contrasting tendencies of absorbing Western philosophical thought (Enlightenment, Hegel,

Schelling, Marx, Nietzsche, Neo-Kantianism, phenomenology and, recently, post-structuralism), and of stressing the *samobytnost'* of Russian philosophy. In the post-Soviet period, this has not essentially changed, only it now becomes clear that the *national* tradition in Russian philosophical culture is, in fact, an *ethnic* tradition. In Russia, one presently finds both a concretization of the rising global philosophical culture, with the traditions just mentioned all in place, and an explicitly Russian philosophical tradition, housing a number of local philosophical traditions (Eurasianism, neo-Patristic philosophy, religious idealism).

Conclusion

The general question at stake in this discussion of Russian philosophy, is this: can philosophy, if it is oriented towards universal truth, be plural? What is the basis of this plurality? As we have seen, three answers are possible: (1) thought is always done individually, therefore there are many starting points in philosophical thought, and even if, ideally, these converge in the end, there is plurality in the present; (2) this plurality has to do with the existence of a number of relatively stable and particular cultural (intellectual, religious, etc.) traditions, each of which develops along its own path, and each of which contains a philosophical culture; (3) thought, including philosophical thought, is always and necessarily related to an ethnically or nationally defined essence or nature, something which is specific and exclusive in the sense that mutual philosophical understanding is, perhaps, possible, but will not, and indeed should not go beyond a certain point, the point, precisely, of ethnic or national determination. While the first and second answer do not exclude the universality of philosophical thought, the third one, since it relates philosophy to an ethnic or national *essence*, does.

Notes

1. Kuvakin's quotation is from Kuvakin 1994, p. 136 and Mamardashvili's quotation is from Mamardashvili 1994, p. 59. All translations, unless otherwise indicated, are mine.
2. I thank Robert Bird and Oleg Kharkhordin for suggesting this translation.
3. Exceptions include Gavin & Blakeley 1976, and Dahm 1975 (see bibliography).

4. This passage is inserted in the first edition of Skovoroda's works (1861) as something he said in a conversation with his biographer Kovalinsky.
5. See Charts in vol. II, and the Appendix in Vol. II, also available in German translation: homepage.univie.ac.at/Franz.Martin.Wimmer/plottperioden.html.

11. Russian Philosophy of National Spirit from the 1970s to the 1990s

Mikhail Epstein

Abstract: Igor Shafarevich lays the blame for the destruction of Russia by communist and then democratic forces on the demonic Small People, allegedly Jews, who, in his picture, appear to be the only source of the metaphysical and social evil. Lev Gumilev, the leading theoretician of Eurasianism, argues for the specificity of Eurasia as a geographical and historical body distinct from both Europe and Asia. Finally, “radical traditionalism” promotes the restoration of archaic cults, in hopes of achieving a union of man with the primordial elements of nature, and champions an esoteric caste system. Atlanticism is peculiar to sea-oriented and extroverted nations which valorize international communication and mercantilism, whereas continentalism presupposes introversion, a strong tie to the soil, and fidelity to national traditions. According to traditionalist projections, the world will one day witness a war between Eurasian continentalism, championed by Russia, and global atlanticism, upheld by the United States. **Key words:** Contemporary Russian Philosophy, Eurasianism, Russian Neo-Nationalism, Lev Gumilev, Russian Neo-Traditionalism

This chapter describes the emergence and evolution of neo-Slavophilic and neo-conservative views as they become increasingly important in the Soviet intellectual landscape since the 1980's. In the West, the platform of moderate Russian nationalism is best known through the books of Alexander Solzhenitsyn, but the two sections of the chapter presented below focus on other tendencies in nationalist thought, which are much more influential in contemporary Russia because of their extremism. Lev Gumilev (1912-1990) is the leading theoretician of Eurasianism, a movement founded in 1918, immediately after the October Revolution, by Russian emigrants whose ideas both were influenced by and anticipated some theories of Italian and German fascists. Eurasianism argues for the specificity of Eurasia as a geographical and historical body distinct from both Europe and Asia. One of Eurasia's distinguishing features is its tradition of ideocracy, which subjects the individuality of a citizen to the 'symphonic', totalizing personality of the State. In the Eurasian state of the future, the spiritual traditions of Orthodoxy will be integrated with the organiza-

tional principles of communism, which also illustrates the closeness of Eurasianism to National Socialism.

In his historical and geographical investigations, Gumilev attempts to substantiate the long-standing unity of Slavic and Turkish nations as the two major constituents of Eurasian identity. More importantly, he advances an original theory of ethnicity, which explains the rise and decline of ethnic formations by biological rather than social factors, that is by disproportionate infusions of cosmic energies into the biological mass of humankind. Gumilev's key concept is 'drive', or 'passionality' which accumulates in the 'heroic personalities' of certain nations and accounts for their historical accomplishments. Ethnic mixing produces 'chimeric' formations that, being devoid of moral traditions and psychological stability, are destructive to nature and rife with nihilistic impulses. The Soviet Union serves Gumilev as an implicit example of such a negative ethnic experiment and, although he is careful not to be overtly racist, his theory of ethnogenesis is sometimes used as a justification for racist views condemning mixed marriage.

Another movement close to Eurasianism, but based on occult rather than ethnographic premises, is called 'radical traditionalism'. It promotes the restoration of archaic cults and mysteries, in hopes of achieving a union of man with the primordial elements of nature, and champions an esoteric caste system, in contrast with the democratic and egalitarian societies of the West. Traditionalists distinguish themselves from more moderate conservatives, like Solzhenitsyn, since they do not want to restore the pre-revolutionary past, but rather to implement a new, Rightist revolution. Also in contradistinction with Solzhenitsyn, their political strategy is not isolationist, but presupposes the consolidation of Rightist movements all over the world. They seek the rapprochement of Russia with Western Europe on the basis of a principle called 'continentalism', which they oppose to English and American 'atlanticism'. The antagonism of these two principles is decisive for the traditionalist philosophy of geopolitics: atlanticism is peculiar to sea-oriented and extroverted nations which valorize international communication and mercantilism, whereas continentalism presupposes introversion, a strong tie to the soil, and fidelity to national tradition. According to traditionalist projections, the world will one day witness a war between Eurasian continentalism, championed by Russia, and global atlanticism, upheld by the United States. Radical traditionalism is the most extreme variety of Rightist Russian philosophy, challenging both liberalism and moderate,

humanistic conservatism and attempting to make the twenty-first century the epoch of another worldwide revolution, spiritually opposed to the democratic and communist revolutions of recent history.

1. From Anti-Socialism to Anti-Semitism: Igor Shafarevich

In the late 1970s, the nationalist movement won another eminent supporter, the mathematician, Igor Shafarevich (born 1923). In the spectrum of neo-Slavophilic thought, Shafarevich occupies the extreme rightist position. A significant theorist in the field of algebra and a privileged Member Correspondent of the Academy of Sciences (since 1958), he originally appeared on the dissident scene as one of the most outspoken proponents of human rights and religious freedoms. However, his position, even in the early 70's, was closer to Solzhenitsyn's cautious conservatism than to Sakharov's liberal Westernism. In fact, he became famous as a contributor to *From under the Rubble* (1974), the collection of articles initiated by Solzhenitsyn, where Shafarevich published fragments of his later book, *Socialism as a Phenomenon of World History* (1977).

This work was the first investigation by a Soviet author to treat socialism not as a specific phenomenon of the 19th and 20th centuries, but as a recurrent social structure, traceable to ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia. Contrary to the traditional view, that socialist states proceeded from socialist teachings as their successful implementation, Shafarevich argues that the reality of socialism embodied in some ancient Near Eastern societies anticipated by at least one thousand years the appearance of socialist theories. Thus, socialist ideology, while claiming to construct a distant future, was in fact a regressive attempt to restore the primitive communality of the past. Such strivings for complete social leveling and elimination of all differences periodically interrupt the progressive historical tendency for psychological individualization and economic privatization that keeps humanity in a state of creative tension. Although its ideological contents may vary from Platonic idealism to Christian millenarism, or from Confucianism to Marxism, the basic structure of socialism, according to Shafarevich, always remains invariable. The common denominator for the State of Jesuits in Paraguay, Thomas More's 'Utopia' and Russian Bolshevism is the suppression of individuality, private property and family bonds in order to promote the absolute negation of social difference.

Socialism, therefore, thrives on destructive energy, and suggests many parallels with what Shafarevich (after Freud) identifies as the

‘death instinct’. As evidence, he cites the pessimistic views of socialists (Fourier, Saint Simon, Engels) regarding the inevitable physical demise of Earth and humanity and the ‘hero complex’ peculiar to all revolutionaries—the desire to die for their cause. This inclination for self-destruction is inherent to the human psyche, and socialism is a powerful expression of this instinctive attraction for Nothingness. “The death of mankind is not only the imaginable result of socialism’s triumph, it constitutes the goal of socialism. [...] Socialism is one of the aspects of mankind’s striving for self-destruction, for Nothingness, specifically, it is its manifestation in the sphere of social organization” (Shafarevitch 1977: 365, 374). This explains, according to Shafarevich, why those philosophers who incorporate Nothingness deeply into the foundation of Being, such as Heidegger and Sartre, demonstrate a strong proclivity for socialism, in its nationalist or Marxist form. “Understanding socialism as a manifestation of mankind’s striving for self-destruction makes comprehensible its hostility to individuality, the attempt to annihilate those forces that maintain and strengthen human personality: religion, culture, family, individual property” (ibid., 375).

Shafarevich’s book, though rather derivative and rife with long citations, made a strong impression on Russian intellectuals. For the first time socialism was divorced from its specifically Soviet connotations, limited by Marxist-anti-Marxist polemics, and treated as a metaphysical law responsible for the periodic interruption of the ‘normal’ and ‘progressive’ course of history. The author’s impartial, scientific approach to a hot social issue, in combination with his staunch loyalty to the ideal of freedom, won him wide public acclaim. Shafarevich’s impartiality is demonstrated by his seemingly paradoxical defense of socialism as an option open to a free society. Just as suicide is the proving ground of unrestrained human self-determination, socialism is indispensable as evidence of the collective freedom of humanity. Though socialism leads to the enslavement and self-negation of mankind, it also witnesses that “the freedom of will, given both to man and to mankind, is ABSOLUTE, it embraces freedom in respect to the ultimate question—the choice between life and death” (ibid., 382).

Shafarevich’s next book, *Russophobia* (1978-1990), though begun immediately after the publication of his first book, seems to be the work of a different author. The entire conception of social dynamics is reversed: the source of destruction is now identified not with the socialist homogenization of society but with an elitist challenge to the traditional values shared by the nation as a whole. Shafarevich borrows his principal ideas from French historian Augustin Cauchy who

explained the French Revolution of 1789 as a process of social self-destruction activated by a narrow group of intellectuals, the members of philosophical clubs and Masonic lodges. He called this adversarial elite the 'Small People' and opposed it to the 'Large People' who constitute the organic basis of a given society. According to Shafarevich, this model, in which the Small People destroy the foundations of traditional society, recurs through the centuries and may be identified with English Puritans of the 16-17th centuries, with the French Enlightenment of the 18th century, with the movements 'Young Germany' and Leftist Hegelianism (which gave rise to Marxism) in Germany during the 1830's-1840's, and with liberals and nihilists in the Russia of the 1860's-70's. The common characteristic of the Small People or 'Anti-People' is their spiritual rootlessness and hostility to the organic way of life based on durable religious and moral values.

The focal point of Shafarevich's conception is his identification of the Small People of the 20th century with Jews, whom he blames for the destruction of the Russian Empire. "The most fatal feature of this entire century, which can be explained by an increasing Jewish influence, is the fact that liberal, Westernist or internationalist phraseology often concealed antinational tendencies" (Shafarevich 1991: 75). Shafarevich argues that the Soviet regime, with its internationalist claims, was in actuality a Jewish occupation of Russia. He cites as evidence the disproportionately large representation of Jews in Russian revolutionary parties and in the first Soviet governments, their 'leading role' in the repressive organs of Cheka, in the ravage of the peasantry under the name of 'collectivization', and in the destruction of the Orthodox Christian Church in the name of 'scientific atheism'. Shafarevich's anti-Semitic arguments, not original by any means, were repeated in the late 1980's by numerous activists of the rising Russian fascism, who later abandoned this intermediary ideologist to refer directly to Nazi propaganda.

According to Shafarevich, the motive for the Jews' destructive obsession is an irrational force that he calls 'Russophobia'. This word was not a new one, but it was Shafarevich who theorized and popularized it. Russophobia is a hatred of everything Russian, including its history, customs, fashions, its pagan and Christian beliefs. He and his followers blame all failures and crises in contemporary Russian history, from the October Revolution, to the disintegration of the USSR, to the proliferation of post-Soviet democratic reforms, on the pernicious influence of Russophobes, including American Presidents

and influential Western businessman. Within Russia, Shafarevich charges not only intellectuals, such as Amal'rik and Pomerants, but also creative writers of Jewish origin, such as Isaak Babel', Ilya Ilf, and Vasily Grossman, with a genetically determined 'contempt and squeamishness' toward Russians and other Slavs. "The ideology of the Small People: an arrogantly-ironical, mocking attitude to everything Russian, even to Russian names; the conception that *'in this country it was always this way and there can be nothing good'*, the image of Russia as 'the Country of fools'" (ibid., 90).

Shafarevich is never clear about why Russianness evokes such a negative reaction, but he does attempt to explain why the Jews are the primary catalysts of Russophobic feelings. As a cosmopolitan people devoid of roots in any national culture, their 'diasporic' consciousness makes them organically incapable of accepting a traditional, agricultural way of life, consistent with the truth of Nature. "Why did it happen that precisely the descendants of Jewish people proved to be the core of the 'Small People', to which the fatal role fell in this epoch of crisis in our history? [...] Here I will indicate only the most evident reason – almost two millennia of isolation and a suspicious, hostile attitude to the surrounding world" (ibid., 82). Furthermore, Shafarevich argues, with numerous citations from the Old Testament, that even before their diasporic period, Jews justified their hatred of other nations religiously, since, according to their messianic beliefs, all non-Jews are inferior to the 'chosen people'. One of the inconsistencies of Shafarevich's thinking is that he blames Jews for their extreme nationalism, while himself subscribing to the same ideology – on the condition that the 'chosen' nation will be his own. This contradiction is characteristic of all brands of nationalism that have an anti-Semitic component.

'Nation' is almost a magic word in Shafarevich's lexicon: "being a member of one's nation makes one a participant in History" (ibid., 95). The destruction of national self-identity in Russia entails the loss of life's meaning: men become alcoholics and drug addicts, women abort their children, the people die out. "This is the end towards which 'the Small People' is driving, tirelessly working to destroy everything that supports the existence of the 'the Large People'" (ibid., 95). Thus the task of Russian national self-preservation is the creation of a weapon of spiritual defense against the Small People.

Shafarevich devoted his later writings, small in quantity and journalistic in style, to the critique of liberalism and 'Western democ-

racy'. He identifies a strange sympathy of 'progressive' Western intellectuals, such as Romain Rolland, Bernard Shaw, or Jean-Paul Sartre, with Stalin's regime and explains it by the internal affinities between Western liberalism and Soviet totalitarianism. Both are hostile to traditionalist societies based on organic ties between human productivity and the natural environment. "Like Stalin's system of administrative command, Western technological civilization chose a technocratic ideology in opposition to a cosmocentric one. This is only another way to implement the familiar Utopia of the 'organization' of nature and society on the principle of the 'megamachine', with maximal exclusion of the human and living element" (*ibid.*, 123).

This two-pronged attack on both the liberal West and communist Russia was a standard tool of Nazi propaganda but appeared rather new on the Russian intellectual scene, where Soviet communism and Western capitalism were customarily opposed as two absolute polarities. From the nationalist-conservative point of view, communism and capitalism are two versions of the same technocratic paradigm, which was initiated, according to Shafarevich, by the Small Peoples of Europe—Huguenots, Puritans, and Jews—who, as the result of their migration to Germany, America and Russia, undermined the organic conditions of agrarian labor and laid the basis for artificial, capitalist and communist economies. Now that Russia has finished with communism, Shafarevich argues that it would be unwise to walk the path of capitalism leading to the same precipice. "The West is ill but with another form of the disease from which we want to recover" (*ibid.*, 140).

With all of his criticism, Shafarevich never presents his positive ideal, unless by revealing his overwhelming nostalgia for the past when a peasant lived in harmony with Mother-Earth and followed the patterns of 'calendar' culture constituted by a mixture of Christian and pagan rituals. Shafarevich rates highly 'village prose', which resurrects the values of agricultural civilization as a model of a stable social structure that preserves the unity of Man and the Universe.

In his conservative views and in his polemics with liberal thinkers, 'Russophobes' such as Sinyavsky, Pomerants, Ianov, Amalrik, and Shragin, Shafarevich often follows Solzhenitsyn, but the difference between the two authors is significant. While Solzhenitsyn, like a biblical prophet, summons Russians to repent for their sins, Shafarevich lays the blame on the demonic Small People, who, in his picture, appear to be the only source of the metaphysical and social evil.

2. Philosophy of Ethnicity: Lev Gumilev's Neo-Eurasianism

The majority of nationalistic thinkers in contemporary Russia have emerged from literary fields, such as fiction, poetry, journalism, and criticism, and Lev Gumilev (1912-1990) stands out among them as one of the very few professional scholars. He never sunk into vulgar nationalism, but his theories of ethnogenesis provide a basis for ideological conclusions that sometimes border on racism. Lev Gumilev was born into one of the most celebrated Russian families: his father, Nikolai Gumilev, was the founder of acmeism, one of the most influential poetic movements of the Russian Silver Age; he was shot by the Soviet Cheka in 1921. His mother, Anna Akhmatova, even more celebrated as a poet, devoted one of her most penetrating long poems, 'Requiem', to the tragic fate of her only son, Lev, who spent fifteen years in Stalin's concentration camps for the mere crime of being the son of 'infamous' parents. After his return from exile, Gumilev emerged in Leningrad as one of the most renowned historians and ethnologists of the 1970's – 1980's. He is the author of many books, mostly dealing with the history and ethnography of Eurasia and with the interaction between Slavic and Turkish tribes in the vast region of the southern Russian and Mongolian Steppes.

The ideological model for these investigations was the teachings of 'The Eurasians', a group of Russian intellectuals who, after the Bolshevik revolution, settled in Europe and, governed by patriotic motives, advanced a broadly discussed theory of Russia as a specific civilization belonging neither to Europe nor to Asia. As distinct from Slavophiles of the 19th century, who connected Russia to Eastern Europe and identified her with the family of Slavonic nations, these theorists emphasized the Asian components of Russian identity. If for traditional historians oriented to the West, the early history of Russia appeared to be an incessant struggle against the Tartar-Mongol horde and other Turkish tribes and nomadic marauders, Gumilev stressed the productive interaction between Slavs and Turks as two major cohabitants of the great Eurasian expanse. For him, Russia is the general name for a synthetic civilization where Slavs are only one of the ethnic components. Gumilev's ethnological studies provoked a heated controversy: official Soviet scholarship accused him of overemphasizing the ethnological aspects of the historical process at the expense of social determinants, and of maintaining a simplistic understanding of ethnos as a natural phenomenon formed by geographical environment and by impulses of 'biospheric' energy.

Indeed, contrary to convention, which situates ethnology within the humanities, Gumilev attempts to base his ethnological research on the methodologies of the natural sciences. His most significant influence is the work of Vladimir Vernadsky (1863-1945), the greatest 20th century Russian scientist in several interconnected fields, including geology and biochemistry. The core of Vernadsky's thought is his theory of 'living matter', the organic substance of life which determines the formation of both the inorganic and super-organic (rational) layers of the global eco-system, including the biosphere and noosphere (the sphere of reason as a geological force). A variety of philosophical schools has made use of Vernadsky's legacy as a bridge between natural and humanistic phenomena. However, one can cross this bridge in two directions. First, one might make an 'ascending' interpretation of the noosphere as the vector of spiritualization of matter, as in the evolutionary theology of divine cosmogenesis created by the French Catholic thinker Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955). Conversely, the 'descending' interpretation attempts to derive all forces engaged in historical evolution from sources of material energy. This descending interpretation, reducing the human element of ethnology to natural laws, is elaborated by Gumilev who argues for the priority of biological and chemical determinants in the historical process. Referring to Vernadsky's theory of the biosphere as a reservoir of energy penetrating and charging all living substances including the human body, Gumilev explains ethnogenesis by the influence and infusion of cosmic energy. "Ethnos as a form of existence of the species *homo sapiens* [...] preceded the creation of tools of production and social development [...]. The character of its development correlates with the fluctuation of biochemical energy in the living matter of the biosphere" (Gumilev 1991a: 62).

Gumilev's most important work, *Ethnogenesis and the Earth's Biosphere*,¹ is a philosophical and methodological summation of his more specialized historical investigations. This book, completed in the 1970's, could not be published until shortly before his death in 1990 because its method, though based on materialist assumptions, was suspicious from the standpoint of official Marxism as an example of 'vulgar materialism', reducing the social form of materiality to its more primitive chemical and biological forms. The historical scope of this book may be compared to Arnold Toynbee's, *A Study of History* (1934-1939), though Gumilev rejects Toynbee's methodology, in particular, his principal conception of human civilization as a response to the challenge of a severe natural environment. Gumilev's book

explores the fates of dozens of *ethnoi*, from Spanish and Italian to Egyptian, Arabic and Mongolian, and covers several millennia of their development and downfall. But it is not based only on empirical research; the author advances an original conception to account for ethnic processes all over the world, relying in particular on Hegel's and Marx's views of the role of passion in human history.² In his search for some decisive factor determining the seemingly variegated forms of ethnicity, Gumilev arrives at the concept of 'passionate drive', or 'passionality'.³ This neologism signifies the extent of passion, which for Gumilev is the key factor determining the historical activity of a given ethnos.⁴

'Passionality' is the energetic drive that generates the formation and activity of an ethnos. "The work done by an ethnic collective is directly proportional to the tension of drive" (Gumilev 1990: 217). Gumilev even proposes to calculate passionality as the quantity of the passionality contained in an ethnic system divided by the number of individuals in that system. This is, however, solely an abstract notion, since Gumilev never goes so far in his scientific claims as to provide a mathematic means for determining quantitatively the passionality in a given ethnos. Nevertheless, he does make use of charts which represent the cycles of solar activity to argue that the historic initiations of new *ethnoi* chronologically correspond to periods of minimal solar activity, when cosmic radiation is more readily admitted to earth's atmosphere, giving rise to a greater frequency of mutation, hence to new passionaries and, correspondingly, to new *ethnoi*.

Not all members of a given ethnos are equally charged with passionality; thus Gumilev singles out a specific category of persons who are its true founders and leaders, 'passionaries'. Whereas most people, both individually and collectively, are motivated by a desire for self-preservation, and therefore behave reactively in the face of social and natural cataclysms, passionaries are people who devote their entire lives to the pursuit of a particular goal and are ready to give their lives for its attainment. "It must be an impulse strong enough to overcome the instinct of personal and even species self-preservation inherent in any organism, i.e. sacrifice that extends even to one's posterity, something, which is not observed in any animal species. But then there are no *ethnoi* among animals. Their communities lack the social form of the motion of matter and self-developing institutions" (ibid., 197 [253]).

As examples of passionaries, Gumilev points to Alexander the Great, Hannibal, Joan of Arc, John Huss, Avvakum, and Napoleon, among others. The decisive feature of the passionary is his or her capacity to charge other people with the energy of action ('passional induction'). Thus, for example, a given division of soldiers may be composed of varied individuals, but the presence of a few passionaries among them would raise their level of passionality and convert the unit into a passionate organism capable of decisive action.

The factor of passionality allows Gumilev to divide ethnic population into several categories. Inasmuch as passionality is measured in relation to the instinct of self-preservation, three relative proportions become possible: those people whose passionality exceeds the instinct for self-preservation are the passionaries, and Gumilev designates their 'drive' as $P > 1$; those whose passionality is equal to their survival instinct are called 'harmonious' ($P = 1$); those whose passionality is less than their instinct for self-preservation are named 'sub-passionaries' ($P < 1$) (ibid., 269 [327]). In a given population, the harmonious personalities, who are diligent but not super-active, comprise a decided majority. Sub-passionaries are those persons whose only requirements for living are 'bread and spectacles'; they are typically found among vagrant populations or are employed as soldiers of fortune who "do not change the world and do not preserve it, but exist at its expense" (ibid., 229 [285]). The proportions of passionaries and sub-passionaries within a population fluctuates with the ascendancy or decline of a given ethnos. Thus, in Gumilev's view, "'Ancient Rus' was ruined by destabilization, which appeared as consequence of a decrease in the passional tension of the ethnic system or, more simply put, an increase in the number of sub-passionaries—egoists not capable of sacrifice for the sake of selfless patriotism" (Gumilev 1989: 682). Notice that Gumilev cites patriotism as the most convincing form of passionality – not artistic vision or philosophical meditation.

Gumilev does not connect passionality with any ethical norms. He recognizes that it can equally generate both heroic deeds and terrible crimes, creativity and destruction; the only attitude that is excluded from passionality is indifference. He is also careful to distinguish between passionaries and successful 'leaders of the pack', arguing that it is the passionality of the rank-and-file within the pack that often is the true impetus for the crucial action. For example, although Napoleon as a passionary had no rivals among the leaders of monarchic European coalition, it was the greater proportion of passionaries in the ranks of the opposing forces that led to the downfall of a less passion-

ate French force composed of fresh recruits. Thus strong passionality does not necessarily correlate with social status.

According to Gumilev, passionality is a factor of an ethnos' neg-entropy, which resists the inevitable tendency toward entropy, dead equilibrium, present in all closed physical systems. However, *ethnoi* too are susceptible to the law of gradual exhaustion of their passionality. First of all, the tendency for untimely death among passionaries during times of war explains why they rarely reproduce and pass on their passionial genes. Moreover, during peacetime, passionaries are apt to miss their callings and are forced to marginal status, becoming alienated by societies where moderate and cautious people enjoy greater success. Thus the fate of every ethnos is a gradual loss of passionality and a multi-stage degradation into passivity and extinction.

More specifically, Gumilev identifies the following phases of ethnic evolution: ascension, acme, fracture, inertia, obscuration, regeneration, relic, and memorial phases, after which an ethnos dissolves into nothingness. In the stages of ascension and acme, the ideal of victory prevails; next, the ideal of success, followed by the ideals of knowledge and creativity; then the search for well-being without risk; and finally quiet conformity adapted to the local biocenosis. The average term of existence for each ethnos is 1000-1500 years, after which entropy vanquishes passionality and the death of this collective organism becomes inevitable. Gumilev charts the moral guidelines prevailing for each period of ethnic history: The phase of ethnic formation and ascension is inspired by such imperatives as, 'It is necessary to correct the world because it is bad', or 'Be what you should be'. The next stage, the transition to acme, requires: 'Be yourself!' The transition to inertia is expressed as 'We are tired of the great', 'Be like me', and later, in the phase of obscuration, 'Be like us'. The collapse dictates 'Mine is the day!' The memorial phase may be summarized as 'Remember how fine it was' (Gumilev 1990: 379 [491]). In the last phase of ethnogenesis people lose their memory of the past and even their sense of time. They enter the state of homeostasis, the equilibrium of energies with their natural environment, where their existence becomes almost identical to that of animals.

According to Gumilev, *ethnos* cannot preserve itself in the status quo; it is either developing or deteriorating. Thus the Chukchas, a northern Siberian *ethnos*, have lost the sense of time and do not even notice the change of seasons. Severe climate might be blamed for this exhaustion of spirit, but even the denizens of paradise are not immune

to such entropy as evidenced by the people of the Ongkhi who are “too lazy to live. They sometimes prefer to starve than hunt for food” (ibid., 373 [450]). Gumilev never considers the possibility that each ethnos may have its own criteria for growth and degradation, and that the same modes of time orientation may be ‘progressive’, ‘regressive’ or ‘neutral’ for different *ethnoi*. On the one hand, Gumilev criticizes ethnic elitism which he ascribes, for example, to Karl Jaspers’s concept of the ‘axis’ time, according to which five great nations, the Greeks, Jews, Iranians, Chinese and Indians, produced the greatest prophets who, during the 8th – 2nd centuries B.C., gave spiritual birth to contemporary civilization. On the other hand, Gumilev finds an original justification for those *ethnoi* which are conventionally considered to be ‘backward’, such as the native Americans, the black Australians, the Bushmen and Eskimos: they are “simply relics that have outlived their flourishing and decline” (ibid., 283 [360]). Contrary to the ‘white chauvinist’ view that these *ethnoi* are still too young and hence need the benefits of Western colonization to enter into historical development, Gumilev believes them to be ‘decrepit *ethnoi*’ whose best time is in the past: they have come to the last phase of entropy, to homeostasis, “that is why their material culture is so poor, and their spiritual culture so fragmentary”. This paradoxical ‘multiculturalism’ does not recognize the values of different cultures, but tries to explain why some of them are devoid of any value at this time.

Gumilev pays considerable attention to the interaction among different *ethnoi*, and especially to the type of interaction that results in the formation of self-destructive ethnic complexes, which he calls anti-systems or ‘chimeras’ (a combination of elements not organically united). When two ethnic systems interact, a kind of cacophonous disruption occurs instead of a seamless harmony. “Let both systems be positive, ecologically and culturally, but when combined they generate anti-system, an epiphenomenon which arises beyond the will of the participants” (Gumilev 1990: 473). With ethnic combination or transplantation, people begin to lose their sense of organic connection with their geographic environment and turn to abstract thinking which finally justifies their hatred of their natural milieu and life in general. “Then in the place of collision emerges either a symbiosis, when *ethnoi* exist in one region independently of each other, or a chimera, when the interaction changes the structures and stereotypes of behavior. Then the development stops in chimeric formations and a complex of negative attitudes to nature, culture and even life as such arises” (Gumilev 1991b: 63). As an example, Gumilev cites Gnosticism which

grew on the border between two prosperous ancient *ethnoi*, the Jews and the Greeks. The Gnostic worldview considers life on earth to be a hardship which the human soul must shed. In the same way, the collision of Greece with Iran in the third century generated Manichaeism, a powerful anti-system which also identified life with evil. Members of this religion destroyed temples, icons, even human bodies, since the visible world was created by an evil god and must be subjected to annihilation.

Gumilev traces the history of such chimeric concepts through Christian heresies and socialist utopias, hinting that the Russian Communist Revolution might also have been initiated by the interaction of two *ethnoi*, Jewish and Russian, leading to the chimeric Soviet ethnicity based on the ideological subjugation of the natural environment, which is self-ruinous for the *ethnos*. Notably, Gumilev's analysis of Christian heresies and early socialist movements (1990: 472-483) has affinities with that of Shafarevich, and both authors come to the same conclusion regarding the gravitation toward death underlying the protestant and socialist movements, whose background may be identified as a Manichean hatred for the world. Gumilev's metaphysics include the concept of the 'infernal' vacuum as the opposite of life-generating nature. He dedicates his treatise to the great cause of defending the natural environment against anti-systems, which have millions of supporters all over the earth and consider the vacuum to be their ideal.

In these terms, however, Gumilev himself may be viewed as a Manichean, since he insists upon dividing the world into two opposing forces of energy and vacuum. In his eyes, the force of anti-system would be irresistible if not for the new impetuses of passionality, which pour energy into the deteriorating ethnic systems. "Given how long humans have existed on earth, all *ethnoi* must long ago have entered into contact; then it seems that anti-systems would have supplanted *ethnoi* and replaced them, would have annihilated all life in its natural habitat [...] But for some reason nothing of the kind has happened. [...] It is the impetus, mutation, giving birth to passionality and imparting the original rhythm of the biological field to the newly arising *ethnoi* that destroys chimeras and their concurrent anti-systems" (ibid., 484). Thus, Gumilev proposes, the passionate impetus at the turn of the current era created Christianity which dissolved Gnostic teachings, though, strangely enough, he seems to forget that Christianity itself arose on the same ethnical border (the Jews and Romans) that originally produced Gnosticism. By the same token,

Gumilev insists that a new impetus of the 6th-7th century put an end to the Iranian anti-systems and created Islam. Both Christianity and Islam are positive systems for Gumilev, though he interprets Protestantism and Ismailitism as expressions of life denial. In general, his attitude toward religion is rather ambivalent; he celebrates the adoption of Orthodox Christianity in Russia, but simultaneously believes that theism may lead to the deterioration of *ethnoi*: “Anti-systems are often theistic while the ideals of ethnical cultures are atheistic” (ibid., 484).

Here again Gumilev’s thought converges with Shafarevich’s allegiance to an ecological morality which condemns theism, and primarily Judaism, for the negligence of nature and the divinely justified assertion of human dominance. Gumilev’s extensive discussion of Khazar history⁵ leads him to the conclusion that this *ethnos*, comprised of many sub-ethnic groups who converted to Judaism, was not only chimeric in itself, but also threatened to ‘chimerize’ Russian and other surrounding peoples. Although Jews themselves were averse to admitting anti-systems into their own communities, Gumilev argues that they deliberately introduced Gnostic and Manichean doctrines to other *ethnoi* in order to destabilize them: “[...] they preferred to see Manicheans among their neighbors but not to admit them into their own domain. And since they, like metastases, penetrated into all civilized countries, they generally succeeded in achieving their goals, but not always” (Gumilev 1989: 151). Gumilev is also very close to Shafarevich’s concept of ‘the small people’ who spread nihilism to undermine the ethnic stability of larger peoples. The only difference is that Shafarevich explicitly blames Jews for the destruction of contemporary Russia, while Gumilev limits himself to a discussion of those dangers which the Judaic state of Khazars posed for ancient Russia. One can also find interesting parallels between Palievsky and Kozhinov’s condemnation of avant-gardist art in favor of traditional realism and Gumilev’s proposal that “ancient Jewish art became the prototype of abstractionism” (ibid., 148). Jewish monotheism forbade the visual reproduction of God’s creation, giving rise to non-realistic tendencies which prefigured the worldwide avant-gardist movement of the 20th century. Thus avant-gardism may also be explained in accordance with the terms of Nazi propaganda as a product of Jewish insidiousness, which infects European nations with a hatred for reality and the spirit of nihilism, thereby setting in motion a progressive dissolution of national spirit.

Gumilev takes his naturalist bias so far as to suspect all philosophical and religious teachings to be only epiphenomena of the vacuum

which, like a black screen, repulses and distorts all biospheric impulses and hampers natural processes. Even personal consciousness, in his terms, is nothing but a black hole which introduces the emanation of the vacuum into the world (1990: 485). In the final analysis, only nature and its vital energetic impulses are considered positive in the system of Gumilev's thought, whose conclusive thesis is: "We are not lonely in this world! The near cosmic space participates in the defense of nature, and it is our task not to spoil nature. She is not only our home; she is ourselves" (ibid., 485).

Gumilev's preference of a natural rather than historical approach to ethnicity is not purely methodological, but also reflects his metaphysical assumption that history is a waste of natural forces, a kind of cosmic illness. Central to Gumilev's philosophy is the problem of historic time, which he discusses as a function of entropy, the tendency for energy to dissipate into nothingness. According to this view, history has no creative potential in itself; only impulses which arise in the biosphere constitute the material impetus for creativity in arts, science, and politics, as well as for violence and destruction. "[...] [P]rocesses occurring in the course of time are entropic and inertial but since now and then they are interrupted by creative flashes, producing new *ethnoi* and cultures, the end of the world does not arrive. Therefore, the history of culture is the struggle of the Creative force (energy) with Chronos (entropy); this is the manifestation of the second law of thermodynamics in the historical process" (Gumilev 1989: 590). The question is to what degree is Gumilev's 'Creative force' actually creative. Although he certainly disdains entropy and praises energy, his theory does not suggest criteria for distinguishing destructive manifestations of energy from constructive ones. The consequences of passional action may be even more devastating than the decline of passionality. In Gumilev's book on ancient Russian history, Gumilev himself observes that "the explosion of passionality at first burns down the place where it emerges. In this conflagration, perish not just weak people who are only capable of admiring the masterpieces inherited from their ancestors, but also the masterpieces themselves" (1989: 590). This imparts a tragic dimension to Gumilev's theory, although the author himself does not always seem conscious of it. The same energy that creates culture arises to destroy it. Gumilev's passionality reminds one of Heraclites' fire, a metaphor for the universe's self-creation and destruction by flaring up and burning itself away. It is not clear why Gumilev condemns entropy and indifference if the energy in his system is as indifferent to values as entropy. Why

condemn Gnostic and Manichean theories denying the material world, if the passionality which Gumilev glorifies as the principle of life negates the world even more vehemently?

Another philosophical question underlying all of Gumilev's theorizing is the problem of free will. He distinguishes a hierarchy of levels of material organization ranging from the atom to the galaxy, and postulates a scale of determinism which correlates with the status of the material unit. Thus, on a galactic scale, the laws of material organization are absolutely predetermined, whereas the atom exists in a zone of indeterminacy. *Ethnoi*, in his view, are intermediate entities, which means that their processes are largely probabilistic (1990: 336). Gumilev is careful to assert that a given *ethnos*' history leaves room for the freedom of human actions, which can change its fate; however, the principal assumptions of his theory ground personality in a genetic and biochemical predisposition, determined by mutation. What Gumilev really means by indeterminism is not free will but randomness: the chance of being born with passionality is not tantamount to freedom of choice, since one's capacity to choose is predetermined by biological mechanisms. Mutation, which is the engine of passionality in individuals (1990: 261 [341]), is a random event, but by producing three specific genetic types (passionaries, harmonious and sub-passionaries), it determines completely the future behavior of the individual in each category. In Gumilev's world, a person does not choose to be a passionary or sub-passionary; it is not a matter of individual choice, but of nature. This is another contradiction within Gumilev's conception. He endows nature with a certain randomness (mutation, explosion), but the human subjects it produces become subordinated to these caprices as if to absolute laws. Like in pagan world view, Gumilev is inclined to animate nature and naturalize spiritual beings.

Though Gumilev deals less with contemporary national consciousness than with historical *ethnoi*, his ideas are easily extrapolated to the social issues facing Russia today. One can find striking parallels between his concept of chimeric *ethnoi* and the platforms of racial purity advanced by Nazi ideologists in Germany. He applies to historical reality what he calls the methodology of the natural sciences, and thus gives some quasi-scientific foundation to a pagan nature worship which poses a challenge of contemporary nationalism not only to Judaism but to Christianity as a kind of 'Judaic conspiracy' against healthy national life in harmony with nature.

3. Radical Traditionalism and Neo-Fascism: Alexander Dugin

Among the multiplicity of conservative movements that arose with the collapse of Soviet Marxism, one stands out as perhaps the most radical, both in political and metaphysical terms. Its radicalism is paradoxical because it calls for the resurrection of ancient esoterism as the antithesis of contemporary rational and democratic convention; hence the movement often identifies itself as ‘radical traditionalism’, though it goes by a number of other names, such as ‘continentalism’, ‘anti-mondialism’, ‘the third way’, ‘revolutionary conservatism’, etc. The closest historical analogue to this worldview would probably be the geopolitical mysticism of the Third Reich, though radical traditionalists claim equal distinction from the three dominant ideologies of the 20th century: communism, fascism and democracy.

The program of this movement is delineated most clearly in the journal, *Cherished Angel* (*Milyi angel*); in the magazine, *Elements*; and in the newspaper, *Day. The Paper of Spiritual Opposition*. (*Den*) (after October 1993 was renamed ‘Tomorrow’ – *Zavtra*). No other movement in Russia, except Marxism, has so thoroughly conflated political and philosophical issues, in such a way, for example, that even the commander of the military organization of Russian nationalists, Alexander Barkashov, constantly uses the terms ‘metaphysics’, ‘mysticism’ and ‘spirituality’ in order to identify his political goals.⁶

The two preeminent spokespersons of this movement are Alexander Prokhanov (born 1938) and Alexander Dugin. The first is a famous novelist who, in Brezhnev’s time, was celebrated as the bard of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and was mocked by the liberal press as the ‘Nightingale of the General Staff’. As the editor in chief of ‘Day’, he served as one of the principal initiators of anti-Gorbachev, and later anti-Yeltsin, movements, and his ideology is a mixture of nativist, technocratic and mystical views usually expressed in a polemical journalistic manner. Alexander Dugin associated himself with the extreme nationalist factions: *Pamiat*’ and *Natsional’noe edinstvo*. He is the editor in chief of *Cherished Angel* and *Elements* and the author of the books *Mysteries of Eurasia* (1991), *Hyperborean Theory* (1992), *Conspirology* (1992), and ‘The Paths of the Absolute’ (1993). His writings betray a thorough acquaintance with esoteric and occult literature, but he is most intellectually indebted to René Guenon (1886-1951) and Julius Evola (1898-1974), the leading theorists of the European extreme right before and after World War II, and Alain de Benoist, a theoretician of the French *Nouvelle Droite*. Further exposition of the ideology of radical traditionalism will rely principally on the

work of Dugin, who remains the most philosophically oriented of all its representatives.⁷

The title *Elements* common to several neo-fascist periodicals in Western Europe and Russia, refers to the pagan foundations of this worldview, which sanctifies “the most stormy, the most cruel, the most powerful” forces in the universe, everything that is endowed with “the potential for terrible power, capable of enacting both Great Creation and Great Destruction” (Dugin 1992a: Editorial). Radical traditionalism has affinities with Romanticism and Nietzschean Dionysianism and thus opposes itself ‘heroically’, and sometimes tragically, to any rationally structured order. From this viewpoint, contemporary civilization, obsessed with ideas of comfort and profit, has abandoned the majestic mysteries of the past, and the task of traditionalists, therefore, is to restore these archaic rituals in the most revolutionary way, by antagonizing all existing systems. The conventional, ‘leftist’ notion of revolution presupposes a radical rupture with Tradition (usually capitalized by its adherents) and an obsession with the new, a utopian vision of the future as superior to past and present. Traditionalists believe that after the American, French and Russian revolutions, which were all leftist and ‘democratic’, the world abandoned Tradition and sold its soul to the devil of material prosperity. That is why a new revolution is needed, this time a rightist one, which is antithetical to the conventional revolutionary formula insofar as it pursues the restoration of the spiritual foundations of the world that were buried by decadent civilization in the guise of ‘progress’. “On the whole, we stand for the Restoration of the fullness of Tradition in its supertemporal and superhistorical essence, for the Restoration of Eternal Order, Eternal Sacred Structure, against which the ‘contemporary world’ – the world of materialism, skepticism, plutocracy, atheism, humanism, profanism, in one word, the world of Devil – has waged an irreconcilable fight for many centuries” (Dugin 1991: 1).

The conception of Tradition, as propagated by Dugin, has several levels of meaning. On the deepest one, traditionalism presupposes esoterism, a direct knowledge of the Divine accessible only to a spiritual elite. Esoterism is not a purely theoretical discipline, but includes the practice of theosis, or deification, the mysterious transformation of the earthly into the heavenly. Dugin is anxious to distinguish the genuine traditionalist esoterism, which recognizes traditional religions and Church dogmas, from Satanic distortions of esoterism, which attack Christianity and Islam and attempt to destroy the dogmatic integrity of Tradition. That is why a second level of Tradition

is exoterism, the sphere of sacred knowledge open to everyone, as long as they participate in the life of the Church. In this sense, traditionalism supports theocracy, “presupposes the restoration of the central position of the Church in the State” (ibid., 9) where all aspects of social life must be subordinated to Church rule, as legislated by an ecclesiastical court. A third level of Tradition requires the spiritual stratification of society and the establishment of a hierarchy of estates or castes. The recognition of different types of people, according to their spiritual origin, is a necessary condition of ‘truly sacred’ civilization. A fourth level of Tradition mandates the restoration of sacred sciences and arts, as opposed to secularized disciplines based upon empirical knowledge. From this viewpoint, most contemporary sciences are examples of ignorance, because they reduce reality to its material surface; whereas true knowledge must be anagogical and lead to salvation. Hence Dugin seeks to restore “rigorous, sacred sciences – alchemy, astrology, sacred geography, sacred ethnography, symbolism, rituals of traditional professions, and so on” (ibid., 4). Finally, Tradition is a totality, subordinating all aspects of culture and establishing strict rules and rituals of everyday conduct for all members of society.

The traditionalist concept of the ‘Third Way’, opposed both to the political left and right, has nothing to do with the solidarist movement of the same name. Solidarism attempts to mediate between extremes of communism and capitalism, a centralized economy and a free market. For Dugin the Third Way is anti-centric, it does not balance or compromise the left and the right, but brings together the extremes of tradition and revolution. “The Third Position or the Third Way is an ideological factor which is directly opposed to the position of the center in all respects. [...] If the center mediates and softens the positions at the edges, the third way sharpens and radicalizes them” (Dugin 1993: 11). The very term ‘radical traditionalism’ contains an almost oxymoronic combination of extreme leftist and rightist components. Radical traditionalists are interested in the collision of extremes, which is the potential source of maximal historical energies that will melt the world in the “eschatological fire of the last revolution”.

The attitude of radical traditionalists to socialism and communism is ambivalent. They distinguish between leftist, technocratic, materialistic models of socialism, exemplified in Fourier, Proudhon, Louis Blanc, Marx and conservative, mystical, elitist models, presented by Plato, More, Campanella, William Blake. If rational, evolutionary, democratic socialism (social-democratic movement) accommodates the progressive movement of history and consummates the capitalist

tendency for general prosperity, then radical, militant, eschatological socialism, more rightly called communism, attempts to reverse the direction of history, to conjoin its end with its beginning. "Such strange utopian details in the descriptions of communist society as the communality of wives, the regulation of natural elements, the absence of labor and of private property, and so on, are nothing other than a simplified, secularized notion of Paradise, of original Adamic conditions in which there exists not a multiplicity of individuals but one single Subject abiding in ontological abundance" (ibid., 13). Thus communism in Dugin's interpretation appears as a version of revolutionary conservatism appealing to the ultimate past rather than to the distant future. Dugin agrees with Shafarevich that socialism manifests mankind's obsession with death, but insists that this death is only a prologue to a resurrection in the 'eschatological eon'. Throughout its history, the socialist myth was damaged by the incorporation of heterogeneous ideological elements, such as the ideas of human rights in French socialism, chauvinism and xenophobia in German socialism, national messianism in Jewish socialism, the belief in evolution and progress in Russian socialism, but finally socialism is regenerating its radicalist core and apocalyptic aspirations. "The fire of global National Revolution, Socialist Revolution, Last Revolution, approaches, which will put an end to the exhausted cycle of human history" (17).

One can find many common elements in Kurginyan's⁸ and Dugin's exaltation of eschatological potentials of communism, but there is a notable difference. While Kurginyan proceeds from communist beliefs and increasingly introduced a mystical dimension, Dugin originates as a mystic of nationalism and increasingly embraces socialism in its radical communist modification. These two reciprocal movements illustrate the interconnection of leftist and rightist extremes of the contemporary ideological spectrum, their gradual unification in what can be called metaphysical radicalism, or eschatological extremism. With it, the difference between left and right is no longer relevant, in the same way that the absolute past and absolute future merge together in this radicalist worldview.

The connection between metaphysics and politics is dictated by the very essence of total traditionalism, which denies the liberal principle of the separation of powers and specialization of knowledge. From a liberal perspective, spiritual, political, professional and economic spheres are governed by their own particular laws, and this limitation secures their relative freedom. For a traditionalist, even the most concrete and seemingly arbitrary facts in any of these spheres are

conditioned by some underlying principles and therefore testify to an all-comprehensive determinism. In this way, the extreme right shares with the extreme left the hermeneutic suspicion of historical reality and the presumption of general laws governing even the most negligible events. But where Marxism, with its materialist assumptions, speaks about 'laws', traditionalism, with its spiritual bias, identifies concealed 'volitions' and 'intentions'. That is why the entirety of history is read and interpreted in terms of 'conspirology', the science of conspiracies. The notion of conspiracy presupposes that history is designed according to some initial plan, so that all particular events – wars, revolutions, natural disasters – can be explained as part and parcel of a grand scheme. In a popular version of conspirology, the plot can be traced to an ancient Jewish and Masonic attempt to take over the world, and both Soviet Communism and American Capitalism are seen as participants in this conspiracy, whose antagonism is merely a simulation concealing their basic collaboration. On a more esoteric level, the upheavals in the contemporary world are derived from the competition between two prehistoric civilizations – Atlantis and Hyperborea, conventional 'meta-geographical' terms in theosophy and other occult sciences.

The popularity of conspirological models in post-Soviet Russia can be explained as a legacy of long-standing habits of ideological thinking. In its spirit and method, conspirology has much in common with communist ideology: both relate to reality as to a book, a system of signs which needs decoding in order to determine the correct behavior of citizens. The difference is that ideology locates the cherished signifieds of this all-encompassing book in the future, while conspirology relates them to the primordial past. Ideology attempts to mobilize the collective will of society for the construction of a deferred paradise, while conspirology mobilizes the nation to oppose the demonic plots which destroyed the original paradise. Both ideology and conspirology are obsessed with deciphering the coded messages concealed in the most ordinary and natural things. In Stalin's time, using a newspaper containing the leader's likeness for wrapping produce, could serve as evidence of subversive intent sufficient to provoke arrest and criminal prosecution. In Brezhnev's time, conspirologists argued that the use of asterisks to indicate textual breaks was a tool of Zionist propaganda, since the symbol resembles a Star of David; they succeeded to have this emblem changed to a five-pointed star in some periodicals, but this too was subsequently opposed by still more vigilant conspirologists as the Masonic Star of Solomon. Conspirology is ideology reoriented to

the past and concerned with the contemporary political implications of ancient mysteries and rituals.

From Dugin's perspective, the variety of the world's political ideologies can be reduced to three global-metaphysical systems, whose conflict determines the geopolitical configurations of the contemporary world.

The first such system is the most ancient and presupposes an absolute unity between God and man which is personified in the figure of a "Divine Subject, Hero, Angelic Leader, Sacred Emperor". The entire world is the domain of his supernatural control. "[...] [T]he Subject of Divine nature stands in the center, on the Pole, in the middle of the sacred cosmos, which completely subordinates itself to him and is therefore paradise-like [...] This Divine Subject has nothing beyond himself (above himself, around himself, under himself), no higher metaphysical principle [...] and therefore, he is absolutely free and inseparable from God. God is within him" (Dugin 1991: 84). This is an esoteric doctrine of immanence, which is based on gnosis, or the immediate knowledge of God as infused with earthly life. According to Dugin, this represents the noblest of all worldviews, historically realized in the sacred imperialism of the Ghibellines, in the 'heresies' of Cathars and Albigenses, in the teachings of Rosicrucianism, and in German National Socialism.

The second worldview, developed in Judaism and partly in Christianity, is based on a transcendental relationship between the Creator and the creation. The identity of God and man is destroyed as God is elevated to a higher realm and man is expelled from paradise and doomed to dwell in a profane realm of earthly suffering. Instead of gnosis, this second worldview bases its religiosity on faith, which includes the elements of uncertainty and heavenly aspiration. Therefore, this system is considered by Dugin to be inferior, since it presupposes the alienation of man and God, though the hope of their ultimate reunion still animates the activity of the Christian church. The paradise principle peculiar to traditionalism and the principle of transcendence prevailing in Judaism are irreconcilable. As for Christianity, it emerged originally in order to restore paradise on earth by merging God and man in the figure of Christ, but subsequently surrendered to Jewish transcendentalism and was transformed into a religion of sin and repentance. The Gnostic teachings condemned by the Catholic church as Satanic and Luciferian, are viewed by Dugin as the true manifestations of original Christianity, since they conceive of man in terms of his divinity and celebrate esoteric knowledge. Therefore, what

is needed is the struggle of authentic Christianity against its Judaic distortions. The Eastern Orthodox church, because of its closeness to an ancient, pagan worldview, is more faithful to original Christianity than Western churches. Dugin finds affinities between this transcendental worldview and the Christian democratic and social democratic conceptions that prevail in contemporary European politics, which promote a view of man as imperfect, sinful and hence reliant on socially organized charity and state support.

Dugin's last system, 'magical materialism', is presented as the most recent, and thus the most ignoble, of the three worldviews. Within it, the subject is altogether divorced from God, both immanent and transcendent, and functions only as a particle of the material world. This view encompasses such different teachings as Soviet Marxism, American liberalism, and Fyodorovian cosmism. All these have in common a belief in progress as determined by the laws of the universe's material evolution. Instead of gnosis or faith, this worldview cultivates empirical knowledge, which is a form of agnosticism, since it denies the spiritual realm and establishes effectiveness as the only criterion of truth. Political applications of this worldview vary from North Korean and Kampuchean totalitarian communism to American and Swedish models of the society of consumption, where paradise is identified with purely material comfort and technological progress.

Dugin himself professes to the first worldview, which calls for a kind of pagan theocracy, a Sacred Empire headed by a Divine Subject or Absolute Leader. Such a society would be organized hierarchically, on the basis of esoteric privilege, with many degrees of mystical initiation. A primary division, however, is drawn between a caste of masters, designated to rule, and the rest of humanity, devoid of spiritual vision and thus treated as a herd. "For the bearers of a Polar Subject, all people are divided into two categories: Man-Gods, Divine Subjects, Super-men (elite, spiritual aristocracy, higher people, 'Sonnenmenschen', 'Sons of Light' and so on) and human animals devoid of subjectivity (plebeians, lower people, underpeople, 'Tiernenschen', 'Sons of Darkness'). Hence caste, racial or intellectual differentiation in all purely esoteric teachings" (ibid., 85).

In terms of their religious orientation, Russian traditionalists proclaim their commitment to Orthodox Christianity, to Islam, and to paganism. How do they justify such an exotic mixture of historically irreconcilable traditions? The immediate impulse for reconciliation of Christianity and Islam is the overwhelming influence of these two denominations in Eurasia, in the territory of the former Soviet Union,

and the concurrent political necessity to unite them against 'profanic' Western civilization. In a traditionalist interpretation, Orthodoxy proves to be closer to Islam than to other Christian denominations, since both privilege dogmatic tradition over innovation, are highly ritualistic, hostile to the spirit of the Renaissance and Enlightenment, and ardently opposed to mixing the secular and the sacred, which is typical of a much more tolerant Western religiosity. Dugin also finds affinities between Orthodoxy and Islam on a theological level, since both of them are less transcendental than Judaism, which locates God beyond human perception and comprehension, and simultaneously less immanent than Western Christianity, which sanctifies worldly values, such as freedom, labor, professional achievement, education and profit. On the scale of transcendence-immanence, the three Abrahamic religions are distributed in the following way: Judaism represents the pole of transcendence, and Christianity, the pole of immanence, while Islam stands between them, with Eastern Orthodoxy as its closest neighbor. But in his further interpretation, Dugin collapses the Judaic and Christian poles by pointing to their shared emphasis on materialism: Judaism, in practical life, has a materialist orientation, precisely because its religious views are 'too transcendental' and are alienated from earthly concerns; the profanic versions of Christianity prevailing in the West emphasize the human aspects of Christ and thus also fall into secularist temptations. In the final analysis, traditionalism polarizes world religions in such a way that a Judaeo-Christian civilization of the West is presented as being challenged by a united Islamic-Orthodox civilization of Eurasia. The metaphysical basis of the former is a break with Tradition, the secularization and profanation of religious mysteries; while the Islamic-Orthodox unity seeks to preserve the dominance of the Church over the State and the immutable order of the sacred Tradition.

As for paganism, Dugin praises it even more ardently than the religions of monotheism, which oppose immanent and transcendental worlds. Paganism, in its original tradition, transcends the very division between sacred and profane and identifies the entire universe as "a tissue of Gnostic revelation, where each detail, each symbol is important and irreplaceable [...]. [B]oth of them, Being and Non-being [by which Dugin understands transcendental world], are no longer separated but merge together [...]. Immanentism actually becomes the manifestation of the highest and the most metaphysically convincing transcendentalism in which, however, the role of the Transcendent is filled not by a monotheistic Creator (Non-being) but by something

transcendent in relation to the Creator Himself' (Dugin 1991: 84). Therefore Dugin posits the third, the most esoteric level of mystery beyond the God of monotheism. The truth of paganism lies deeper than the distinction between the creator and the creation. The root of things is not spirit distinct from matter, but Something transcending this very opposition. Paganism is a manifestation of this higher unity, since it worships the universe both in its smallest parts and in its all-embracing wholeness and finds the truth of the whole fully present in each of its parts.

It is not clear how this paganism, cherished by Dugin, is different from pantheism, which is furiously condemned by all traditionalists as the most cunning form of materialism. "Thus the pure atheist, or 'mystical materialist', actually endows the cosmos with a quality of divinity [...]. This gives us reason to define the given ideology as pantheism – 'everything divine', identification of everything (Cosmos, World) with God" (ibid., 87). In Dugin's classification, pantheistic materialism is the lowest of the three worldviews, but his definition of paganism, which is the highest of the three, coincides almost verbatim with his formula of pantheism: "The 'paganist' universe is theomorphic, or more precisely, angelomorphic" (1991: 27). This is the principal weakness of traditionalist thought: it does not provide sufficiently clear concepts to distinguish between paganism, which makes the transcendent immanent, and mystical materialism, which deifies the material world. The extremes of the Left (pantheism, materialism) and the Right (paganism) easily coincide in traditionalist metaphysics, since both of them are hostile to Creationism, to the Judeo-Christian concept of the separation of man and God, which supports the ideology of moderately liberal and conservative movements. The first and the third worldviews in Dugin's classification are virtually identical and both are antagonistic to the second view, which prescribes tolerance and compassion, since man is weak and imperfect in his alienation from God. Paganism and materialism, on the other hand, both proclaim a heroic vision of a human being who embodies the totality of divine qualities and is sinless and self-sufficient.

In the final analysis, the traditionalist project of complete identification, 'homogenization', of God and man leads to the destruction of both of these entities, since man and God can be defined only in their distinction from one another. What traditionalists actually cherish is neither divine nor human, but a middle sphere of mighty spirits conventionally called 'angels' – hence the title of their leading theoretical journal, *Cherished Angel*. In spite of their proclaimed

allegiance to Christianity and Islam, traditionalists tend to privilege the angelic over the divine, since the multiplicity of angels more closely accommodates a paganist religiosity than the worship of a single God. “The gods of ‘paganism’ [...] are not so much self-sufficient and self-regulating principles (like the God of monotheism) as Angels in an etymological sense, ‘messengers’, ‘spirits’” (1991: 27). The metaphysics of angelism allows traditionalists to pursue an alternative path between polytheistic and monotheistic doctrines. Angels are more transcendent than corporeal polytheistic gods and at the same time more immanent than a monotheistic God. With a monotheistic worldview, angels are derivative in relation to God, but for traditionalism they become primary forces that reflect the multiplicity of nature in the multiplicity of spirits.

On the other hand, traditionalist angelism presupposes contempt for the ‘human, all too human’ nature of the common man. In his programmatic introduction to the first issue of ‘Cherished Angel’, Dugin writes: “We are not interested in the slightest degree in profane and humanistic problems, even in their most honest and critical existentialist versions. One can say that we, in general, do not address people as such. What is important to us is only the angelic dimension of being and therefore only those souls who are aware or at this stage at least have a intuition of their ‘angelomorphism’, their ‘likeness to angels’” (1991: 4). Dugin’s basic orientation is pure esoterism, or angelic elitism, as opposed to vulgar and democratic appeals to human dignity and human rights. However, the practical outcome of this angelic worldview, claiming to reconcile man and God, may in fact be the radical rejection of both, and ultimately the rejection of the world, which is, according to a recent statement of Dugin, ‘hopelessly bad’. “The only way to get rid of it and its chimeras is its severe liquidation by any means. Total war declared against everyone who cooperates with the world, against all humanists, against anyone who is fearful or prefers American soup to spiritual values” (Dugin 1994: 8). Thus the search for ‘spiritual values’, the angelization of the world, in its most radical extension, presupposes its utter destruction.

Traditionalist writings, though densely populated by occult terminology, should not be classified as religious philosophy since their ultimate goal is not to provide a path to God, but to establish a hierarchy of national and geopolitical values. Orthodoxy and Islam are advocated not for their intrinsic spirituality, but as a means to consolidate Eurasian nations. In the alliance of geopolitics and metaphysics typical for traditionalists, it is geopolitics that plays the leading part.

The same symbiosis was established by Marxism in the relationship of philosophy and history. Leftist, Marxist metaphysics was interested in history as a vehicle for the transformation of the world, whereas traditionalists are obsessed with geography, since their values are radically prehistoric and anti-historic. Geopolitics, in Dugin's view, is "directly connected with symbolic geography, which regards the entire earth as a single Sacred Text, written with special signs and symbols" (Dugin 1992d: 19).

Using the insights of European geopoliticians, Dugin distinguishes two types of civilization: sea-oriented – 'Atlantian' – and land-oriented – 'continental'. The antagonism between Atlanticism and Continentalism constitutes the major tension of world history. Atlanticism, exemplified by the legendary Atlantis, by ancient Carthage and by contemporary England and the United States, is characterized by the spirit of trade, of profit, and internationalism. Continentalism, best represented by legendary Hyperborea, and by historical Roman, German and Russian Empires, emphasizes the organic unity of people in their spiritual bonds with the earth. Thus the very form of the land-mass supporting a people is thought to influence the character of their culture and philosophy. The openness of the seas surrounding island nations produces an extroverted character, inclined to mercantilism and intercourse with other nations, while the isolating expansiveness of continents engenders an introverted character focused on the preservation of tradition.

Another important opposition in traditionalist geopolitics is North-South. "The most ancient and original layer of the Tradition unequivocally asserts the primacy of North over South" (Dugin 1993: 41). North is related to the primordial Paradise, to the spirituality, light, purity, eternity, whereas South embodies materiality, darkness, mixture, temporality. The opposition East-West is derivative from this initial polarity, in such a way, that in the sacred geography East is the projection of North, while West represents the projection of South on horizontal axis. Therefore, the contemporary geopolitical conflict between East and West can be interpreted as a modification of the original polarity between North, with its faithfulness to Tradition and "the intuition of the Sacred", and South, with its hedonism and veneration of external Nature. However, in the contemporary period, after the cold war is over, the opposition East-West gives way to the initial polarity North-South, so that Northern peoples should seek the expansion of their dominion not so much in horizontal, but in vertical dimension. "The civilized harmony reigns when the people of the

South are in harmony with the people of the North, that is, recognize their authority and their typological (not racial!) superiority” (ibid., 43). However fantastic this geopolitical speculation can seem, it finds very practical applications in the programs of influential rightist politicians, such as Zhirinovskiy. His political autobiography-manifesto ‘The Last Throw to the South’ (1993) proclaims reorientation of world geopolitics from horizontal to vertical lines of expansion.⁹

The specificity of radical traditionalism is determined by its antagonism toward liberalism and its criticism of conservatism. Liberalism is viewed by traditionalists as a combination of Rightist economic policies – the absolute freedom of markets – and a Leftist political orientation – the absolute freedom of individuals (‘all-permissiveness’). Traditionalism “also must combine in itself elements of ‘Leftist’ and ‘Rightist’ ideologies, but we must be ‘Rightist’ in a political sense (that is, ‘nationalists’, ‘traditionalists’, etc.) and ‘Leftist’ in an economic sense (that is, supporters of social justice, ‘socialism’, etc.)” (Dugin 1992b: 2). Therefore, there is an inverse relationship between liberalism and traditionalism on all ideological levels. If liberals are oriented to the West, then traditionalists privilege an “unequivocal orientation to the East and solidarity with the most Eastern geopolitical sectors in the solution of territorial conflicts” (ibid., 2). If liberals proclaim internationalist and cosmopolitan doctrines, traditionalists take an ‘anti-mondialist’ position and extol national and racial allegiance. This inversion extends to every issue in the liberal program because traditionalists take great pains to contradict liberalism ‘on all fronts’ of ideological struggle.

The distinction between traditionalism and other Russian conservative movements is subtler because of the variety of correspondences between them. Traditionalists support the bulk of Slavophilic and neo-Slavophilic views, including the romantic allegiance to the past and valorization of the soil, the criticism of Western rationalism and individualism, the equal rejection of Marxism and liberalism, the condemnation of the spiritual poverty of democratic societies with their loss of national identity and erosion of tradition, and so on. However, the conservative nationalism of Solzhenitsyn’s type seems palliative to traditionalists, since it nostalgically appeals to Russia’s pre-Revolutionary, Tsarist past. From a traditionalist perspective, even 19th century Russia was already perverted by the Enlightenment mentality that gave rise to Bolshevism; thus traditionalists “are striving to return to an order that preceded not only the Revolution but also the emergence of those causes that led to the Revolution” (1992c: 15).

They oppose the ideal world of Tradition to both the post-Revolutionary and pre-Revolutionary ‘worlds of crisis’, which “makes absolutely inevitable not ‘conservatism’, not maintenance of the past, but precisely Revolution, total, all-renewing, radical, but in a direction completely opposite to the Revolution of the Left” (ibid., 15). In other words, conservatism is not nostalgic or radical enough; it wants to preserve the legacy of a past and resists any innovation, which made sense before the communist revolution. Now that the world is already radically changed, ‘liberalized’, conservatism is outmoded, naive and impotent; what is needed is not preservation of the past, but radical innovation, the restoration of a deeper layer of the past which was buried by the destructive forces of ‘progress’.

Another distinction of traditionalists is their universal Rightist appeal, an almost paradoxical pan-nationalism, or nationalist internationalism. Unlike other conservatives, with their exclusively Russian or Slavic nationalism, traditionalists attempt to unite the extreme Rights of the entire world. They are more indebted to German, French and Italian fascist or para-fascist ideologists than to the Russian Slavophiles of the 19th century. They cite Khomiakov and Kireevsky with sympathy, but distance themselves from the patriarchal, conservative utopianism of idyllic pre-Petrine Russia. The traditionalist spirit is not meek and conciliatory but militant and unrelenting, which allies them more closely with the aesthetics of brutal heroism characteristic of National Socialism; and, like the Nazis, they desire to form an international coalition of Right-wing movements to oppose the decadence of the democratic West.

As compared with conservatives, who proclaim a nativist Orthodox faith, traditionalists are much more religiously eclectic. The range of their mystical interest is as ‘cosmopolitan’ as their political strategy. Although they praise Orthodoxy, they see in it only an external manifestation of a much deeper esoteric tradition, which unites paganists, Muslims, Gnostics, Christian heretics and Indian holy men. Whereas conservatives like Solzhenitsyn extol the Christian virtues of humility, self-limitation, and communality, traditionalists attribute these values to the insidious Judaization of Christianity, which infused the pagan essence of Christianity as a religion of God-man with the slave mentality and repentant religiosity of a creature cast out of paradise.

If the conservative ethics of self-limitation lead contemporary Slavophiles to a policy of isolationism, to the concentration and utilization of all native resources under the aegis of a monoethnic State,

then traditionalists, with their militant mysticism, pursue imperialist and expansionist goals. “We foresee the future Eurasian empire consisting of various *ethnoi*, peoples, denominations and political formations, but united around the Continental Idea” (1992a: 4). That is why traditionalists, unlike Slavophiles, emphasize the historical affinities between Russia and Europe. Their goal is the unification of the entire continent of Eurasia for the struggle against the dominance of Anglo-American Atlanticism. Therefore, in contrast with conservative isolationists, traditionalists make overtures of alliance with Western Europe, especially Germany and France, in hopes of forming a powerful bloc of nations ready to surrender part of their political sovereignty to the Continental Idea.

From a radical traditionalist standpoint, neo-Slavophilism, or conservative nationalism, is not only an outdated and insufficient reaction to democratic reforms, but it is fully compatible with the most aggressive impulses of Western mondialism, which tries to isolate Russia and reduce it to a purely ethnic constituency. “Whatever lies at the foundation of ‘narrowly ethnic’, ‘racial-nationalist’, ‘chauvinistic’ models of Russian statehood – ignorance, naiveté or conscious work against one’s own people and their independence, – the result is full identity with mondialist goals. Without the transformation of Russia into an ‘ethnic reservation’, the USA will not be able to gain *complete* control over the world” (1993: 32). Traditionalists are suspicious not only of Russian patriots but also of Eurasianists, who identify Russia as a specific continent, neither Europe nor Asia. Traditionalists agree, that, in cultural and historical sense, Russia must preserve its unique character, but in geopolitical terms Eurasianism is capitulation to mondialism, since Russia deliberately withdraws itself from Europe and Asia and thus leaves room for the expansion of Atlanticism. A better geopolitical formula for Russia would be the ‘Heartland’, the central land of the continent, the ‘geographical axis of history’, which, with the support of the ‘Rimland’ – the peripheral, shore states from China to France, from Japan to Italy, from India to Norway – should oppose the Atlantic claims to world dominance.

Also, whereas conservatives, like Russian Village Writers, gravitate nostalgically to the values of a pre-industrial, agrarian civilization, traditionalists like Prokhanov are ardently dedicated to technological innovation and extol the beauty of nuclear armaments and other advanced weapons of mass destruction. For them, technology, as a tool of power, is not opposed to nature, but improves and extends the majestic potential of nature’s elemental forces.

To a great degree, traditionalist thinking follows the patterns of the Soviet ideological imagination with its exaltation of heroism, courage, technological and political power, the cult of personality, and the revolutionary transformation of the world. It is as if the structures of Soviet rhetoric have merely changed their contents from Leftist to Rightist, like a reflection in a mirror. This is especially clear in the case of Alexander Prokhanov, who in the 1970s and 80s distinguished himself in giving a mystical color to his glorification of Soviet military and technological expansion, as he now inevitably gives a Soviet color to his glorification of the militant and technological mysticism of the extreme Right.

Therefore, the Russian nationalist conservatism of the second half of the 20th century has undergone several modifications. The first stage was the promotion of organicism and the critique of structuralism in aesthetic theories. Second came a revitalization of the thinking of 19th century Slavophiles and an attempt to prioritize their legacy over the revolutionary-democratic and Marxist traditions of Russian thought. A third phase saw the rise of Rightist political dissidentism and the reevaluation of Russian history as having been degraded by the invasion of Marxist ideas from the West and now requiring the restoration of a pre-Revolutionary national identity. Next came the idea that capitalism and communism are two strategies of a single conspiracy, conceived by Zionists and Masons and designed to crush Russia as the world's last bastion of true Christian spirituality. At the same time, an alternative theory, under the influence of 1920s Eurasianism, asserted that Bolshevism was an organic extension of the Russian imperial tradition and so promoted a future synthesis of Orthodoxy and communism. Another aspect of Eurasianism found detailed biological and geographical elaboration in the theory of 'ethnos' as a natural propensity governed by cosmic rather than social forces and destined to undergo a predictable cycle of development, from birth to extinction; the mixture of *ethnoi* dilutes their strength and leads to an untimely dissolution.

Finally, two modifications of nationalism surfaced in post-communist Russia. One is moderate conservatism, claiming the timeless values of Orthodox Christianity as a specifically Russian legacy destined to introduce the spirit of national reconciliation into a society torn apart by militant pluralism and partisanship. The other is radical traditionalism, proclaiming the restoration of a pagan, esoteric legacy and the unification of Eurasia into one Empire under Russian guidance to wage spiritual war on the secularized and materialist West.

Between these two extremes, conciliatory conservatism and militant traditionalism, fall many other nuances of contemporary nationalist thought.

Notes

1. L.N. Gumilev. *Etnogenez i biosfera Zemli*. 3rd pr., Leningrad: Gidrometeoizdat, 1990. The abridged version of this book appeared in an English translation: Leo Gumilev. *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1990. I will cite both editions, since they are not identical; in particular, the Russian one has 528 pages, 9 parts and extensive indexes; the English edition has 384 pages, 6 chapters and no indexes at all. For the reader who wants to use both editions, the page numbers for the Russian edition will be indicated parenthetically. It is significant that the last (ninth) part of the Russian edition, "Ethnogenesis and culture", in which Gumilev's views on ethnic purity and his condemnation of 'mixed', chimeric *ethnoi* are most directly expressed, is absent from *Progress's* edition, probably to avoid offending a foreign reader. For those pages that are missing in the translation, I will cite directly from the original.
2. "Inasmuch as the whole individuality, to the neglect of all other actual or possible interests and claims, is devoted to an object with every fiber of volition, concentrating all its desires and powers upon it – we may affirm absolutely that nothing great in the World has been accomplished without passion". G.W.F. Hegel. *The Philosophy of History*. Transl. by J. Sibree. New York: Dover Publications, 1956, p. 23.
3. Russian '*passionarnost*'. An anonymous Soviet translator of Gumilev's book uses the term 'drive'; however, since Gumilev's term is a neologism in Russian, I prefer an English neologism derived from the same root: 'passionality'. Accordingly, Gumilev coins the term '*passionarii*' to signify those people who embody the ethnic '*passionarnost*' the English equivalent would be 'passionaries', but in the Soviet edition, it is translated as 'people with drive'.
4. The meaning of the term 'passionality', as well as of other derivative terms, such as 'passional infusion' and 'passional overheating', can be located in "The Dictionary of Concepts and Terms of L. N. Gumilev's Theory of Ethnogenesis", compiled by V. A. Michurin, in the appendix to Gumilev's book *Ethnosphere. The History of People and the History of Nature*. In this same edition, one can find the author's account on the history of the creation of his theory of ethnogenesis, "The Biography of a Scientific Theory, or an Auto-Obituary".
5. Khazars – a people who inhabited the vast area in the lower reaches of Volga in the 7th-9th centuries. Khazars were defeated by the Russian Prince Sviatoslav in the 10th century and quickly dissipated.
6. See Prokhanov's interview with Barkashov in *Zavtra*, March 1994, No.12 (17), p. 1-2. "I and you are not only Orthodox mystics, not only monks (*skhimniks*) and ascetics, we are politicians...". – this passage from the interview is characteristic

for the bombastic metaphysical tone and the conceit of the extreme right. Barkashov: “[...] Some historical mystery occurs in Russia, and one must seek friends, strategic allies precisely in this mystical spirit that penetrates this event” (the storm of the White House in October 1993).

7. For a pioneering exposition of their political ideology see Walter Laqueur. *Black Hundred. The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993, esp. pp.139-142.
8. Sergei Kurginyan, a political activist, journalist and theatre director was a counselor of the late Gorbachev’s government, an ideologist of the 1991 putsch and is close to Communist and Eurasian movements.
9. “The last ‘throw’ to the South, Russia’s going out [*vykhod na*] to the shores of Indian ocean and Mediterranean Sea are, indeed, the tasks of salvation of Russian nation. [...] It is better to share the spheres of influence, according to the principle: North-South [...]. [L]et it be such a world agreement, that we share the entire globe, the spheres of economic influence and act in the direction North-South”. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. *Poslednii brodok na iug*. Moscow, Too Pisatel’, 1993, 63, 71.

12. What is “Local Thinking”? (Can There be Finnish Philosophy?)

Tere Vadén

Abstract: The question of what local philosophy is can be understood in two different ways. I am looking at the case of Finland. On the one hand, Western philosophy has been imported, classical authors have been received, there is a certain local perspective on the tradition, etc. On the other hand, there is thought that contains something unique and unrepeatable. This thought becomes available for analysis only on three conditions: (1) to see language as experience. (2) To understand linguistic experience through its asubjective side as language that is not the useful communication between subjects. (3) To adopt a non-hierarchical mode of conceptualization of experience with no unquestionably prioritized forms of experience. It is necessary to separate open local thinking from closed, semi-chauvinistic variants of Heideggerian being-historical philosophy. These conditions describe a form of thinking that is local in the sense of being non-universal both temporally and spatially. **Key Words:** Asubjectivity, locality, uniqueness, Heidegger, openness, Finnish philosophy.

1. Can There be Finnish Philosophy?

There are at least two ways of understanding the question on the possibility of Finnish philosophy or thinking.¹ First, one can ask what Finnish philosophy has been like, how the Classic, German, French and Anglo-American traditions have been received, interpreted and appropriated; much like one can ask how Finnish culture once was Christianized and how Christianity has evolved into the Lutheran faith with its distinctive “Finnish” sects today. This form of the question is very important, for instance, if one wants to know why the question of locality has not been raised in Finnish philosophy. It is to be expected that there are certain structural reasons for the absence of the question, and, furthermore, that these reasons are not altogether different from the reasons that have led to the Christianization. Therefore an investigation of these structures can be highly revealing on the nature of “Finnish philosophy”.

However, I’d like to turn to the second way of interpreting the question. We can ask, “What is Finnish philosophy?” and take the question to mean Finnish philosophy in the sense of unique and unrepeatable thought. Unrepeatable in the sense of something that happens

only once and that can not be duplicated at will. Unique in the sense that the properties and content of the thought are one with the unrepeatable processes of thought so that the properties or contents can not be abstracted or idealized apart from the processes without destroying some crucial features. Finnish philosophy of this kind would be local, unlike the Classic, Greek-originated tradition of philosophy that is still often presented as somehow universal.

Can there be unique Finnish philosophy? The first answer must be in the negative. The existing Finnish philosophy is European philosophy or American philosophy, in a word: Western philosophy. If there is thinking presented in Finnish that is not European or American, it is seen as problem, again in a similar vein as native religious rituals have been seen as a problem; they are treated as signs of primitivism or backwardness, at best as something to do with artistic license. It follows immediately that if Finnish philosophy in the second sense of the term would exist, it could be neither ancient nor *zeitgemäß*. From the point of view of (universalist) philosophy, it could not be important, pressing or traditional. These first inclinations make possible to reformulate the original question: if local thinking – say, Finnish thinking – were possible, *how* would it be possible?

2. The First Condition: Language

The possibility has to do with language, understood in the widest possible sense of the term. Language does not include only spoken or written texts, but all meaningful and meaning-giving activities.² Language includes systems of signs and symbols, but also any meaningful actions forming a way of life: ways of skiing, ways of talking or using mobile phones. The threshold that makes the question of local thinking meaningful is that of translatability, or, in a wider sense, learnability. Languages as interconnected networks of meaning are not identical with each other. Languages can be translated and interpreted into each other, but translation is never a mechanical and deterministic procedure.³ Meanings can be transferred and reinterpreted, but they can not be translated without residue. The prospects of translation are different with regard to different areas of culture. There are areas of language and linguistic forms that are fairly precisely translatable, but there are also areas and forms that can be translated – or, rather, reinterpreted – only with utmost effort, if at all.

Language is inseparably tied with ways of life. Ways of living create systems of meaning. Unique, untranslatable language can exist, when unique, untranslatable ways of life exist. If there are ways of life

that are in a meaningful way different from some other ways of life, then there are possibly (linguistic) meanings that can not be translated without residue. Such untranslatability is relative, not absolute. Translation and learning are often possible, if one is willing to take great pains and use a lot of time: if one is willing and able to experience and live in a new way. However, choosing or adopting a way of life is not something that one person or subject can do at will, and the process of learning to live in a new way can easily last longer than the life-span of a generation. For instance, if the Finns do have ways of life that are significantly different from some other ways of life, they might also have relatively different linguistic experience and, consequently, also unique language-related thought.

This leads us back to the impossibility. Finnish culture, like many other cultures around the fringes of Europe and in many other places around the globe, has for several centuries been exposed to cultural harmonization. It has not, in the main, been developed towards uniqueness, but rather been colonized by and made one with a series of invading cultures – German, Baltic, Swedish, Russian and American.

The history of colonization reveals an interesting fact about untranslatability. It is not possible to adopt Western technology without adopting the Western view of man and nature. The Western philosophical and scientific claims and beliefs about universal structures (such as the belief in the existence of natural laws and separable natural kinds and entities, and the belief in human individuality, personality and freedom) are not neutral facts but rather the accepted foundations that make philosophy and science possible. Natural science and philosophy in this sense have not discovered by way of inquiry that humans and nature consist of separable individuals, things or objects. Western science and philosophy are founded on these presuppositions and can not start to function without them. In a Foucauldian sense they keep on producing the truth of these beliefs. Furthermore, these basic presuppositions are clearly connected with technological manipulation. Consequently, Western science, philosophy or technology can not be taken as neutral tools and used for the possibly divergent purposes of another type of culture. Using Western science, philosophy and technology means living in a Western way. For the same reason, Western rationalism or humanism can not in an effective way challenge the technological way of life.

The question of local thinking makes sense only if we accept some kind of linguistic relativism: all languages are not the same. This

can be put in another way: all minds are not the same. We have to concede that being human, for instance, thinking or experiencing, are not universally same or identifiably similar, but vary both in time and place in possibly incommensurable ways. Thought or experience can not be led back to something foundational or essential. To use philosophical language: local thinking is nominalistic in the extreme.

Those cultures, too, that claim to be universal are, in fact, local, but aspire to hide their locality. This is a feature of the Western civilization that has been criticized systematically at least since Nietzsche. By asking why the question of locality has not been raised and by investigating how the Western tradition has been digested and translated into Finnish, we learn something very valuable about the specificity and uniqueness of the Western claim to universality.

Both locality and claims of universality are connected to historical circumstances. A presupposed universality makes invasion and colonization inevitable and rational, while at the same time corrupting the colonized minds. While Finnish life has been harmonized with Western patterns, by force, reason and justified promises of technological and economic success, the non-Western and non-technological experience of nature and human being included in the Finnish language have been subdued and muted. If one⁴ wants to listen to those experiences, then Western technology, science, and philosophy – the Western way of life – has to lose its grip at least temporarily. Because of the colonization, such anti- or atechological experiencing can not exist in harmony with the predominant European ways of life.

3. The Second Condition: Asubjectivity

When we talk about the non-universality and in that sense locality of mind or experience, we are talking about areas or features of the mind that are not subjective (or objective), that are not parts of a person, but something else. If we are subjects, persons or if we are the objects of science, then our parts and structures are, by definition, similar if not the same. The subject and the subjective in us is something commensurable, universal, and repeatable. In the case of the objects of science, the matter is even more straightforward: the objects known to natural science (such as physical particles or forces) can not even in principle be or contain anything unique. Any water molecule is any other water molecule. The objects of science lack all *haecceitas*, thisness, as do the structures of the subject and the subjective. If I am a rational subject, then that means predictability and accountability: in similar circumstances, I will act as other rational subjects would.

That which is unique and untranslatable, lives in a mind and a language that can be called asubjective, lives in experience that comes before or after the separation between subjects and objects.⁵ Asubjective experiences are experiences that do not belong to a subject (or a non-subject), but happen before or after all subjectivization (or objectivization).

Let us imagine three concentric semi-circular forms of different sizes, and call these the forest, the garden and the house, from the biggest to the smallest. The forest is its own, it does what it pleases regardless of human not to speak of natural laws. It changes, slowly. Living in the forest demands knowledge of flows, circuits, connections that span over individual lifetimes and personal capacities. A garden can be cleared and cultivated in the midst of the forest. It takes constant care, attention and struggle to make the garden prosper and not to be overtaken by the forest. One needs fences, pathways and systems of irrigation. Looking from the garden, the forest becomes the wilderness. The garden, in turn, surrounds a house, where things have their place, where the subject is best protected and life at its most economical.

Here the forest illustrates the area of asubjective experience that is unpredictable, unrepeatable and independent of us. The fenced garden is the site of constant struggle between the inseparable flows of the forest and the reified and objectified economy of the house, where weeding, planting and harvesting are needed. In the house devoted to human purposes calculation can start. Here things have their uses, and behavior its rationale.

These three areas form human experience, from the asubjective forest to the economical pinnacle of the subjective and objective. It should be noted that the asubjective is not the same as the unconscious. Asubjective experience can be conscious, even though it is not a part of the self. In a similar way, language does not belong to the house only. It is true that language functions most reliably and precisely in the house. Everything has a name, and the structures of language can be made to correspond to the structures in the house; new objects and identifications can be erected. Such language is suspect to continual improvement and frictionless functioning with regard to its economical task.

In the garden, language will have to fight for the stability it already possessed in the house. Strange and unexpected things are encountered, and the wind may wash some words away. Speech is sometimes rendered into a series of noises, hardly distinguished from

those of an animal. In the garden language is constantly altered, along with the performers of linguistic communication.

In the forest, language is spoken without purpose or function. No permanent and separable centers of either speaker-subjects or language-objects are formed. However, the temporary and non-communicative nature of language in the forest does not entail simplicity or primitiveness. Quite the contrary: language in the forest may be very complicated, multi-layered, and subtly connected with both long historical processes and precise experiential pathways.

Language is asubjective when it is not the manipulation of word-objects by a communicative speaker-subject. For instance, words like “mother”, “death”, “friend”, “sea” pertain to experiences that do not support a clear subject-object division. The subject, a Western person, is structurally deaf with regard to asubjective experience and language. A subject can not want asubjective experience, because it would mean the dissolution of the subject. A subject can not at will decide to experience or speak in an asubjective way. Therefore, something else than the subject – something other than myself – must take part in the experience or language for it to be asubjective. From the point of view of the subject, asubjectivity is not a positive or progressive thing. A subject can not rule over asubjective experience, but perhaps it can wait, hunt or pray for it. In this the forest with its power to wound us despite the structures of the subject has its role.

In the Heideggerian tradition, the dissolution of the metaphysics of subjectivity is often linked with “negative” experiences, such as anxiety or nearness of death. To come back to Finnish non-Western experience, the experience is, to be sure, often under technological pressure that makes it wriggle in similar “negativities”: alcoholism, suicide, mutism, violence, hermitism. But the subject may withdraw under more “positive” conditions, too. For instance, in intoxicated communion with nature, in love, in festive circumstances. These, too, betray a desire not to be self-conscious, as such consciousness represents technology in us.

Asubjective, a-Western experience does not come of itself, naturally, and it is definitely not subjective or personal. A precondition for asubjective experience is that technological ways of channeling experience are destructed and other experiential means devised. It is not permissible to let technology own words like “nature” or “life”. These words, too, have to be lived in another way and undergo an asubjective treatment. Their meaning must be asubjectively reconceptualized.

4. The Third Condition: Openness and Impurity

For local thinking to be possible, two traps must be avoided. The first is the trap of universalism. In the recent decades, universalisms of various kinds have been under criticism from many different quarters, up to the point that it has become the easier trap to avoid. All one has to do is to steer clear of the subject-object division and point at untranslatability.

The trickier trap is that of purity and authenticity. This trap can also be called that of closed locality. Let us take an example, that of Martin Heidegger’s thought, not the least because in it the possibility of locality is opened in an exemplary and unprecedented manner. For Heidegger, the Western tradition lives in large part in language, in the experiences that language carries. According to him, only a creative re-experiencing of the origins of the Western tradition open up a possibility of internal reformation. Thus, for him the task of questioning *Technik* can happen only in a language that is close enough to the original Greek language (especially to words like *techne*) that sets the initial Western experience of technology. This is the philosophical reason for Heidegger’s infamous and semi-chauvinistic idea that the Germans have a special task in overcoming metaphysics.⁶ Heidegger’s view, if true, is particularly distressing if one lives in the geographical area of Europe, but speaks a language that is non-Indo-European, and, therefore, quite far removed from the Greek origin and the *logos* of the West. What about the tasks of “overcoming a technological understanding of being” in a situation like that?

Heidegger’s epochal understanding of the history of being is often celebrated as a decisive step in overcoming metaphysics. According to the epochal view, a metaphysics is the ground of a world age. Understandings of being are historical, they change; what we have are particular epochs of metaphysics. It is believed that by realizing this epochality we get a more free relationship towards all metaphysical ways of thinking, and avoid taking our own technological understanding as absolute. However, few philosophers fond of this “temporal” description of the epochs of the history of being discuss its essential counterpart: the “spatial”, localist description. For if understandings of being and thus metaphysical epochs are connected to different ways of life and their languages, then they are variable not only in terms of history but also in terms of place: different “concurrently” existing cultures with their different languages, habits, habitats, temperaments, religions and so on have

different understandings of being. In this sense, understandings of being are not only epochal, but also local. Heidegger, of course, emphasizes that “history” in this sense is not co-terminous with the clock-time of physics, and the same goes for place or locality. Crucially, Heidegger’s notion of nearness (*Nähe*), of the locality constructed by experienced intensities of meaning, gives us a non-physical notion of locality.⁷

The relative negligence of the local interpretation in favor of the epochal one is a pity, since the local view brings the issue of closedness and openness in cultures into sharper focus. The meanings carried by a language vary historically, to be sure, but also in between different concurrently existing languages. Heidegger’s philosophy of language is not “purist” in the sense that it would fanatically avoid so-called “foreign” influence or foreign words.⁹ But it is (hyper-)sensitive to the fact that words and turns of phrase carry complexes of meaning and matrices of understanding, so that an effort to change thinking implies an effort to change language. It is also localist in the sense that different cultural areas, not only different historical epochs, have different possibilities and tasks of thinking.

Here we encounter the problem: the connection between localist thought and anti-democratic politics. The reason for thinking that (local, historical) non-technological communities are not possible in their democratic forms is that such democratic communities would function only if humans saw themselves as rational subjects, and such an understanding would be (on the road to) a technological understanding of being. On the other hand, if we want to establish a community with a non-technological understanding of being, we have to take on board shared asubjective experience in both the temporal and local senses, which leads to the conclusion of unequal – or at least different – possibilities and tasks of thinking. So the question becomes, is locality something necessarily closed, anti-democratic or elitist? Or would it be possible to have a notion of locality that is open, at least in a minimal sense?

If we for the sake of the argument would want to state the mistake of traditional Western metaphysics in a crude formula, one candidate would be the claim that metaphysics posits an unquestionable ground or foundation for being and, *a fortiori*, for knowledge, which gives us a “totalized” view of what beings are. This ground, as metaphysical or transcendental, is allegedly beyond empirical inquiry and practical change. Another way of putting the issue would be to say that traditional metaphysics includes a hierarchical picture of

experience, in which a particular type of experience, e.g., "first philosophy" is beyond the revision and scope of other types of experience. Against this background, we can see that the problem of the closed, chauvinistic type of localism, i.e., localism in which untranslatable cultural or linguistic (not to speak of ethnic or racial) areas are given a status that can not be questioned or challenged from other cultural or linguistic perspectives is similar: it gives an unquestionable status to one specific type or area of experience. Now the area of experience is not first philosophy, but rather the untranslatable, original or authentic poetic essence of a language and the ineffable ways of life of a linguistic community.

For instance, to us non-Germans Heidegger's claim that there is a special relationship between the original Greek *techne* and the German language in which it can be re-experienced and confronted, is a claim we have to accept on faith: we, as non-native German speakers do not have the resources of confirming or disproving the claim. In this sense the problem with universal, essentialist metaphysics and poetic, authenticity-seeking thinking are similar: they "close off" one type or area of experience from criticism and challenges from other areas or types of experience.⁹

We need a minimal condition of openness: a philosophical view is (minimally) open if according to it, it is in principle possible to question and criticize any and all forms or areas of experience from the point of view of any other area or form of experience. This would mean, for instance, that art is free to criticize science, philosophy to criticize religion, religion to criticize science, and so on. It would also mean that there are no first philosophies or metaphysics that can not, in principle, be touched by empirical criticism (nor any scientific truths that could not be challenged by pure philosophy, or poetical understandings of being that could not be criticized by natural science, for that matter). Furthermore, if there is a view according to which there are philosophical problems that can in a proper way be discussed only in a particular language and particular linguistic community, so that the content of that discussion can not be challenged from the point of view of other linguistic communities, then that view is not open, but closed. Equally, if there is a view according to which a certain type of shared national-linguistic basic experience has its own criteria of validity that can not be evaluated from other experiential points of view, the condition of minimal openness is not fulfilled.

Minimal openness means, in other words, that there is no unquestionable cultural authenticity. This view is expressed in Paul

Feyerabend's later work in the formula "every culture is potentially all cultures" (Feyerabend 1999: 33). Potentially, yes; however, actualizing this potentiality is no minor task. Changing the ways of life of a culture, and in that sense becoming another culture, is not an easy and not a fast process – certainly it is not something attainable by a subject at will. So the experiences of things like technology in other cultures may be in a sense transcendent to us; we can not reach them in our lifetimes, or even if we could, it would mean that we would be transformed beyond recognition. This is how localism can at the same time be called relativist – cultures and languages are incommensurable – and open at least in the minimal sense.

It is easy to read in Heidegger tones that suggest that the road to traditions that support the necessary experiential transformation goes through sufficiently earthy, pure and strong roots. If what is "sufficient" here is striven for through a quest for a definite origin, for instance in the sense that if language is to be properly heard, it has to be stripped of all metaphysical dead weight, then there is a clear danger of cultural purism. To be sure, there is a Heideggerian perspective from which the metaphysical language of traditional philosophy is seen as actively corruptive. If one wants to creatively re-experience and re-forge the original founding experiences of the Western tradition, one presumably has to be very careful about language: one can not use the standard terminology of philosophy because it actively distorts experience. Authenticity seems to demand a language that is not the vulgar chattering of the marketplace, reeking the fumes of public transportation vehicles. In this view, in order to be free for non-technological and non-calculative thinking, language has to be purified of the metaphysical and the inauthentic strata. If that is the case, then Heidegger's philosophy necessitates a kind of homogeneity, purification and originality of asubjective experience, and thus is not open in the minimal sense.

However, homogeneity of language or experience is an impossibility if we bear in mind that a precondition of asubjective, local experience is the abandonment of metaphysical foundations. The experiential net of nearnesses is always impure and conflicted, full of contradictory, even mutually hostile drives, thoughts and sensations, maybe even incommensurable areas – this is something that Heidegger, too, emphasizes almost as often as the need for strong and original rootedness.¹⁰

The heterogeneity and impurity of experiential traditions is a direct consequence of the fact that identity is not grounded on a

fundament, a thinking substance or hung upon a transcendental structure. Locality as experiential nearness is made impossible by universal homogeneity: this is one of the main motivations of a Heideggerian-post-modern "rage against reason". But locality suffers also if the network is homogenized in the name of experiential purity, intensity and strong roots. This time the thing threatened is not so much the possibility of locality (or epochality) which is taken away by universalism, but rather the openness of locality, that has to go when purity gets in.

For instance, while we are thinking of problems like technology, metaphysics, and civilization, a language like Finnish may well contain ingredients that are anti-metaphysical, that go against metaphysics, civilization, and technology, as well as lexical and grammatical features that are very metaphysical, reified, Indo-European and Western. It may also contain asubjective and ametaphysical ingredients that do not in any way commit themselves over the question of whether humans are persons or not or whether nature is something to be used or not. These ingredients exist in the "same" language, sometimes in one sentence. As impurities and inauthenticities they are the necessary conditions of local thinking.

5. The Fourth Condition: Democracy of Experiences

The Finnish language may contain grammatical forms, ways of speaking, philosophically pregnant fields of meaning that make it possible to think. This makes it possible to find pathways through the language that in a Heideggerian or Derridean way make thinking local. However, such pathways must be clearly separated from any yearning towards closed locality, to pure origins or infinite tasks.

Open local thinking necessitates the creation of non-technological ways of life in the present by using as traces the almost destroyed experiences of previous non-Western lives. Closed locality may travel a while in the same direction, but it is committed to a view of authenticity in which a certain set of experiences is given a glorified and unquestionable status. This makes it susceptible to nationalistic interpretations.

Impurity and a denial of all kinds of authenticity mean that the uniqueness that makes locality possible is neither permanent nor eternal. To paraphrase the quote from Feyerabend above, every language is potentially all languages: all potentially meaningful linguistic expressions lie in the potential scope of development of a language. But such potentiality (competence) has precious little to do with

actuality (performance). Every experience is potentially all experiences, but the realization of that potential might be historically closed, beyond a barrier of tradition that is insurmountable, at least during our lifetimes. For instance, it might be possible to experience in Indo-European German some of the subjectless, numberless and non-gendered sentences contained in Finnish, but it may take a creative restructuring that borders on changing the language beyond recognition. And even then such experience would be different (for instance, in the sense of being a re-experiencing of Finnish in German); it would not be the same but something creatively reinterpreted.

Open locality needs the impurity, heterogeneity and non-foundationality of experiences, which, in its turn, means that there is no absolute hierarchy amongst experiences. In want of a better word, this view might be called democracy of experiences. The view contains the condition of minimal openness, presented above, augmented to encompass all of experience. The view could also be called *daimocracy*, if we reinterpret Socrates' classic view in which an inner voice called *daimon* steers the path of a person in a quite wide sense.¹¹ Let us call "*daimons*" all of the more or less distinct areas of experience that can more or less separately inform us, such as the "experience of the physical world (perception)" or "experience of pain" or "experience of counting (thought)", and so on. The idea of a democracy of experiences, or "*daimocracy*", is quite simple: perception (or perceptual experience) can criticize feeling (or emotional experience), not to mention the possibilities of thought criticizing perception, feeling criticizing thought and so on. Open locality means that all experiences and all areas of experience are questionable, can be criticized, changed, at least in principle. No way or method of arriving at an experience, be it the scientific or the authentic, gives it a non-questionable status.

To be sure, "democracy" here cannot mean the standard view of democracy as rational decision-making by separable individuals. The name *daimocracy* might better imply the fact that what is at issue is the capacity of experiences in having an effect on each other so that, in principle, no experience, however reified or dignified, is ever safeguarded from further change and that the change is not always or even for the most part subjectual. Any change is, as such, temporary, and no big enough flow of experiences is without its contradictions, or even incommensurabilities.

To recap: in opposition to universalism, there are two types of localism: closed and open. However, the closed type is close to

universalism in that they both assume that there are, or must be, experiences that are beyond doubt, change or question. Open localism does not allow for that kind of rest to any type of experience, other than for the time being. To be sure, everything can not be doubted or questioned at the same time, or all of the time, and some areas of experience are slower, more dense and solid than others; many experiences are unchosen and beyond subjectual control. But no invulnerability or invincibility can be guaranteed to any type of experience. Ultimately, there is nothing transcendental, not even in the Other; the sacred and the gods are local, too.

6. Why?

Impure local thinking, such as the possibly local Finnish thinking, is not looking for unquestionable, authentic origins. Why should we be interested in it, then? Why think locally?

There are two answers. The first is somewhat unphilosophical – or, alternatively, “deep”. We may say that there is no “should” involved, there is no rational choice or decision on the basis of which we could assign blame or praise to a person or subject. What is to be thought is not wholly or even mainly a subjectual matter. For instance, one’s native language or first languages are not something one may at will choose – not to speak of the properties of those languages or the ways of life they are connected to.

The second answer which, in a sense, follows from the first is that thinking, too, is an impure, conflictual, and temporary thing. A trace can be lost, missed, followed, abandoned. Any tradition carries mixed tasks of thinking and mixed flows of experience, with different ethical properties. What one “should” do is formed on the basis of these contradictory and temporary ethical properties. We saw above that both universalism and closed localism include features that are destructive with regard to experience. It is also obvious that Finnish experience, like any “ethnic” experience, has been and is impure and conflictual. Nevertheless, such impurity does not justify the Western destruction or colonization.

Invasion of mind and language must be resisted – not only because it is invasion, but because of the particular type of the Western invasion. This leads us to locality. Many kinds of locality seeking for authenticity or pure origins are not better than Western pretended universalism. This leads us to open, impure locality. The impure mish-mash called Finnish includes features that are valuable; these should be promoted. It also contains features that are bad and

must be changed. Resisting colonization is not best done by returning to some imaginary pure origins, but by listening to the suppressed experience now, in our lifetimes.

But does not the incommensurability of these impure and local criteria present a problem? Yes, but fortunately it is a philosophical or, rather, intellectualist pseudo-problem. In life it is not problematic enough: we live in any case amongst conflicting criteria, desires and experiences that have to be constantly balanced, weighed against each other. Still, we must live and act, and we do. The problem is born in a view of philosophy that admits only the matters of the house as something worth thinking about. But philosophy as the restricted economy is not the only kind of philosophy, not even inside Western thought.

The flux of criteria and the democracy of experiences do not make thought or action impossible: eternal or infinite decisions become impossible, but not present temporary ones. Local thinking also makes it possible to discuss the problem of technology in ways that are structurally impossible inside universalistic thinking. Experiences of non-created matter and nature may live in non-Indo-European languages and ways of life. This does, however, mean that we have to abandon the naive realism and naturalism inherent in much of Western thought, along with the separability of Western individuals and the view of meaning as utility. A technological experience is in the Western eye always wasteful and inutile. Nevertheless, it may be the only type of experience that can effectively challenge the current harmonization and leveling down of both nature and human being. If we want to overcome technology, it is simply not enough to think like and about the same things as philosophers do in the core areas of Western culture. The insufficiency is even more pertinent, if we want to create other forms of experience and conceptualization.

7. How?

Are language and mind in the last instance universal? Are there unquestionable experiences or authentic cultures? If we answer to both of the questions in the negative, open local thinking becomes possible. But how? How can the impure local experience be thought?

From the point of view of universalistic aspirations, local impurities are or produce disturbances. To closed locality seeking original experiences, impurities are something to be cut away. It is no secret that the grammar of the Indo-European languages contains a strong trend towards a metaphysics of subjectivity (as noted by both

Bertrand Russell and Friedrich Nietzsche) and that the Western view of human being is closely connected with that grammar. At times the non-Indo-European Finnish and the Fenno-Ugric view of the human being are in tangible conflict with Europeanness. Consequently, these areas of experience are retreating, atrophying, being masked. As impurities they are unwelcome, and if presented in broad daylight, something in need of justification, if not an excuse. Therefore such impure experience seldom presents itself directly, and can for the most time be seen only as traces. Traces and tracks, in turn, are never pure, they are made of impurity and hybridity.

If we see philosophy in the first sense, as the universal Greek-originated tradition, then philosophy in the second sense, as local tasks of thinking, is impossible, because such philosophy tries to overstep the limits of communicable language. However, if we understand language, too, in the second sense, the impossibility disappears. Language in terms of unique thinking is not communicative, but a form of experience. Language is not only the medium through which one can send thought-objects wrapped in word-objects. In and through unique experience, language too becomes unique, as part and parcel of that experience. Language is a way of living and experiencing together. Experiencing together or experiencing with is crucial. Experience is larger than the subject: when language is experienced it speaks beyond the subject.

How can an experience of language be shared, if we are not (universally) the same? Something shared or something common does not require structural identity, but participation in a subjective experience. There is a sense in which humans are one. However, the level of experience we share is not that of reason, subject, or even humanity. If we admit our continuity with the animal world, universalistic philosophy becomes impossible, because universality demands certain structures of experience – reason, subject – not the continuity of experience. Sharing experiences, taking part in a subjective experience, is not a structural matter, and it resides on a level that is much lower – or higher, if you wish – than that of proposed universal structures. As persons, as subjects and individuals we do not share experiences.

Because the traces of a technological experience are from the point of view of purity, originality, authenticity, utility and functionality something disturbing, they can most likely be found on areas that are in one way or another marginal, unofficial, embarrassing. One must be careful, though, as the Western traditions imbued in many

forms of literature, poetry, sports and so on make them the lackeys of globalized consumerism.

The commonality of language, the possibility of shared asubjective experience, the possibility of our continuity with nature are beyond both universalism and closed localism, in impurity and heterogeneity. This also means that we have to reinterpret our relationship with animals: if there is something that separates humans from animals, it must be present already in the animals, otherwise open locality is lost. All of this does not mean that we could not talk and think about such continuous experience. What it does mean, however, is that philosophy or thought becomes not only local but also mortal in the sense that it has no claim to eternal truths or infinite tasks.¹² Local philosophy can make claims of validity for people who are sufficiently like us, here and now. What is “sufficient” is a question of quite opportunistic, temporary and unprincipled criteria, not of highly intellectualistic notions like ideal communication, rationality and so on. In this sense, the localist view of ethical encounters and cross-cultural communication is dialectical and Hegelian rather than idealized and Habermasian.¹³ In the Habermasian tradition cross-cultural understanding is made possible by a shared universal goal (e.g., successful communication, rationality), and contains always the epistemological problem of not being certain if A has understood B correctly. In the Hegelian tradition, on the other hand, the basic situation is characterized by an ontological misunderstanding: A does not fully understand herself, and neither does B. But it is this ontological impossibility and impurity that makes the dialectical and open process of cross-cultural communication possible: particular epistemological processes of (mis)understanding are made possible by the shared ontological misunderstanding. To put it bluntly: A and B might want to try to (mis)understand each other, because they are not ready or complete.

Such local thinking cannot be found lying around. For instance, Finnish thinking is something that must be created. For it to exist, it needs to be invented. The seeds can be found in unique features of culture and language. This implies that locality always includes our relationships to other cultures. Once more: the impure and frictional connections between cultures, languages, and ways of life are a necessity for open locality. The second necessary condition is hearkening to disappearing forms of language that contain vestiges of non-technological experience. The third necessary condition is a creative re-conceptualization of the experiential knots that make a non-Western

life possible. Impurity and asubjectivity do not mean formlessness, crudity or primitivity, muteness or unconsciousness. Impurity and its shared experiencing can take forms that are subtle, and complicated. Myths, the knowledge of experiential connections, thinking that takes time over several generations are all good examples of local meaning. Temporary solutions to the problem of meaning create ways of experiencing, grasping, and conceptualizing. Invigorated by these concepts local experience can shape itself towards a direction where the Western notions of “utility” and “survival” are not equated with “good”.

Notes

1. I will be talking about *Finnish* philosophy, because that is closest to me, but I imagine that many of the structural issues have bearing on other ethnicities, as well.
2. In this sense language does come close to the systems of signs studied in general semiotics. However, as semiotics is typically interested in the structural and pragmatic aspects of systems of signs, I prefer the term language, even though the kind of existential semiotics described by Eero Tarasti (2001) might be suited for a study of the experiential side of semiotics.
3. The claim of untranslatability is here taken as given without further argument. However, philosophical arguments may be found in recent German and French philosophy of language (Heidegger and Derrida come to mind), as well as from concurrent empirically inspired Anglo-American philosophy of mind.
4. It is of importance to notice that having to use the surrogate subject “one” in forming these kinds of passive sentences is not an innocent grammatical device. There seems to be a clear connection between the Indo-European grammar and sentential structure and certain forms of Western thinking. In Finnish, a similar sentence could be written without any identifiable and separable grammatical subject, which might imply that such a subject is not needed for the listening or hearing under discussion. For more detailed discussions on Finnish passive sentences and their philosophical impact, see Pylkkö 1998.
5. For asubjectivity, see Pylkkö 1998 and Vadén 2001.
6. “I have in mind especially the inner relationship of the German language with the language of the Greeks and with their thought. This has been confirmed for me today again by the French. When they begin to think they speak German, being sure that they could not make it with their own language”. Heidegger 1993 (*Spiegel-Interview*). See also the comments by Derrida in *Of Spirit. Heidegger and the Question* (Derrida 1989), p. 69-70.

7. For a more detailed discussion of this notion of locality, see Vadén & Hannula 2003. The “temporal” and “spatial” metaphors of epochs and localities for the historicity of understandings of being can be used interchangeably, as, for instance, when Heidegger writes that “Descartes ist nur überwindbar durch die Überwindung dessen, was er selbst begründet hat, durch die Überwindung der *neuzeitlichen* und *d. h. zugleich der abendländischen* Metaphysik”, Heidegger 1977, p. 98.
8. Neither were his practices as a philosopher: he repeatedly sought inspiration not only from the poetry of Hölderlin, but also from Eastern sources, especially Chinese, see May 1996.
9. It is an open question to Heidegger scholarship whether or not his view is of this closed type: there certainly are strong reasons for believing so, his all to real involvement with and even post-war valorization of (his kind of) Nazism being one of the most visible and his philosophy of language and technology the most interesting ones.
10. The internal tensions of being itself are discussed, for instance, in Heidegger 1949 (*Über den Humanismus*), p. 49 ff. For instance, a propos of Hölderlin’s view of the Germans as a nation in the poem *Andenken*, he writes “Das ‘Deutsche’ ist nicht der Welt gesagt, damit sie am deutschen Wesen genese, sondern es ist den Deutschen gesagt, damit sie aus der geschickhaften Zugehörigkeit zu den Völkern mit diesen weltgeschichtlich werden” (p. 29).
11. Socrates mentions his *daimon* in several of Plato’s dialogues, for instance, in Apology, 31d-e.
12. Edmund Husserl in his famous Vienna lecture from 1935 (included in Husserl 1965) defines the Universal European spirit through “infinite tasks” of thinking that the spirit sets itself in fields like philosophy, science or mathematics. It might be even more interesting, however, to note that immediately after this definition Husserl concedes that there are in the geographic continent of Europe peoples, such as the “Eskimos and Gypsies”, who are not European in this sense. What is this exclusive “Universalism” of infinite tasks, then, if not Eurocentrism? It is somewhat worrying that some of the most radical forms of post-phenomenological thought, such as Levinasian ethics or Derridean deconstruction, still retain this language of infinity, transposed to the ethical register.
13. Here I follow the presentation in Žižek 1997 (*The Abyss of Freedom*), p. 49.

13. What is Ethnofuturism? Thoughts on “Uralic Philosophy”

Kari Sallamaa

Abstract: In 1989 a group of young Estonian writers founded a new aesthetic movement which they called ‘ethnofuturism’ whose main aim was to blend traditions from folklore and national romanticism with postmodern principles. I explain the ontological and epistemological principles of ethnofuturism and how it differs from ethnopraterism and cosmofuturism. I provide a summary of the thought of two Finno-Ugric philosophers, of the Estonian Uku Masing and the Komi national K. F. Zhakov, whose ideas can be used in constructing ethnofuturism. Masing compares Indo-German and Boreal thinking. Zhakov develops a philosophical system which he calls “Limitism” whose key principle is that “cognition is a variable quantity striving towards its limits in order to become being”. **Key Words:** Ethnofuturism, Uku Masing, K.F. Zhakov, Finno-Ugric Languages, Estonian literature.

In the spring of 1989, a small group of young writers in Tartu, Estonia founded a new aesthetic movement which they called ‘ethnofuturism’.¹ The name was meant as a provocation to the then already moribund socialist realism. The original group consisted of the poets Kauksi Ülle, Sven Kivisildnik, Valeria Ränik, Karl Martin Sinijärv, and the writer Jüri Ehlevest. A few literary critics and scholars also joined the group, which soon organized itself into the Estonian Kostabi Society, named after the American Estonian painter Mark Kalev Kostabi who is widely known through the Internet.

According to the first ethnofuturist manifesto, the main aim of the movement was to blend traditions from folklore and national romanticism with postmodern principles: intertextuality, pastiche and simulacrum, that is, the mixing together of various kinds of literary sources without puristic rigor. Ethnofuturists relied heavily on the Internet as a censorship-free medium. This is understandable, given the Soviet censorship of the period with its powerful Central Authority of Literary Affairs (also called Main Administration for Safeguarding State Secrets in the Press; or Glavlit).²

In Tartu, in 1994, the EK\$ organized the first Finno-Ugric Young Authors’ Conference, where ethnofuturism was presented to writers and artists of related Finno-Ugric peoples. A second conference

was held in Izhevsk, Udmurtia in 1998. The third and fourth conferences took place again in Tartu in 1999 and 2001 when ethnofuturism was accepted unanimously as a philosophical system and aesthetic program especially well suited for Uralic (the collective term for the Finno-Ugric and Samoyed language families) literature and arts. Some of these ideas can be found in the text compiled by the leading figures of Estonian ethnofuturism (cf. Päril-Lõhmus & al. 1995: 11-15).

Since 1996 I have participated – as a member of the loose international network of ethnofuturists and as the vice chairman of the Association of Finno-Ugric Literatures (AFUL) – in the development of ethnofuturism. Its most important task is to help small ethnic literatures to survive and to thrive. Etymologically, the concept ethnofuturism relates to *ethnos* – to minority peoples and ethnic groups with their own traditions and cultures, whose ethnic and national existence is at stake or threatened by state assimilation policies or multinational enterprises. *Ethnos* experiences pressure from larger peoples, for example Russians or, in the case of the Samis, the Nordic majority peoples in Finland, Sweden and Norway.

Futurism no longer relates to the modernist aesthetic program launched by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in Italy and Vladimir Mayakovsky in Russia at the beginning of the 20th century. Here it refers to the development of an ethnic culture based on one's own language and heredity. The aim of ethnofuturism is not just to save cultural traditions. Above all it seeks to construct a new urban ethnic culture for peoples who have previously been nomads and peasants. The ethnic youths in the villages speak or at least understand their mother tongue and know the principles of their traditions, customs and culture. However, as they move to the cities, they forget their heritage and blend into the majority. Ethnofuturism is a philosophical and artistic “survival program” which guarantees a future to small languages and cultures.

1. Finno-Ugric or Global?

Because ethnofuturism does not rely on rigid rules as classical philosophical systems and aesthetic programs do, it has been defined in different ways. There is an ongoing debate about its scope: is ethnofuturism global and general or should it be restricted to the Finno-Ugric or Uralic world? The young Estonian semiotician Ott Heinapuu, for example, has criticized the author for, on the one hand, defining the term too broadly and thus nebulously, and on the other hand, by restricting it to the culture of Uralic peoples. In his view, one should

not speak of ethnofuturism but rather of Uralic philosophy (Heinapuu 2000: 9). True, ethnofuturism germinated and was first disseminated among Uralic peoples, although its principles have to a certain extent become known among the Turkic peoples of Russia as well. The Chuvass literary critic Atner Huzangai, for example, gave a lecture about Chuvass ethnofuturism at the AFUL conference in Udmurtia in 2002. This spread is understandable: the Finno-Ugric and Turkic peoples live side by side, are mixed (especially in Central Russia) and their language systems differ from the Indo-European system. Even though the old theory of the linguistic link between the Uralic and Altaic language groups is no longer considered valid, it is obvious that there are many common traits in the type of thinking based on the languages of these two groups.

Friedrich Nietzsche writes in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886): “Philosophers within the domain of the Ural-Altai languages (in which the concept of the subject is least developed) will in all probability look ‘into the world’ differently and be found on different paths from the Indo-Germans and Moslems: the spell of definite grammatical functions is in the last resort the spell of *physiological* value judgments and racial conditions” (Nietzsche 1976: 32).

I agree that it is not necessary to restrict ethnofuturism to Uralic peoples. On the contrary, this program is ideally suited for indigenous and autochthonous peoples and ethnic groups (“First Nations”) all over the world. When I presented a paper on ethnofuturism at an international colloquium at the Nouvelle Sorbonne, Paris, in March 2001, the anthropologist Jean-Léo Léonard noted that the principles of the Zapatist movement of the Mexican Indians in the state of Chiapas manifest many parallels with ethnofuturism. The Zapatists can thus be called Mexican ethnofuturists! One common aspect is the non-violent type of action. The pen is more powerful than the sword. The Zapatist leader, Subcomandante Carlos, is also a poet, and frequently issues his orders in the form of poems. Similarly, one of the leading ethnofuturists, Udmurt multiartist Kuchyran Yury (Lobanov) explains what ethnofuturism is through dancing, singing, painting and performance-art.

2. Ethnofuturism and Cosmofuturism

At the third ethnofuturist conference in Tartu in May 1999, the Estonian political scientist Rein Taagepera (universities of Tartu and California at Irvine) gave a substantial lecture in which he established three concepts: (1) *ethnopræterism*, a nostalgic effort to preserve ethnic cultures in their pristine traditional form, (2) *cosmofuturism*, a

point of view which pays no attention to national and ethnic problems and (3) *ethnofuturism* as something which stands between these two (Taagepera 1999; cf. Heinapuu & Heinapuu 2002: 144).

I accept Taagepera's terminological division, but I propose to emphasize other aspects of cosmofuturism in order to use the term in a slightly different way. Cosmofuturism does not need to signify some cosmopolitical fuzz. It should, rather, refer to the greatest possible context, the ecological and cultural conditions of the world's future, both globally and locally. Cosmos refers to nature, to natural and human resources as well as to culture and information technology. Understood like this, ethnofuturism is an important part of cosmofuturism.

One reason why I am interested in cosmofuturism is that ethnofuturism, at the moment it is developed, needs to be placed into a larger context. It is time to broaden the area of ethnofuturism in order to include problems of global existence. By creating ethnic urban cultures, ethnofuturism can harmonize the relationships between city and countryside. It can rescue traditional village cultures from declining into dead museum items, that is, into ethnopraeteric ineffectiveness. It can regulate technology without negating technology's achievements. There is a global movement that creates uniformity of nature, language and culture, and ethnofuturism has something to say about this threat. If we accept the pessimistic prognoses of the UNESCO and the Worldwatch Institute that within a century the approximately 6000 languages which exist today will be reduced to about 150, we may wonder if a single Uralic language will survive.

Ethnofuturism is not a kind of nostalgic lament preaching the preservation of languages and culture. That would be, in Taagepera's terminology, ethnopraeterism. Ethnofuturism insures the survival of small cultures. The renaissance of the Livonian language and Livonian culture in Latvia proves that it really works. After the "last Livonians" had died out, the "first Livonians" arose. The first Livonians are Latvian citizens who rediscovered their Livonian roots and rebuilt and modernized their language and culture as they knew it through folklore and the memory of their ancestors.

Because ethnofuturism points out the spiritual values of ethnic traditions and cultures, it puts the current desperate situation to the test and becomes *ethnocriticism*, if I may borrow the term Arnold Krupat used in his works on native American literatures. In Finno-Ugric media one can find some variations of ethnofuturism, like *etnoduhovnost*

(ethnospiritualism): this accentuates the spiritual values in the new ethnic-ethical movement.³

Ethnofuturism is no longer a vague label for some aesthetic and literary phenomena. It is now a full-scale aesthetic, political and cultural program. Its scope is broadening to include village planning, architecture, fashion, eco- and cultural tourism, etc. For this reason it must also have philosophical principles valid in all three domains: in ontology, epistemology as much as in ethics.

3. Epistemological Principles

In 2001, the well-known Estonian writer and philosopher Jaan Kaplinski gave a paper at the University of Tampere with the title “If Heidegger Had Been a Mordvinian”. According to Kaplinski, the most advanced philosophies have been created in classical Greek, German and Chinese languages, but never in any of the Finno-Ugric languages. Philosophers have spoken about language fairly extensively, but most of the time they have done so with reference to language in general, not with reference to concrete languages like classical Greek, English, Finnish, Hopi or Erzja-Mordvinian. Differences in language structures were considered irrelevant and their impact on philosophical thinking has been examined very little (Kaplinski 2001: 1-3).

Kaplinski asks how Heidegger would have philosophized if he had been Mordvinian. I suggest that he might have wanted to answer Nietzsche’s question about “Uralo-Altaic philosophy” and that his answer would have been very different from what the German Heidegger would have answered. As Heidegger’s philosophy is based on the German language, his thinking is thoroughly labeled by an Indo-Germanic mentality. Jacques Derrida points out that Heidegger’s metaphysics works in the framework of an Indo-European linguistic environment: “Metaphysics – the white mythology which reassembles and reflects the culture of the West: the white man takes his own mythology, Indo-European mythology, his own *logos*, that is, the *mythos* of his idiom, for the universal form of that he must still wish to call Reason” (Derrida 1982, 213).

Kaplinski asks whether a still non-existent Finno-Ugric philosophy can provide us with something new. The fundamental qualities of a Finno-Ugric philosophy are as follows: (1) concreteness and phenomenological nominalism in conceptual thinking (*one* idea is expressed by *one* particular word) instead of Indo-Germanic realism. (2) Inductiveness from particulars to generalization and not, as in Indo-European thinking, vice versa. This means that universal concepts (Platonic ideas for example) are for Finno-Ugric languages not “as

real” as particular ones. The Indo-European languages tend to classify with the help of definitions (as does Aristotle). Uralic languages tend to count and list things. (3) Onomatopoeics or ideophony. Uralic languages have a rich potential of word alternatives and might be ideal for the currently popular “fuzzy logic” (Kaplinski 2001: 7-10).

Kaplinski asks if this kind of Finno-Ugric philosophy is a real philosophy or if it is only a *tendency* towards a special philosophy. No matter how that question is answered, such a “philosophy” has a right to exist – a possibility which Western Europeans have often denied to their counterparts who speak other kinds of languages (Kaplinski 2001: 10). However, in my opinion this kind of Finno-Ugric philosophy already exists although it is scattered throughout the texts of many thinkers. We should collect and systematize these scattered elements and shape them into an ethnofuturist philosophy. Of course, these Finno-Ugric philosophers are not as famous as Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Heidegger, Kung Fu-Tse and Lao Tse. Still, there are many noteworthy philosophers who think and write in marginal languages.

The Maori novelist Patricia Grace from New Zealand has said that her people has thoughts but not thinking. They have ideas but not philosophy.⁴ If philosophy is seen as a Venetian lead chamber, a straitjacket of thinking, if it means dead ideology, we can accept this opinion. However, ethnofuturism implies flexible mythic thinking and deconstructive acts against mediocre Western Eurocentrism, cultural Americanism and Great Russian reactionism. Instead of Indo-European analytic thinking we need a synthetic mode of thought that can be found in Uralic, Altaic or indigenous thinking.

4. Glimpses of Ethnofuturist Ontology

Gaston Bachelard states that the circle is the very form of the cosmos. In his *La poétique de l'espace* (1957) he speaks of “*la phénoménologie du rond*” stating that the ideal building is round – the four corners of a house or room break/brake the universal harmony (1967: 208ff). The Sami or Nenets tent, like the native American teepee or Mongolian yurt, follow this original form. The universe is an ellipse, as Einstein demonstrated in his theory of relativity. A mother’s womb is an ellipse, too.

Also time is not linear. It is circular, as suggests Nietzsche’s and Mircea Eliade’s concept of the eternal return. Our foremothers and ancient heroes are still present today. The well-known Sami multiartist, the late Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, held similar beliefs.⁵ The native American actor, dancer and shaman Norman Charles, who lives in Swedish Samiland and performs together with the Sami actress Åsa

Simma, said to me when I visited Valkeapää on the way to the indigenous literature conference in 1993: “Everything is round, even the colors. Can you imagine that red has corners? Does a human face have corners? And when you rotate like the Turkish Konya dervishes, you can keep on revolving for hours, and you go into ecstasy, into a seer’s state of mind. No drugs or booze are needed”.

5. Two Finno-Ugric Philosophers

I would now like to provide a summary of the thought of two Finno-Ugric philosophers, of the Estonian Uku Masing and the Komi national K. F. Zhakov, whose ideas can be used in constructing ethnofuturism.

5.1. Ethnofuturist Ethics and Politics: Uku Masing

Uku Masing (1909-1985) began his academic career in Tartu between the wars but was barred from the university during the Soviet era. Still he had a great impact on the younger intellectual generation as an unofficial teacher of Jaan Kaplinski and many others.

Ethnofuturist philosophy, culture, literature, arts and criticism always have their political aspects. When looking for historical parallels, Uku Masing’s “Confessio amantis” (1961) turns out to be most relevant. The text was published in *Communio Viatorum* 2/1961, a tiny periodical published by the Theological Faculty of Charles University in Prague (which to my knowledge was the only university in the socialist countries which did not close its faculty of theology). The article powerfully rejects all kind of racist thought about the right of whites to rule over other “races”. Resolutely, Masing connects those ideas to the history of capitalism. For Masing, capitalism is just another form of the violence that was carried out by medieval warlords and robber knights. The supremacy of the white race is for him “Siegheilslehre” (SHL) (Masing 1998: 64-65).

Masing holds that warfare is for SHL the only right method, the leading principle in Western ideology. Rejecting the Western linear conception of history, Masing puts forward the original native beliefs in a “golden age” which are remnants of a shamanistic mentality according to which it is permitted to fight against natural forces, diseases and demons, but not against fellow humans. According to Masing, “primitive” cultures do not know wars: at least in the “golden age” there were no wars, and the Northern indigenous peoples do not even *know* wars. In Sami languages, for example, there is not even a word for war. Masing underlines that conflicts between individuals in those “primeval Communist” societies are solved with song contests,

just as Väinämöinen and Joukahainen settle disputes in the Finnish national epic *Kalevala* (Masing 1998: 71-72).

The rejection of these ideas by Western civilization is connected with the primacy of war. Masing writes: “The war ideology of capitalism has blinded us to such a degree that at the beginning not even I could imagine how such a period [the golden age] could have existed” (73, my translation). Western history has been made by political murderers, speculative merchants, individualistic selfishness, racial selection, etc. There is no real difference between a road robber, a feudal lord, a great capitalistic merchant or a communist bureaucrat. Although skalds, troubadours, *poeti laureati* and other hired pens praised the deeds of kings, politicians and capital magnates, those well-known clichés (“my country”, “the Aryan race”, “the Northern race”, “white man’s burden”) are only a camouflage for making money. The most divine myths of capitalism remain “free competition”, Darwinist natural selection, “to kill or to be killed”. In Masing’s view they are variations of the ancient Roman slogan of “bellum omnium contra omnes” (76-77).

Masing compares Indo-German and Boreal thinking and shows that the structure of the Grimm brothers’ fairytales and other Indo-European folk tales follows the Nietzschean concept of “Wille zur Macht”. In many cases, an ordinary young fellow or a poor boy gains access to a higher class through marriage with a beautiful princess. The whole universe with its helping animals serves his will to power. An alternative to such a pattern that is based on a cast and class system is the Northern and indigenous kinship/clan system, in which animals are not servants but forefathers and totem figures. Unlike in the Indo-German tales, in Uralic tales or myths there is no logic working towards a causal-finalistic plot but the action is rather arbitrary and unmotivated.

With his linguistic theoretization on Uralic language and philosophy, Masing made a valuable contribution to emerging ethnofuturism. His starting point is a criticism of “Standard Average European” (SAE) thinking. The term itself is invented by B. L. Whorf (see 1972). SAE thinking is dominated by the illusion that there is a universally valid way of being human. According to this illusion everything that has been invented in some ideological centers will one day become the international norm (Masing 2004).

Ancient Uralic thinking precedes newer Western models. While Ferdinand de Saussure showed in his *Cours de linguistique générale* (1915) the arbitrary nature of words, the Ugrians have (according to Masing) always known that the name is never identical with its

meaning. While an Indo-German person understands ‘dragon’ as a clear idiom, Mikael Agricola (the founder of Finnish written language in the 16th century) translates the word as ‘lohikäärme’ which alludes to something else: ‘lohi’ (salmon or a big fishlike animal, e.g. small whale) and ‘käärme’ (snake) never fuse; the fantastic shape of this mythical creature remains vivid.

Masing states that in Indo-German languages negative words change their nature and become independent (words with a-, in-, un- and non-prefixes). In Baltic-Finnish languages, word prefixed by ei-, epä- or mitte- never fuse with the positive equivalent which means that the contradiction remains constant. In English, for example, ‘unhappy’ bears a stress on the word ‘happy’; in Finnish the stress lies on the prefix (like in ‘*epä-onninen*’) or on the suffix (like in ‘*onne-ton*’). The word ‘suspicion’ points out the subordination of the non-trusted object or person. In Finnish ‘*epäluulo*’ underlines the non-existing trust as a separated area.

Originally, it would never have come into the minds of Uralic peoples that existence differs from being: none-bird is still a bird, a man-bird is also a bird (there are such man-birds on the arms of the republic of Udmurtia, designed by Kuchyran Yury, and on the flag of the Finno-Ugric youth organization MAFUN). Masing writes: “In our languages you never imagine that ‘inexistence’ could exist as an independent term beside ‘existence’”. How much attention has German philosophy paid to ‘being’ and ‘existence’?

Masing posits ontology as a central dividing point between Indo-German and Boreal philosophy. For Indo-Germans there is one absolutely existing “reality”. For Ugrians there are at least three realities (heaven, earth, and the underworld), and perhaps as many as nine or twelve, depending on how many heavens – all shelved one on top of another – one imagines (Sallamaa 1999: 4).

5.2. Thinking Without Borders: K. F. Zhakov

The Komi national Kallistrat Falaleyevich Zhakov (1866-1926), was a real polyhistorian. He studied mathematics, geology, anatomy, psychology, philosophy, history and philology at the universities of Kiev and St. Petersburg. During his lifetime he wrote novels, stories, fairytales, poems, essays, literary criticism and an autobiography, as well as scholarly works on ethnography, folklore, linguistics and mathematics. From 1908 on, Zhakov taught at the Psychoneurological Institute of the University of St. Petersburg. After the first Russian revolution in spring 1917, he lectured in Pskov and at the Baltic universities of Tartu and Riga.

Zhakov developed a philosophical system, which he called “Limitism” as a combination of ideas borrowed from the Russian “god-builders” (*bogostroitelny*), Lev Tolstoy, Asian world religions and the energetics of Wilhelm Ostwald. His main philosophical work was published in 1912 in St. Petersburg under the title *The Principles of the Developmental Theory of Knowledge (Limitism)*. The final edition was published after the master’s death by his students as *Limitism: The Unity of Science, Philosophy and Religion* (Riga 1929). Other works that turn around the same theme are *The Theory of Variability and Limit in Gnoseology*; *Limitism: A Theory of Variability and Limit in Gnoseology*; and *Fundamentals of the Evolutional Theory of Knowledge (Limitism)*.

The names of the editions are instructive. At first, Zhakov developed the epistemological principles of his system. Later he confessed that he wanted to overcome two of his older tendencies: first materialism; then Kant and other idealists, like Schopenhauer.

Zhakov wanted to create a synthesis: “Limitism goes beyond materialism, idealism and skepticism. Limitism is a new method of studying the history of philosophy, philosophy of history and all other sciences. [...] It unites all sciences and religions” (Zerebtsov 1999: 23). Limitism is a sort of religion of science which is why an atheist can find in limitism a solid amount of logic and a religious person can find plenty of spiritual energy. The ideas of the Russian god-builders are clearly recognizable here: they too wanted to reconstruct religion in a scientific way. Zhakov called his limitism an evolutionary religion as he wanted to fuse religion with Darwin’s theory of evolution.

By including religion in this unified system, Zhakov did not think of Christianity, at least not of institutionalized Christianity with churches, priests and theology. As a Russian god-builder he wanted to create a new religion based on the natural sciences and energetism. His central concepts are energy and will. Behind all phenomena is hidden

an eternal truth and eternal beauty. We can get glimpses of it in all sciences and in all religions (Mikushev 1993: 10-12).

One of the key principles of limitism is that “cognition is a variable quantity striving towards its limits in order to become being”. The prime reason behind all being is the Prime Potential, or God. This force is “limitless in all directions and in all senses, and therefore impossible to cognize. He acts differently, but His attitude towards the cosmos is cognizable”. This Prime Potential is “inexhaustible, simple, natural, free, wise, good and indivisible” (Zerebtsov 1999: 23). This minimalism yields only energy and nothing else. In parallel with theories of energetism, the Prime Potential is “the wise principle of the Universe”.

Later, Zhakov emphasized the unity of knowledge, as well as the necessity of bringing together the separate spheres of human thinking. His scattered studies prepared him for this task of unification. Limitism’s central idea is its holistic worldview which annuls the artificial borders between science, philosophy, the arts and religion. Just as there exists a principal unity between the spheres of nature, there is also a principal unity connecting human beings, life and nature. Today we would call this unity “ecological unity”.

From all this, it follows that there must also be unity between the several areas of human thinking: limits exist in order to be transgressed. The borders between religion, science, philosophy, literature, and art are artificial. We can assemble thoughts from these various spheres without fear of being illogical or undialectical.

At Zhakov’s time *Lebensphilosophie* was popular and he reacted to it in his work *Rules of Life According to Limitism*. The book manifests many parallels with Wilhelm Ostwald and Henri Bergson.

During the Soviet time Zhakov was considered a “bourgeois” philosopher and almost forgotten. But he has now been rehabilitated, first of all in the Komi republic. His earthly remains were brought from Riga to Syktyvkar and were buried there again in an honored grave. His works have been republished and seminars have been held. He is indeed one of the most inspiring forerunners of ethnofuturism.

6. Revitalizing the Belief in Nature and in the Future

Although Zhakov had spent some time in a Russian monastery studying Greek Orthodox theology, he was skeptical of this kind of religion and especially of the church, which was so much intertwined with the Tsarist regime. We have today, after the Soviet period, the same situation: the Orthodox church is again a tool of Great Russian nationalism and supports the Putin regime. Christianity has often been

an important component of Western and Russian colonial and imperialistic thinking.

Zhakov's limistic ideas are supportive of a renovation of the so-called nature religions of many Finno-Ugric peoples. These religions have survived through the Soviet period, especially among the Maris in the Volga region, and are now officially acknowledged alongside Orthodoxy. Among the other Central Russian Finno-Ugric peoples (the Komis, the Mordvines and the Udmurts) the worship of nature gods, of heaven (En, Inmar), of the mother earth, of the goddesses of grain, of water, etc. have been re-established. What all these peoples have in common are the big sacrificial feasts that are held in holy groves during the summertime. Animals are sacrificed and eaten as a common meal.

Even in Estonia there are several hundred of worshippers of the thunder god Taara, as well as a more modest group called earth believers (maausk), who worship holy trees and wells but do not perform animal sacrifices. Like the Inuits, the Mordvinian peoples, the Erzjas and the Mokshas, they speak of Mother Water as well as of Mother Earth (mastorava). As one might imagine, Christian churches are worried about this type of rehabilitation of "paganism".

Ethnofuturism can harmonize man's relationships with nature by revitalizing the original religions of the Finno-Ugric peoples and First Nations, and by having them accepted as alternatives to the three monotheistic religions of Middle Eastern origin. Within our hopelessly demoralized world of consumerism, the much-discussed death of the Christian patriarchal God permits a return to the spiritual. Instead of Christian prelates dressed in black robes we could imagine shamans and druids dressed in pure white.

Epiphany, the act of reaching back to the memory of the ever-lost paradise of early childhood is important for a child. *Hierophany*, the act of reaching out to the Sacred, to the spirit of the ancestors, to the holy trees, woods, stones, wells, and other holy places of worship is important for adults.⁶

The short history of ethnofuturism has already shown its strength in preserving and developing ethnic cultures. It has had a particularly strong influence in Udmurtia, where the majority of younger writers and artists are creating a new national culture under its banner. Ethnofuturism could do an even better job in the Karelian Republic if it were adopted there; however, in this republic the chances for developing an ethnic and regional culture have declined following the Ingrian emigration to Finland. The birth and rise of Vepsian literary culture, on the other hand, with ABC-books, poems and fiction as well

as the newspaper *Kodima* [Homeland] points towards new possibilities for recreating an ethnic consciousness of peoples that have so far been hardly visible to the world.

In summary, it is possible to say that because ethnofuturism strongly favors national and ethnic multiculturalism, it helps to counter the kind of globalization that is led by multinational companies, stock exchanges and failed governments. In this respect it can be seen as a variation of the re-ethnicization of the mind.

Notes

1. "Ethnofuturism" is mentioned on the site of the Estonian ministry of foreign affairs as a movement striving to "revitalize literature through national traditions" [the editors].
2. A brief summary of the main tenants of the Estonian group is presented in Viires 1996.
3. In the periodical *Kudo-Kodu* 1/2001 (Mari El).
4. Held at the conference on indigenous literatures at the university of Tromsø, Norway in 1993.
5. Rauna Kuokkanen reproduced a poem by Valkeapää in her contribution.
6. For these matters I recommend Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane* (1959). Like his better known book *The Myth of the Eternal Return: Archetypes and Repetition* (1949), it emphasizes the importance of connecting the time of nature (Henri Bergson's *durée*) and the time of culture (*temps*).

14. The Logic of the Gift: Reclaiming Indigenous Peoples' Philosophies

Rauna Kuokkanen

Abstract: This chapter considers the notion of philosophy from the perspective of indigenous peoples. It starts by critically examining the concept of philosophy and expands it with the help of feminist and indigenous scholarship which have pointed out the exclusions and biases in Western philosophical conventions. The main argument of the chapter is that the notion of the gift is one of the structuring principles of many indigenous peoples' philosophies. The chapter suggests that the understanding of the world which foregrounds human relationship with the natural environment, common to many indigenous peoples, is manifested by the gift, whether give-back ceremonies and rituals or individual gifts given to the land as a recognition of its abundance and reinforcement of these relationships. **Key Words:** Sami culture, Indigenous philosophy, gift practices, feminism, Finno-Ugric peoples;

1. Introduction

Philosophy defies neat definitions – it is the *différance* par excellence. For centuries, it has been considered the monopoly of those peoples claiming the legacy of ancient Greece as their own and even as such, it effectively excluded women and their contributions. Indigenous peoples – viewed alternately as primitive, barbaric or noble savages by philosophers such as Hobbes, Locke, Bacon and Rousseau – were not generally considered to have the capacity or inclination for philosophy.

Jacques Derrida (1982) argues that the violent hierarchy of oppositions is the founding moment of philosophy. For him, western metaphysics is inescapably dualistic in its structure and it interprets difference in terms of the logic of hierarchy. The hierarchical dualism and control of reason over nature have also contributed to the creation of the fault-line between the West (the sphere of reason) and indigenous peoples (the sphere of nature). As indigenous peoples were defined as nature, i.e., primitives without intellects or rationality, they were excluded from humanity and placed into the same category with other subordinates. While western knowledge is located within disciplines such as philosophy, history and literature, corresponding indigenous forms are denied the access in these academic subjects and instead, are constrained within fields of anthropology, ethnography and folklore.

Val Plumwood (1993) has articulated a critique of reason that accounts for human domination and the domination of natural world. Her analysis of the systematic backgrounding of the natural world (and/or women) from accounts of history and economics is helpful to understand the mechanisms of exclusion that also apply to indigenous epistemes and assumptions of the world. These mechanisms have their roots in dualistic assumptions of reason emanating from classical

Greek philosophy, particularly from Plato who is credited as the founder of the western philosophical tradition. Plato's (and consequently, other male philosophers') account of reason as masculine has been criticized by several feminist philosophers (e.g., Lloyd 1984; Irigaray 1985). Luce Irigaray examines the gestures of exclusion in the western tradition, focusing on the double exclusion of women from philosophy and society. Her central argument is that rationality in the western philosophical tradition is conceptualized as male and has its roots in dualistic structure and exclusion of the feminine. Plumwood argues, however, that

it is not only a masculine identity as such which underlines the Platonic conception of reason and of the life of reason, but a master identity defined in terms of multiple exclusions, and in terms of domination not only of the feminine but also of the slave (which usually combines race, class and gender oppression), of the animal, and of the natural (Plumwood 1993: 72).

While some environmental theorists have interpreted Plato as an early environmentalist and represented the Greeks as having an organic worldview through the worship of ancient earth goddess Gaia, Plumwood (1993) points out how in *The Republic*, Plato considers the story of the earth as mother to be false yet belonging to the category of 'magnificent myths' which can be used by the ruling class to serve the social ends deemed worthy. Although the universe or cosmic nature might be glorified in Plato's accounts, his "thought systematically denigrates nature in the same way that it systematically denigrates women [...]" (Plumwood 1993: 86).

Rationalization is also employed to justify the privileged colonial position. A classic example of rationalization is the Aristotelian and Christian notions of a just war, a war of superior against inferiors which, many scholars argue, was the philosophical foundation of European conquest and subjugation of indigenous peoples (Hanke 1959; Wilmer 1993; Williams 1990).

Indigenous peoples and their worldviews, values, histories and conceptions of knowledge have been systematically excluded from western epistemologies and intellectual inquiries. Today, the legacy of this exclusion is reflected in views according to which indigenous theoretical and methodological practices are considered either a (unnecessary) supplement or having value only if they have something to offer to the western discourse. Although we now have Indigenous Studies programs at many universities, they still occupy a marginal position and remain in 'academic reservations'. As long as indigenous epistemologies are not recognized alongside with Western, mainstream or dominant epistemic conventions, indigenous scholars and their research will remain in a marginal, colonial position within intellectual inquiry.

In the process of dismantling the hegemony of Eurocentric intellectual and philosophical conventions and the privileging of western systems of knowledge, indigenous epistemologies have an important role of raising questions of relevant research regarding indigenous communities and contribute to our understanding of different ways of knowing and theorizing. This does not mean, however, a

mere ‘translation’ of indigenous epistemologies into the language of western theories, but it requires that we consider and take seriously understandings and theorizing of the world by indigenous societies which may not necessarily be articulated in ways or forms that are conventionally considered ‘theory’ or ‘philosophy’.

In other words, there is a need to see beyond Eurocentric structures and conventions of knowledge and put previous dualistic thinking aside that allows scholars and others to perceive indigenous societies and their practices only in ethnographic or folkloric terms. In this way, it is possible to grasp the multiple roots of philosophy and expand the scope of philosophical inquiry. Andrea Nye suggests that what characterizes philosophy throughout history is its continual self-questioning and self-renewal. She points out:

Often, self-questioning and redefinition have come from outside what is considered philosophy proper. ... The very insistence on what is ‘real’ or ‘hardcore’ philosophy against what is ‘only’ poetry, sociology, personal memoir, or politics itself renews the possibility of yet another philosophical reconstitution (Nye 2000: 102).

Feminist critiques of philosophy share many similarities with reconsiderations of hierarchies of knowledge by indigenous scholars. Feminist philosophers have called critical attention to several basic assumptions of mainstream epistemologies constructed as neutral and value-free but which, after a closer scrutiny, turn out to be gendered as male. These presuppositions include:

(1) That the subject of knowledge is an individual who is essentially identical to and substitutable with other individuals; (2) that the object of knowledge is a natural object known by propositional knowledge, expressed in the form of S-knows-that-p; (3) that objective knowledge is impartial and value free (Schott 2003: 56).

Like feminist philosophy, indigenous philosophies expose often the narrow conceptions of reason and rationality and emphasize their relation to social, cultural, and historical frameworks. Both indigenous and feminist epistemologies also ask questions of legitimacy: Whose knowledge is validated and on what grounds? Who gains and who loses when knowledge is validated and structured in certain ways?

Further, in a similar fashion to feminist epistemologies, indigenous epistemologies consider the knower as situated in his or her community and knowledge as rooted in and stemming from a specific location. Indigenous epistemologies recognize the significance of other than rational modes of knowing. Experience is also considered central in the process of producing and reproducing knowledge. As feminist epistemologies have argued, “objectivity is not jeopardized but strengthened by the contextualization of the practices of knowledge and its norms of justification” (Schott 2003: 56). It is also necessary to differentiate between having a system of knowledge rooted in experience and practice that has been accumulated over generations and describing one’s own experiences or limiting one’s inquiry to personal experience and expressive self-referentiality. Indigenous epistemologies are not based on an experience of one

individual, but on what Marie Battiste calls 'a collective cognitive experience', established by combining personal experiences and sharing views within a community (Battiste 1996).

In other words, the intergenerational accumulation and communication of knowledge is central in indigenous epistemologies. Within an indigenous system of knowledge, the final decision of the validity and usefulness of knowledge is made jointly based on varied experiences of the community members. Indigenous knowledge is thus constituted in response to past circumstances and shared with other members of the community through language, oral tradition and ceremonies.

2. Indigenous Philosophies

If we look at the roots of the word 'philosophy', we find out that it translates from the ancient Greek as 'love of wisdom', thus implying a call for knowledge and questioning, learning and teaching. Philosophers examine ideas such as existence, ethics, truth and the nature of things (especially religion and science) – in general, they are curious about the world and human existence in it. The call for knowledge and understanding or learning and teaching are definitely not alien to indigenous peoples and although they may not have called these activities philosophy, they certainly have practiced them (and continue to practice) in many ways. This is echoed, for example, by the UN Special Rapporteur Erica-Irene Daes who asserts: "heritage of an indigenous people is not merely a collection of objects, stories and ceremonies, but a complete knowledge system with its own concepts of epistemology, philosophy, and scientific and logical validity" (Daes 1994: para. 8). Indigenous languages may have not conceptualized generalized and abstract categories such as philosophy. This, however, does not mean that indigenous cultures have not been capable of philosophical thought and analysis (Krupat 1996: 17)

Indigenous thought and philosophies continue to be generally more holistic than Western philosophical conventions. Gregory Cajete notes that indigenous philosophy "is not based on rational thought alone but incorporates to the fullest degree all aspects of interactions of 'human in and of nature'" (Cajete 2000: 64). Indigenous philosophies consist of the lived practices and accompanied systems of values and perceptions of the world. Importantly, indigenous philosophies are particularly concerned of the human relationship *with* the world. As Tim Ingold suggests, in indigenous thought "the world is not an external domain of objects that I look *at*, or do things *to*, but is rather going on, or undergoing continuous generation, with me and around me" (Ingold 2000: 108). The kinship and interdependence with the world and all life forms is reflected in a common expression among North American indigenous peoples, that of 'all my relations'. Vine Deloria, Jr. argues that the phrase "describes the epistemology of the Indian worldview, providing the methodological basis for the gathering of information about the world" (Deloria 1999: 52).

In this chapter, I suggest that the notion of the gift is one of the structuring principles of many indigenous peoples' philosophies. The understanding of the world which foregrounds human relationship

with the natural environment, common to many indigenous peoples, is manifested by the gift, whether give-back ceremonies and rituals or individual gifts given to the land as a recognition of its abundance and reinforcement of these relationships. While these gift practices are often very different from one society and culture to another, the purpose of giving is usually alike: to acknowledge and renew the sense of kinship and coexistence with the world. There is also a difference between interpersonal gift practices and relations on the one hand and the giving to the land. My focus is on the latter as I believe it better reflects the ethos of indigenous worldviews – its primary values and conception of the place of human beings in the social and cosmic order – whereas the former (e.g., Sami *verdde* relations¹) has more to do with the political economy of the gift in traditional and contemporary societies. Although my examples of gift-oriented indigenous worldviews are limited here to the Sami people, many of the same values and principles can be found in other indigenous cultures as well.

3. Indigenous Peoples

According to estimates, there are 300 to 500 indigenous people in more than 70 countries on every continent. They represent over 5,000 languages and cultures, many of which are facing serious threats to their existence. ‘Indigenous peoples’ is generally considered to refer to distinct groups who are the living descendants of pre-conquest or pre-occupation inhabitants of lands and territories currently dominated and controlled by others. Not merely ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples remain in a colonial situation within or across the borders of nation-states that have not recognized their self-determination or sovereignty – a right which in international law belongs to ‘all peoples’ (see Anaya 1996).

The definition articulated in the Martinez Cobo study on indigenous populations (1983) emphasizes four main characteristics of indigenous peoples: the historical continuity of their societies on territories they have occupied and inhabited for generations, their distinctiveness from ‘mainstream’ or dominant societies, their current non-dominant status in relation to larger society and their desire and willingness to defend, protect, advance and pass on their identities, languages, cultural and social traditions, conventions and philosophies.² What is more, the concept of indigeneity (as it is used by indigenous people) is grounded on and inseparable from the contemporary politics and ramifications of the history of colonization.

The Sami are the indigenous people of Sápmi (Samiland), an area that spans from central Norway and Sweden through northern Finland to the Kola Peninsula of Russia.³ A rough estimate of the Sami population is between 75,000 to 100,000, the majority of whom are in Norway, approximately 45,000. There are about 20,000 Sami in Sweden, 8,000 in Finland, and 2,000 in Russia. Faced with similar colonial practices of assimilation, expropriation of territories and eradication of languages and cultures as other indigenous peoples worldwide, the Sami have been engaged, particularly since the late 1960s, in a process of reclaiming their self-determination and rights to

land, language and cultural heritage (see e.g., Gaski 1997; Helander and Kailo 1998; Lehtola 2002).

4. The Gift as Philosophy

The classic gift theories tend to view the gift as a mode of exchange imbued with obligations, counter-gifts, pay-backs, debts, forced reciprocity and other mandatory acts. These considerations are often grounded on an assumption according to which exchange is the primary structuring principle of society. This view is articulated particularly by Claude Lévi-Strauss for whom all societies are founded on various forms – kinship, economy, culture – of exchange.

The exchange framework also characterizes Marcel Mauss's influential essay on the gift (*Essai sur le don, forme archaïque de l'échange*, first published in 1924). His central thesis was that the gift is constituted by three obligations: giving, receiving and paying back. Existing within distinctive social rules, the gift is both constrained and interested even if it may first appear voluntary and disinterested. Unlike many other classic gift theories, however, Mauss's analysis was relatively free of the economic bias that sees the gift through the lens of mercantile interaction (cf. Godbout 1998).

Some feminist philosophers have questioned the conventional view of the gift as a form of exchange. Genevieve Vaughan (1997) suggests that there are two concurrent paradigms in contemporary society, those of the gift and exchange. The gift paradigm is characterized by giving in order to sustain and satisfy the needs of others. It is other-oriented whereas exchange, a constrained double gift, is characterized by self-interest: "The receiver is expected to give back to the giver an equivalent of what she has received" (Vaughan 1997: 49). Exchange is the basis of the patriarchal capitalist economy that seeks to maximize the profit by commodification and exploitation of the gifts of nature, women and other subordinate groups. The gift economy offers a viable alternative to the current economic model characterized by values of domination, individualism and competition (Vaughan 2004: 17).⁴

I argue that as a central principle of many indigenous philosophies, the gift exceeds the realms of both economy and exchange. The gift is a reflection of a particular worldview characterized by a perception of the natural environment as a living entity which gives its gifts and abundance to people if it is treated with respect and gratitude (i.e., if certain responsibilities are observed). Central to this perception is that the world as a whole is constituted of an infinite web of relationships extended to and incorporated into the entire social condition of the individual. Social ties apply to everybody and everything, including the land. People are related to their physical and natural surroundings through genealogies, oral tradition and their personal and collective experiences pertaining to certain locations. Interrelatedness is also reflected in many indigenous systems of knowledge. These systems are often explained in terms of relations and arranged in a circular format consisting mostly or solely of sets of relationships seeking to explain phenomena.

The gift is the means by which the social order of indigenous societies is renewed and secured. The gift is the manifestation of reciprocity with the natural environment, reflecting the bond of dependence and respect toward the natural world. From this bond, certain responsibilities emerge. These responsibilities are observed through different ceremonies (e.g., giving to *sieidis*, the potlatch) and verbal and physical gestures of gratitude (e.g., the Iroquois Thanksgiving address). In this system, one does not give primarily in order to receive but to ensure the balance of the world on which the wellbeing of the entire social order is contingent. Thanks are given in the form of gifts to the guardians of the land that sustain human beings but the gifts are also given for a continued goodwill. Because, according to this worldview, human beings represent only one aspect of the creation, their view of the world is marked by a clear sense of responsibility toward other aspects with which the socio-cosmic order is shared and inhabited.

In order to discern the unique character of the gift, we need to look beyond the functions of the gift (cf. Godbout 1998: 129). The gift represents a system of values different from those of economic exchange, foregrounding the values of interdependence, reciprocity and responsibility toward others. This is not romanticization: the relationships indigenous peoples have forged with their environments for centuries are a consequence of the living off the land and the dependency on its abundance. They are a result of a relatively straightforward understanding that the well-being of land is also the well-being of human beings. It is also important to distinguish between worldviews or philosophies and individual behavior. Elaborating indigenous worldviews and philosophical traditions does not suggest that these arguments and positions apply to every single indigenous individual in the world.

It is obvious that the long period of domination by various forms of colonial practices has eroded and changed indigenous philosophies and estranged many contemporary indigenous people from them. The Sami, for example, have experienced a very subtle colonial process which has resulted in a situation where only traces of the Sami philosophy are left, as many Sami have internalized and adapted to 'modern consciousness'. Quite naturally, we need to bear in mind that to discuss the Sami philosophy – a set of values, system of knowledge and worldview deriving from a distinct Sami understanding and interpretation of the world and its phenomena – does not imply its immutability throughout time.

Indigenous philosophies are not a question of mere 'cultural difference', nor does it mean that considering implies internally homogenous cultural entities congruent with certain groups. Indigenous philosophies refer to certain ways of knowing and understanding of the world which have been shaped and developed in the course of history by various indigenous peoples, including the Sami. This understanding has resulted in certain values, ethics, codes of behavior and practices of customary law that has guided individual Sami and the community as a whole in their lives and interactions with others as well as with the rest of the world. These values, ethics and

practices form not only the foundation of Sami culture, but also an epistemology and a philosophy that continues to guide at least some Sami in some circumstances today.

To discuss Sami philosophy, then, is to reclaim Sami epistemological and philosophical histories and practices for contemporary contexts where the production of knowledge and reproduction of society take place. It is to decolonize structures and discourses that efface and deny the existence of these epistemological and philosophical conventions. This necessarily includes taking the historical context and the relations of power into account. There is indeed a need to address the epistemic displacement of the Sami and become more aware of the subtle forms of colonization that have become internalized during the hundreds of years of colonization and today affect much of our basic assumptions and thinking. Lacking a critique of discursive practices of colonialism in particular, the dominant Sami discourse has not paid adequate attention to the gradual erasure of the Sami philosophy of the gift – the deeper structures such as values, worldviews, underlying assumptions and principles. As Sami scholars we have to both enter and know the struggles within a discourse and of multiple discourses in order to be able to examine critically the profound effects of colonial processes on us and our society.

5. Sami Philosophy of the Gift

Like many other indigenous worldviews, the traditional Sami perception of the world postulates that the land is a physical and spiritual entity of which humans are just one aspect. The relationship with the land is maintained by collective and individual rituals in which the gift and giving back are integral. The intimacy and interrelatedness is reflected in the way of communicating with various aspects of the land which often are addressed directly as relatives. For example, in the Sami language words for 'earth' and 'mother' derive from the same root (*eanan* and *eadni* respectively). The close connection to the natural realm is evident also in the permeable and indeterminate boundaries between the human and natural worlds. Skilled individuals can assume the form of an animal when needed and there are also stories about women marrying an animal (see e.g., Porsanger 2004).

The porosity of the boundary between the human and the non-human is sometimes seen as a reflection of shamanistic worldviews. In traditional Sami society, particularly *noaidis* – the spiritual leaders, healers and visionaries – were in contact with the spirit world where they traveled usually in an animal form. In a worldview in which survival and thus knowledge depend on the intimate connection with the world, this kind of transformation is not considered supernatural but rather, a normal part of life. An important part of this knowing is the awareness of one's responsibilities and norms of behavior. As "[e]very geographical place was considered an entity in which the physical dimension was in balance with the spiritual one, [b]oth aspects needed to be taken into consideration when making a living"

(Porsanger 2004: 153). The important role of gifts in maintaining this balance is echoed in a poem by Nils-Aslak Valkeapää:

We still did not erect our *lávvu* without the spirits' permission
 moved *lávvu* if it chanced to be placed on a trail
 And when we left our winter camp
 we apologized if we had acted wrong
 and thanked the camp because it had fed us and our reindeer
 And when came to the summer camp
 some of us dressed in red *gáktis*
 adorned ourselves
 offered a libation as well to your light beautiful camp
 and asked it to open its embrace for protection once again
 (Valkeapää 1994: n.p.)

Traditionally, one of the most important ways to maintain relations and the socio-cosmic order has been the practice of honoring various *sieidis* with gifts. *Sieidis* are sites of thanking for the abundance of the land and giving back to various spirits that guard certain activities or spheres of life. Commonly they are rocks in their natural locations which sometimes are of unusual shape and color. Some *sieidis* were of wood, whether trees with the lowest branches removed, carved stumps or fallen trunks. The common location for *sieidis* are in the vicinity of sacred places, camp grounds or fishing and hunting sites. Particularly in the mountains, *sieidis* have also functioned as natural landmarks.

For the Sami, *sieidis* are considered alive although many ethnographers have interpreted them merely representing inert stones and structures. If treated appropriately, *sieidis* give fish, deer and other game, sometimes abundantly. Some *sieidis* also look after the reindeer. The abundance of the land and its gifts were recognized by giving the *sieidi* either a share of the catch, fish heads, antlers and bones or metal objects. Some *sieidis* were greased with fish oil or given an entire reindeer. *Sieidis* were regularly consulted and asked for advice before embarking on a hunting or fishing trip. They were also asked for health, safe travel and overall well-being (Itkonen 1948: 316).

Sieidis required regular attention and if neglected, the consequences could be drastic: a loss of subsistence luck, illness or at worst, death. Reindeer herding Sami held *sieidi* give back ceremonies particularly in the fall to thank for the summer and reindeer luck, and in the spring to ask for a successful calving season and a good summer. If the *sieidi* did not respond and fulfill its responsibilities in giving abundance, it was either abandoned or chastised. The gifts were taken away if the family or community had to move due to poor fishing or hunting. Sometimes a *sieidi* was chastised by chipping a sliver off from it and ceasing to give it gifts (Itkonen 1948: 318-19). Sami reindeer herder Johan Turi describes the nature of the *sieidi* in the early twentieth century as follows:

Some *sieidis* were satisfied if they received antlers, and others were content with all the bones, which meant every single bone, even the most wee ones. Fish *sieidi* did not demand less than a half of the catch but then it directed to

the nets as much fish as people could collect. Some *sieidis* wanted a whole reindeer which needed to be embellished with all kinds of decorations, cloth, threads, silver and gold (Turi 1987: 108, my translation).

It is interesting in Turi's description that the gift reindeer also had to be decorated. As Kira Van Deusen suggests, for some indigenous peoples such as those in the Amur region in Siberia, decoration and more broadly, aesthetics has its special function of protecting from bad spirits (Van Deusen 2001).

Particularly in ethnographic literature, *sieidi* gifts are almost invariably referred to as 'sacrifice' and usually defined as a gift exchange with gods and nature. As a forfeiture of something for the sake of receiving something else, sacrifice is not voluntary but given under certain pressures or conditions. Jacques Derrida notes:

Sacrifice will always be distinguished from the pure gift (if there is any). The sacrifice proposes an offering but only in the form of a destruction against which it exchanges, hopes for, or counts on a benefit, namely, a surplus-value or at least an amortization, a protection, and a security (Derrida 1992: 137).⁵

I argue that contrary to conventional interpretations, giving to *sieidi* cannot be completely understood through the concept of sacrifice. Even if *sieidi* gifts do have aspects of sacrifice, they are not and should not be regarded solely as such. They may have other dimensions that can be as significant – if not more – as the aspect of sacrifice. Bones are given back, the catch shared and reindeer given to the guardians and spirits of hunting, fishing and reindeer luck represented by *sieidi* sites as an expression of gratitude for their goodwill and for ensuring abundance also in the future. In this sense, giving to *sieidis* appears involuntary as it is done for the protection and security of both the individual and the community.

On the other hand, *sieidis* are considered an inseparable part of one's social order and thus it is an individual and collective responsibility to look after them. While it may appear that such a gift is an exchange and a mandatory forfeit (especially when interpreted from the framework of a foreign worldview), I suggest that it rather is a voluntary expression of a particular worldview that reflects the respect of and intimate relationship with the land. The Sami *sieidi* practices, like many other gift practices concretely contribute to the well-being of an individual and a community. They represent a relation and constant engagement with the living world and keep its abundance in motion with the help of gifts.

Further, the Sami gift philosophy is apparent in the central role of the female divinities in giving the gift of life (to both human beings and domestic animals, mainly reindeer) and their connection to the land. This has been largely ignored in the analyses of Sami cosmology, reflecting patriarchal biases of ethnography and anthropology that have focused on representations of cultural and spiritual spheres typically belonging to men (cf. Hirvonen 1996; Trinh 1989). The Sami deity Máttaráhkká ('Ancestral Mother') with her three daughters Sáráhkká, Juksáhkká and Uksáhkká may well, however, signify the very foundation in the Sami cosmic order. These

female deities of new life convey the soul of a child, create its body and also assist with menstruation, childbirth and protection of children (Ränk 1955). Máttaráhkká and her daughters thus personify the generative forces of the world: the procreation, giving birth and sustaining life.

Jacques Godbout and Alan Caillé suggest that fundamentally, “the gift is the condition *sine qua non* of all fertility”. According to them, “[i]n a world populated only by autonomous powers that cannot be subjugated, except perhaps by trickery or seduction, *nothing is produced, everything must be given*” (Godbout 1998: 133). Drawing a difference between production (of goods) and (giving) gifts and stressing the act of giving as a primary structuring principle are important but it might not be entirely correct, however, to suggest that nothing is produced in gift-oriented societies. Perhaps more correctly, there is a strong emphasis on the gift relations between various autonomous powers that include the natural world and on the recognition that *the abundance is given* if those relations in and with the world are nourished. Another neglected aspect in scholarly and other considerations is Máttaráhkká’s daughter Sáráhká’s role as a female creator of her own right. That her name originates from the Sami word ‘sáret’ meaning ‘to create’ remains obscured even in contemporary considerations of Sami cosmology and ontology, thus reflecting the continuance of patriarchal bias not only in research but also in society at large. Somewhat surprisingly, Lars Levi Laestadius (1800-1861), the founder of an evangelical, revivalist movement inside the Lutheran Church called Laestadianism,⁷ has recognized the significance of these female deities, noting that “because Akkas played a central role in Sami mythology, I guess I have to mention examples of sacrifices given to them” (Laestadius 1994: 52). He quotes Jessen and writes that...

...while eating, these Akkas were honored by water, wine and particularly by special porridge. Of these Akkas [...] Sáráhká, however, was the most important. Her place was by the fire and she was given especially drinks. Sami turned to her often in all of their activities. She was also given sacrifices without asking advice from the drum. [...] Women in labors drank Sáráhká’s wine before giving birth and ate her porridge with other women; after the birth some arranged a feast in Sáráhká’s honor (Jessen, cited in Laestadius 1994: 53, my translation).

As elsewhere, missionary work was the central means of the colonization of the Sami. The first churches in Samiland were built in the eleventh century although the influence of Christianity was not significant until the 17th century. With the aid of determined missionaries, Christianity gradually started to gain more foothold in the Sami territory and eroded the land-based spirituality by banning shamanistic ceremonies, executing the *noaidis*, burning and destroying the Sami drums and outlawing yoiking (*juoigan*), the Sami form of singing, chanting and communicating.

Christianity has also had a negative influence on general attitudes and perceptions of women in Sami society that continue to exist today. Since the mid-1800s, particularly Laestadianism has had a

strong effect in Sami society. It has introduced certain concepts of female piety and humility in addition to common Christian dualistic notions of women as either good or evil.⁷ Christian religion and ideology has introduced a hierarchical understanding between genders, prioritizing men and resulting in low self-esteem of many Sami women (Juuso 1998; Lukkari 1998; Paltto 1998). This might also explain the relegation of Sami female deities to lesser significance within Sami society.

Emphasizing the life-giving values enables the reconnection with the generative, nurturing forces embodied in the Sami female guardian spirits. This, in turn, may facilitate healing from cultural alienation that is often manifested in forms of violence inflicted to other individuals or to oneself. Also in contemporary Sami society, there is a need to reclaim woman-positive perspectives and role models and critically rethink 'traditions' in ways that address the imbalance of patriarchal representations and asymmetrical gender relations (Eikjok 2000; Kuokkanen 2004). The revalorizing of the Sami female divinities and their autonomous, powerful character in the Sami cosmology provides representations of the feminine that can contribute to undermine prevailing dualisms of gendered power relations in contemporary Sami society.

In the "atmosphere of gift" (Mauss 1990: 65), recognizing the gifts of the land and female spirits by giving back and sharing establishes a specific form of circulation. I call this gift reciprocity which has radically different ethos compared to mercantile reciprocity characterized by "the need to settle one's debts and to put an end to all debt" (Godbout 1998: 133). In gift reciprocity and mutuality, the ultimate goal is to secure the physical, social and spiritual well-being of the individual, community and the entire social order. The responsibility toward the 'other' that is embedded in the *sieidi* giving, for example, is mutual and is different from pure self-interest only interested in accumulation. Rather than accumulating wealth, the goal of gift reciprocity is to recognize and sustain the relationships in and with the world. The land itself as well as the spirits and guardians inhabiting and looking after it are considered equals that need to be respected and honored rather than endlessly exploited.

For some, however, indigenous people's gift practices with the nature may present nothing more than examples of 'primitive' or 'archaic' religions. To reduce the worldviews of the gift to mere obligatory practices of worshipping spirits of nature, however, is a gross misinterpretation of indigenous peoples' philosophies. I also argue that it is misleading to call the gift relations with the land a 'religion'. While practices of giving back to the land may have religious dimensions, they are better understood as specific ways of knowing, relating to, and being in the world. As the term 'religion' is closely associated with the institutionalized, monotheistic world religions, it carries with it understandings and connotations that may distort interpretations of indigenous peoples' practices and perceptions of the world. Instead of focusing on a transcendental search for a unity with God, indigenous peoples' spirituality is characterized by

immanence. It permeates every aspect of daily life and existence. As Deloria puts it:

Formulas of faith were anathema to Indian societies. Debate over implications of the existence of God and creation of subtleties related to deity were unknown. The substantial doctrines developed by Christian theologians to explain, define, and control deity were never contemplated in Indian religious life. Religion was an undefined sphere of influence in tribal society (Deloria 1970: 106).

Deloria's analysis describes the context of traditional Sami society fairly well. Today, many Sami (like many other indigenous people) are devoted Christians which, however, does not mean that the Sami land-based worldview no longer exists. Although the several centuries' long influence of Christianity has severely eroded the Sami gift-giving to and sharing with the land by banning it as a pagan form of devil worshipping, there is a relatively large body of evidence that the practice of *sieidi* gifting is still practiced (see e.g., Kjellström 1987; also Juuso 1998). The continued existence of the Sami worldview even among some elderly Sami who identify with Christianity became also apparent in a recent case of Suttésája, a sacred site threatened to be turned into a water bottling plant (see Kuokkanen and Riihijärvi 2005).

Moreover, instead of talking of 'archaic societies',⁸ we need to look at the ways in which gift philosophies continue to characterize indigenous people's practices and to inform discursive practices in contemporary contexts (cf. Kuokkanen 2005). Among other things, the focus on archaic aspects leads to perpetuating both implicit and explicit assumptions of 'frozen' cultures and may reinforce false 'tradition vs. contemporary' binaries. As Hugh Brody reminds us, "[w]e are all contemporaries, whatever lands we live on and whatever heritage we rely on to do so. All human beings have been evolving for the same length of time" (Brody 2000: 7).

Most considerations of the gift that address the aspect of giving to the natural world at all only give meager attention to it. They are often imbued with assumptions of primitiveness, strangeness and antiquity. One of the reasons many scholars do not give non-Western systems of thought the serious and rigorous attention they do to Western counterparts is the common belief and insistence

that non-Western peoples represent an earlier stage of their own cultural evolution – often that tribal cultures represent failed efforts to understand the natural world.... Non-Western knowledge is believed to originate from primitive efforts to explain the mysterious universe. In this view, the alleged failure of primitive/tribal man [sic] to control nature mechanically is evidence of his ignorance and his inability to conceive of abstract general principles and concepts (Deloria 1996: 37).

One scholarly myth that has contributed to the evolutionary notion of the archaic gift is the argument first put forward by Mauss that the gift represents "a pre-market social system". There is, however, ample ethnographic evidence that the gift has co-existed with various types of market in 'traditional' societies, including those

practicing the 'archetypal' gift practices like the *kula* (in Trobriand Island, Papua New Guinea) and the *potlatch* (in the North West Coast of North America). Moreover, as Lewis Hyde observes, in traditional societies "[t]here is trade, but the objects traded are not commodities" (Hyde 1983: 15). Also the Sami have held and gathered to markets, *márkan*, that besides trading goods, had a very important social function in people's annual cycles. These *márkans* were and are being held in specific times in certain towns close to trading routes for hundreds of years, the oldest on-going gathering being the Johkamohki (Jokkmokk) *márkan*, first held in the 16th century (Pulk 2005).

Further, classic gift theories are usually characterized by serious misinterpretations simply because the analysis is informed by the paradigms and thought of modernity that are incapable of adequately grasping the deeper meanings of gift giving to the land. Instead of viewing gift giving to gods and nature as a reflection of indigenous worldviews founded on active recognition of kinship relations that extend beyond the human realm, Mauss explains it as a "theory of sacrifice" in which people have – they *must* make – exchange contracts with the spirits of the dead and the gods who are the real owners of the world's wealth. Similarly, Laestadius utterly fails in considering the reasons for the ability of Sami *noaidis* to get in contact with the spirit world. Rather than seeing it as a characteristic of a worldview where detailed knowledge of and an intimate connection with the world is necessary for survival, he suggests the opposite; that it is the 'remoteness and other emptiness' that makes the 'uncivilized' person's imagination turn to the outside world (whereas a thinker or a poet is able to turn their imagination inward) (Laestadius 1994: 27-28). Embedded in the worldview of modernity that considers the natural world 'dead' and 'void,' Laestadius is not able to see that it is the very reverse of loneliness – the closeness with the natural environment and recognizing the importance of knowing (rather than radically altering) the environment that allows individuals to remain 'tuned in'. His interpretation is informed by a deficit model that has a tendency to dismiss spiritual phenomena as 'nothing but' a sign of mental instability and primitivity.

To conclude, I return to the question of why I have insisted that indigenous peoples' worldviews of the gift amount to philosophy. I have proposed that the gift constitutes a specific logic that is radically different from the logic of exchange. This logic foregrounds the inter-related character of the world and the active recognition of the gifts of the land. It is manifested through different practices of giving, sharing and acknowledging that range from individual acts in daily life to communal feasts and ceremonies held at special occasions. These gift practices are not mere 'mechanical interlockings of obligatory practices' as suggested by Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1997: 198) but are grounded on a specific philosophy – a system of values, knowledge and understanding of the world – that sustains the socio-cosmic order and balance necessary for the well-being of everybody and everything. The kinship with the world also forms the ethical basis of indigenous philosophies, articulating a set of principles (i.e., customary law)

according to which individuals, communities and societies were expected to conduct their lives (e.g., Borrows 2002; Deloria 1999; LaRocque 2001).

To consider indigenous gift paradigms as philosophies is also to call attention not only to biased interpretations of gift practices as 'archaic' or 'primitive' but to Eurocentric thinking according to which philosophy and philosophical thought is reserved only for certain peoples and traditions, while the rest of us can settle for mythology, folklore and (ethnic) cultures. What is more, Derrida contends that philosophy has never been tied to one single language, memory, place or people: "Under its Greek name and its European memory, it has always been bastard, hybrid, grafted, multilinear, and polyglot" (Derrida 2002: 10).

Discussing indigenous gift-oriented worldviews and the logic of the gift as philosophies may not be so much a matter of re-ethnicizing minds as an act of indigenous people reclaiming their systems of knowledge and rejecting categories and labels from outside.⁹ This and other forms of on-going endeavors of decolonizing knowledge and perceptions of the world also recognize the power of naming and the right to redefine concepts according to the needs and preferences of indigenous people themselves.

Concepts such as 'indigenous philosophy' or 'indigenous science' might not have always existed in indigenous languages but they are employed today, for instance, in order to make contributions of indigenous peoples more visible to mainstream society or to bridge understandings between indigenous and mainstream or Western systems of knowledge (cf. Colorado 1996).¹⁰ The gift of indigenous philosophies is not found only in the challenges it poses to conventional conceptualizations of philosophy, but perhaps even more importantly, in the alternative logic and vision it offers to today's global economic order and its values. Indigenous peoples are among those in the world who are most drastically affected by the extension of the global capitalist markets, ever-intensifying exploitation of natural resources (that usually are found in their traditional territories) and cheapening of labor, these destructive processes are radically limiting and decreasing the quality of life for others on the planet as well. Denouncing dependence from our natural environment and assuming that individual freedom is achieved by domination, as has been the tradition of mainstream Western scientific paradigm established by Bacon and his followers, is not only utopian but also very dangerous in its short-sightedness and arrogance. The evident destruction of ecosystems, biocultural diversity and livable environments is already resulting in escalating instability and violence in the world. Learning from indigenous gift philosophies, however, cannot be interpreted as a license to political or spiritual abuse of 'indigenous people as nature' or appropriation of their epistemologies.

Appropriating indigenous philosophies or spiritualities as models for sustainability raises several potential problems. First, discussing indigenous worldviews without recognizing the effects of various colonization processes ossifies them into the archaic past that also plagues some of the considerations of the gift. Second, there is a

danger of simplification of these values and practices once they are detached from their social, political and cultural contexts. Finally, failing to consider how indigenous philosophies were negated, suppressed and inferiorized by white settlers and denied by the establishment (and enforcement) of modern values denies the Western complicity in this process. A flight to the unproblematized and conflict-free past, the avoidance of present realities of all parties and the ways in which the injustices of the past continue in our present cannot offer solutions that are required for a sustainable change (or for that matter, a sustainable future). As Andy Smith suggests, many environmental and ecofeminist movements pay tribute to indigenous peoples and their land-centered ways of life, use them as inspirational symbols and quote them but decline to join the struggle for survival of these peoples or “do not adequately discuss the material conditions in which Indian people live, how these conditions affect non-Indians, and what strategies we can employ to stop the genocide of Indian people and end the destructive forms of resource development on Indian land” (Smith 1997: 30). To learn from indigenous peoples philosophies of the gift necessitates, first and foremost, practicing and engaging with the very principles of the gift – establishing and sustaining continuous relationships for the well-being of all.

Notes

1. *Verddevuohta* refers to relations between reindeer herding and sedentary Sami families based on mutual friendship and trading of goods of their specific livelihood.
2. Another working definition commonly referred to is found in the International Labors Organization's Convention 169 (1989).
3. Previously called as the Lapps or Laplanders by outsiders, the Sami have claimed their right for their own collective term deriving from their own languages (*sápmela^a* in Northern Sami). Moreover, the terms ‘Lapp’ or ‘Laplander’ is usually considered negative and derogative.
4. For an extensive analysis of the gift economy as a practice of other-orientation based on the principle and values of mothering, see (Vaughan 1997; 2002; 2004). The gift economy and paradigm is further elaborated by the International Feminist Network for the Gift Economy established in 2001.
5. Derrida's analysis of the gift is too extensive and complex to delve further in this context. I have engaged with his considerations in (Kuokkanen 2004).
6. Laestadius was of South Sami ancestry and he traveled across Samiland preaching and delivering his healing sermons, which partly drew upon Sami culture and oral traditions. Laestadianism has had a particularly strong effect in Sami society. It has introduced certain concepts of female piety and humility in addition to common Christian dualistic notions of women as either good or evil. A central characteristic of the Laestadian faith is the confession of sins followed by absolution ‘in the name and blood of Jesus’. Laestadianism requires an abstinence from alcohol and disapproval of contraception.
7. Such perceptions of women are evident, for example, in some of the works of Sami writers (e.g., Guttorm 1998). In her collection of short stories *Guovtteoaivat nisu* (“Two-Headed Woman”), Kirsti Paltto (Paltto 1989) analyzes common

images and representations of Sami women in a society strongly influenced by Christianity (see Poikajärvi 1996).

8. Various gift practices related to nature are often assigned to belonging only to traditional indigenous societies (or what anthropologists in particular but also others are inclined to call 'archaic') and thus something that does not describe current realities of indigenous peoples. Even many scholars otherwise critical of the narrow interpretations of the gift as economic exchange refer to indigenous and other non-Western societies as 'archaic'.
9. Representatives of indigenous peoples have repeatedly pointed out that they are not ethnic minorities though they can be racialized and numerical minorities in certain contexts. James Anaya, for example, writes: "While rights of cultural integrity outside the specific context of indigenous peoples have been associated with 'minority rights', indigenous rights advocates have frequently rejected calling indigenous groups minorities in their attempts to establish indigenous people within a separate regime with greater legal entitlements" (Anaya 1996: 99).
10. Spivak, for instance, talks about the 'gift discourses of ethnophilosophies' (Spivak 1999: 19).

MIDDLE EAST

We should not be ashamed of recognizing the truth and assimilating it from whatever source it may reach us, even though it may come from earlier generations and foreign people. For him who seeks truth, there is nothing of more value than truth itself. It never cheapens or abases him who searches for it, but ennobles and honors him.

Abu Yusuf al-Kindi (801-873 A.C.)

15. Encountering Modernity: An Islamic Perspective

Zain Imtiaz Ali

Abstract: I aim to present three motifs which capture Muslim reactions to modernity. The first motif, termed the Islamicisation motif describes an attitude which views modernity as the alienating ‘other’. The basis of this opposition lies in the perceived distinction between the Islamic *Weltanschauung*, which is God given, and modernity which is man-made. The second motif, termed the existentialist motif declares the death of Islamic traditionalism. Proponents of this motif argue that tradition appears indifferent, and incapacitated by the existential concerns arising from modernity. The third motif, termed the evaluative motif seeks to re-think Islam within the context of modernity. I argue that the encounter between Islam and modernity highlights the need for a pluralistic ethnophilosophy: where ethnophilosophy represents a philosophy which is primarily responsive to people and tradition. **Key Words:** Islam, Islamicization, modernity, ethnophilosophy, folkphilosophy.

1. Introduction

My evaluation of Muslim reactions to Modernity draws inspiration from Fidelis Okafor’s paper, entitled “In Defense of Afro-Japanese Ethnophilosophy”. The notion of ethnophilosophy is understood by Okafor as a process that is...

...essentially speculative. Its object of inquiry is not the universals, however, but the reasoning of thinking that underlie the existential outlook and the way of life of a particular people as a cultural group. It begins as an inquiry where the anthropologist end, so far as the fact of the culture are concerned. The reasons behind the facts are the basic concern of ethnophilosophy. These reasons are obtained by means of philosophical reflection and deductive ratiocination (1997: 365).

For the purposes of my project I will term Okafor’s account of ethnophilosophy as being the ‘received’ view. In light of the received view of ethnophilosophy, my project is divided into four overall parts: Section A aims to engage in an anthropological survey of how Muslims have reacted to the issue of modernity; sections B and C will be devoted to evaluating the anthropological survey; and in Section D I will attempt to reformulated ethnophilosophy as a pluralistic philosophy. My project, however requires two preliminary clarifica-

tions: the first, is the concern that ethnophilosophy is at best a pseudo-philosophy “mainly because it is reconstructive and apologetic of the traditional worldview” (Okafor 1997: 370). Ethnophilosophy, it is claimed, has an a priori bias in favor of tradition, and therefore incapable of critical (i.e. philosophical) self-reflection. This critique is misplaced for two main reasons: if we adopt Okafor’s notion of ethnophilosophy as a working definition, then tradition represents a horizon in which philosophical analysis may be carried out. Consequently, our philosophical investigations are contextualized within tradition, as opposed to predetermined by tradition. An added weakness of the critique is its uncharitable, even dogmatic attitude toward tradition. The critique assumes tradition as being contrary to the project of philosophy (i.e., seek truth and avoid error). The problem with this line of thought is that it rules out tradition a priori, as a source of truth, and this seems, at best, question begging.

We may, however adopt an attitude of precaution, and act to guard ethnophilosophy from an undue bias in favor of tradition. We may do this by guarding ourselves against, what I term the Traditionalist fallacy.¹ This fallacy involves drawing a conclusion about how things *ought to be* based solely on information about how things *are in tradition*. For example, tradition *x* specifies that an enemy who is killed in battle must also be eaten; however, it would erroneous to argue that in virtue of this tradition, members of tradition *x* ought to continue with the practice of cannibalism. With this consideration in mind, I now turn to the encounter between Islam and Modernity.

2. Reactions to Modernity

The primary challenge I face in this paper is how best to define, or understand modernity. The first anthropological trend I identify, which is termed the Islamicization motif regards modernity as a threat and a danger. Proponents of this motif regard modernity as a vehicle of western values that alienate Muslims from the tradition of Islam. The second motif, the existentialist motif views modernity with great hope. Proponents of the existentialist motif view Islam as being a tradition which has lost its spirit of virtue and justice. Accordingly, modernity represents a new horizon whereby humanity may rekindle its desire for a just world. The third motif which I term the Evaluative motif, views modernity as a catalyst for a process of critical self-reflection. Those who endorse the Evaluative motif argue that acts of evil committed in the name of Islam, and the philosophical stagnation of the Muslim world, suggest the need for an intellectual and moral reformation. On the whole, the motifs reveal a multifaceted understanding of modernity. Consequently, my project will not directly address ontological status of modernity. The survey to follow will, however reveal the diverse, and at times competing notions of Islam.

2.1. The Islamicization Motif

The Islamicization motif regards the Muslim community, or *Ummah*, as being in a state of crisis. The crisis, it is claimed, manifests itself as two general symptoms: first, the weakness of the *Ummah* in terms of economic, intellectual and military strength; and second, the

unchecked intellectual, moral and military colonization by the ‘West’. As for the underlying cause of the crisis, proponents of this motif point to the alienation of the *Ummah* from ‘true’ Islamic values. Thus, the solution offered involves the *Ummah* returning once again to its ‘true’ Islamic roots. Proponents of this motif construe modernity as being synonymous with the ‘West’. As a result, it is the secular ideology which underpins the ‘West’ that is seen as cause for concern. In broader terms, secularism is seen as a force which will de-Islamicize the *Ummah*. The Pakistani based Islamic revivalist, Abu Ala Maududi observes:

When our new generation completed their studies in western-oriented educational institutions they came out fully trained and groomed in the western way of thinking and with their minds totally changed. Their hearts were no doubt Muslim, but their minds had turned secular. They lived among Muslims, had dealings with the Muslims...But all their faculties of thinking, understanding and opinion-forming had turned Western, having nothing to do with Islamic values and Muslim mannerisms...How could the plain truth of Islam adjust so as to fit into the crooked frame of their west-oriented mind? (Maududi 2000: 209)

Modernity is then seen as a vehicle for secularism which serves to undermine the Divine, hence depriving Islam of its foundations. The motivation driving this motif is the view that Islam is God-given and not a mere human construct. Accordingly, any view which regards human norms as being equal to, or above that, of Divine command is opposed to Islam and contrary to the will of God. As Sayyid Qutb notes:

This religion [Islam] is really a universal declaration of the freedom of man from servitude to other men and from servitude to his own desires, which is also a form of human servitude... This declaration means that the usurped authority of God be returned to Him and the usurpers be thrown out – those who by themselves devise laws for others to follow, thus elevating themselves to the status of lords and reducing others to the status of slaves. In short, to proclaim the authority and sovereignty of God means to eliminate all human kingship and to announce the rule of the Sustainer of the universe over the entire earth (Qutb 1981: 57-58).

As a result, the ‘West’ who embraced modernity and its secular outlook is perceived as the unholy other, which grants humanity independence from the Divine. The secular nature of modernity represents a threat in its ability to alienate the *Ummah* from ‘true’ Islam. There has also emerged a counter-strategy that aims to Islamicize aspects of modernity. Commenting on Islamicizing the sciences – arguably a corner stone of modernity – Taha Jabir al’Alwani, former president of the International Institute of Islamic Thought, suggests:

The time has come to do away with the myth that science is essentially secular. In particular, when considering the astounding findings in physics concerning the influence of the observer on the events, findings which force us to rethink our concepts of objectivity, we have every reason to suppose that the Muslim scientist who approaches his work from an Islamic point of view will indeed produce solutions with an Islamic tinge. More important, however, is the

perception that there is indeed a significant role for faith in science (Lodhi 1989: 7).²

To summarize, the Islamicization motif represents a tradition which sees itself in a crisis caused by an alienation from 'true' Islam. The crisis while not caused by modernity is seen to be intensified by its secular ideology. The motif also appears to be an evolving tradition, in which an attempt is being made to revive Islamic values, and to Islamicize those aspects of modernity which will contribute toward a flourishing *Ummah*.

2.2. The Existentialist Motif

A proponent of what I term the existentialist motif is the Noble prize winner for literature, Nagib Mahfouz; and it is in his novel entitled *The Children of Gebalawi* that we discover the existentialist critique of Islam. Mahfouz has as his focus the notion of social injustice and its reflexive relationship with faith. In the words of Rasheed El-Enany, *The Children of Gebalawi* captures...

...the history of man and religion from the beginning of time to the present day. God, Satan, Adam, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad are there, but without the halo of religious myth: the novel is an attempt at demythologizing humanity's religious quest (El-Enany 1993: 142).

Mahfouz recasts salvation history as resistance against social injustice. Thus, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are best understood as successive, socio-political movements against repression. The problem, however, is that social injustice continues to plague humanity. In fact, much injustice continues to be carried out in the name of God. As for Islam, *The Children of Gebalawi* has added poignancy, since Islam has traditionally viewed itself as a *Weltanschauung* that is full and final. The critique is captured as a dialogue between the characters Sadek, Hassan and Kassem (who symbolizes Muhammad the prophet of Islam):

Sadek murmured: 'God have mercy on our Dead'.
 Kassem said: 'God have mercy on both the living and the dead'.
 Hassan's sprits began to revive.
 'We shall win our victory soon, and the alley will say good-bye to the ages of blood and terror'.
 Kassem said: 'To hell with terror and blood' (Mahfouz 1981: 50-55).

If indeed the prophet Muhammad's aim was to do away with terror and injustice – as was Kaseem's – then we must consider his mission as being a failure. The persistence of terror and injustice testify to the inadequacy of Muslims and Islam. Moreover, as long as terror and injustice endure we must search once again for a deliverer. Consequently, Islam must relinquish its claim as being a full and final faith. The sentiments expressed by Mahfouz echo strongly Nietzsche's parable of the madman...

...who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: "I seek God! I seek God!" – As many of those who did not believe in God were standing around just then, he provoked much laughter. Has he got lost? asked one. Did he lose his way like a child? asked another. Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? emigrated? – Thus they yelled and laughed. The madman jumped into their midst and pierced them with his eyes. "Whither is God?" he cried. "I will tell you. We have killed him – you and I. All of us are his murderers (Nietzsche 1974: 181-182).

Nietzsche's madman highlights humanity's alienation from God. The modern man and woman now choose to live their lives independently of God; people need not turn to God for meaning or morality. Moses, Jesus and Muhammad are no longer icons of the eternal Divine, rather they are mere prophets of a lost deity. While the Mahfouzian critique of Islam is in a similar vein to the Nietzschean critique, its message has an added subtlety. The Muslim world, observes Mahfouz is very much immersed in its salvation history, and many Muslims proclaim Islam as being a complete and perfect faith. The values of traditional Islam, however, have failed to prevent terror and social injustice. The focus of the Mahfouzian critique is against the existential relevance and efficacy of Islam; the attachment to Islam has blinded Muslims to their existential situation. Consequently, the Muslim appears more intent on adhering to tradition rather than expressing the spirit of tradition, which for Mahfouz is resistance against terror and social injustice.

In relation to modernity, Mahfouz would advise Muslims to move beyond their tradition. Why? Well for the simple reason that terror and social injustice persist in Muslim and non-Muslim communities alike. Terror and injustice need to be confronted with a universal expression of resistance. The requirement for a collective response requires all to be equally inspired – not just the prophet. The challenge of modernity is for Islam to search out, and articulate a universal spirit of resistance.

2.3. The Evaluative Motif

The evaluative motif calls for a reformation of Islamic traditionalism. The two authors representative of this motif are: Khaled Abou El Fadl and Irshad Menj. While both authors are united in their call for a reformation, their projects are motivated in very different ways. El Fadl is concerned with the moral authority of Islam, he notes that Muslims who encounter extreme acts of ugliness, must confront the following quintessential questions:

Is this Islam? Can this be Islam? And, should this be Islam? It is simply too easy to shirk off responsibility for extreme acts of ugliness to Western imperialism, and colonialism, to engage in the morally evasive strategy of complaining about false universals, and to blame everything and everyone else, but refuse a confrontation with one's own conscience. With every major human tragedy committed in the name of Islam, I think that it is imperative for every Muslim to put aside, for a while, the various intellectual methods by which responsibility is projected, transferred, diluted, and distributed, and to engage in a conscientious pause. In this pause, a Muslim ought to critically evaluate the prevailing systems of belief within Islam, and reflect upon the ways that these systems of belief might have contributed to, legitimated, or in any way facilitated the tragedy. In my view, this is the only way for a Muslim to honor

human life, dignify God's creation, and uphold the integrity of the Islamic religion (El Fadl 2003: 33-77).

Along with Fadl, Irshad Manji is concerned with reviving the tradition of *ijtihad*, which she defines as independent thinking. Manji (2004) notes that at the end of the 11th century, the tradition of *ijtihad* was discontinued due to political turmoil within the Muslim world. A consequence of ending *ijtihad* was that imitation of medieval norms trumped innovation. Manji argues that it is now time to revive *ijtihad* and update Islam for the 21st century. The call for reflection by El Fadl and Manji seems reminiscent of Arendt's observation that lack of critical self-reflection leads to moral degeneration. At issue, however, is the suppression of critical discourse which is often justified on the basis of Islam. Thus, modernity confronts Islam with the need for critical self-reflection.

3. The Challenge of Modernity

In light of the three motifs discussed we are able to identify three issues that arise out of Islam's encounter with modernity.

3.1. The Problem of Alienation

The issue of alienation figures most prominently as part of the Islami-cization motif. For Muslims, and many non-Muslims who reflect on modernity, alienation appears as a fundamental existential concern. Take the example of Martin Heidegger, who identifies three symptoms (Young 2002) which characterize the alienating nature of modernity. The first symptom being the loss of the gods, in that we no longer live in communities which are bound by a shared conception of 'the good'. A community also acts to preserve its values and ideals from generation to generation through exemplary, charismatic and authoritative figures. In the modern world, however, we appear to live in societies, bound merely by mutual self interest. The second symptom is the observed violence of technology. This describes the narrow minded view of the world as being purely resource (i.e. to be exploited). The third symptom is the loss of 'dwelling'. 'Dwelling' means to experience oneself as secure – in spite of the risks and dangers which confront all human beings wherever they are. The loss of dwelling describes a lost sense of security.

Since Islam strongly affirms notions of community, non-exploitation, and Divine providence, and if Heidegger's analysis is correct, then the proponents of the Islamicization motif seem to have a point. Though, an important distinction would need to be made, in that modernity cannot be said to have Islam as its primary target; rather, modernity results in the collective alienation of humanity. If a proponent of the Islamicization motif were to adopt this line of argument, they encounter a major challenge, namely they must establish a correlation between the symptoms of alienation and secular modernism. An alternative line of argument involves demonizing modernity as the 'man-made-other', and Islam would be taken to represent the divinely revealed 'Truth'. If such a stance were to be adopted, the result as Huntington notes, is a clash of civilizations.

3.2. The Question of Spirit

The question of the spirit as raised by Mahfouz, suggests that the tradition of Islam is existentially vacuous. While Islam inspires adherence to tradition, it fails to deliver what is really needed, namely, a spirit of resistance against terror and social injustice. As an alternative to Islamic traditionalism, Mahfouz suggest that science may help with our existential concerns. Science unlike religion is universal, thus all may benefit from its discoveries, not merely the chosen few. Furthermore, science has resulted in substantial improvements in the areas of health, education and economics. Mahfouz notes also that science is prone to abuse, whereby science becomes a tool to perpetuate terror and injustice. The underlying claim of Mahfouz, however, is that science, or perhaps the scientific method, has enhanced the human condition in a way that faith is yet to do. One might even claim that science has superseded faith as the inspiration to humanity's greatest achievements.

3.3. The Challenge of Critical Discourse

The suggestion made by El Fadl and Menj is for Islam to engage in a process of critical self reflection. A serious challenge, however, is deciding on the status of reason within sphere of religious discourse. Traditionally, the Qur'an, Sunnah (the tradition of the prophet Muhammad), and Ijma (the scholarly consensus) are regarded as the main sources of religious authority, while reason is often excluded as an independent source of authority. Consider the example of Seyyed Hoessien Nasr's account of Traditional Islam. At the core of Nasr's (2002) thought are the notions of *din*, *iman*, and *ihsan*, which are regarded as foundational principles of Traditional Islam. The Arabic word *din* can broadly be interpreted to mean religion, though it also describes an attitude whereby one "humbles oneself before God", or the surrendering of oneself to the Divine. Consequently, the term Islam is said to "refer to that universal surrender to the One and that primordial religion contained in the heart of all heavenly inspired religions" (Nasr 2002: 17). The term *iman* is translated to mean faith. Importantly, though, Nasr notes that the Qur'an defines the faithful as including "those who have faith [in what is revealed to Muhammad] and those who are Jews and Christians". The verses underscored by Nasr also suggest that "whosoever has faith in God and the Last Day and live a virtuous life", are numbered amongst the faithful. The third term *ihsan* is said to mean beauty, goodness, and virtue. Consequently, "the goal of human life is to beautify the soul through goodness and virtue and to make it worthy of offering to God Who is *the* beautiful". Nasr (263) suggests that "the person who has realized *ihsan* is fully aware of the centrality of the qualities of compassion and love, peace and beauty in the Islamic spiritual universe". Traditional Islam, as seen by Nasr represents an inclusive worldview that values all who pursue virtue while having faith in God. A true believer is then a person who is humble before the Divine, and is inspired by faith to value and express compassion and love. Accordingly, the total religion that is Traditional Islam can be understood to consist of the levels of *din*

(surrender), *iman* (faith), and *ihsan* (spiritual beauty). The main drawback of Nasr's work is the dismissive attitude toward 'Western' attempts to critically evaluate Islam. Nasr writes:

The rationalistic and agnostic methods of higher criticism applied by certain western scholars to the text of the Qur'an, which was not compiled over a long period of time like the Old and the New Testaments, is as painful and as much a blasphemy to Muslims as it would be to believing Christians if some Muslims archaeologist claimed to have discovered some physical remain of Christ and were using DNA analysis to determine whether he was born miraculously or was the son of Joseph (Nasr 2002: 23).

I agree with Nasr, that for believers a process of critical evaluation may indeed be painful. I don't, however think that such a process, no matter how painful, constitutes blasphemy. Nasr's pejorative attitude is underpinned by the notion that "the philosophy of defense of traditional Islam has always been to keep within the boundaries of Islamic teaching" (2002: 23-25). The danger of limiting dialogue to Islamic teaching is that Traditional Islam becomes blinkered to its own heritage, and the heritage of other philosophical and theological traditions. One need only reflect on the history of Islamic philosophy and theology to discover the correlation between, intellectual vitality and openness to engage in critical debate. Figures such as al-Ghazali and Ibn Rushd² serve as paradigm examples of those who saw themselves as being part of Traditional Islam, yet differed as to what constituted the boundaries of Islamic teaching.

4. The Phobia of Reason

We can summarize our discussions thus far, by noting that Islam is confronted with three main issues: the intellectual and economic successes of a secular *Weltanschauung*, the waning spirit of Islamic traditionalism, and the rise of Islamic extremism. These challenges arise within the context of Islam's encounter with modernity. A proposed resolution requires Islam to engage in a process of reasoned self-reflection. There is, nonetheless, a phobia about reason as a source of religious authority, and it is a fear which is motivated by three genuine concerns:

4.1. The Problem of Distance

The traditionalist notes that as humans we are in no real position to meaningfully speculate about the Divine. Therefore, our reasoning amounts to no more than pure speculation. In reality we are in the dark as to the intention, motivations and nature of the Divine mind. How then, asks the traditionalist, can reason be considered a genuine source of religious authority?

4.2. The Problem of Unity

If we do accept reason as being a genuine source of religious authority, then our notion of community will be undermined. Our community is held together by a shared heritage from which we derive meaning and our social norms. In accepting reason as an authority we run the risk of becoming a fragmented community. In theory, since each person is

regarded as a loci of reason then each can choose to have their own meaning, and their own set of social and moral norms. The exercise of reason would end reliance on our shared heritage, and potentially lead to the death of Islam.

4.3. The Problem of Commitment

Once we regard reason a source and constraint of religious authority, reason can then be used to construct a multitude of competing theories in regard to meaning and morality. How then are we to commit to any world view, when there exists a plethora of reason-based alternatives? Moreover, the plethora of competing hypotheses would lead to ambiguity and tentativeness in regard to faith. However, as Gray Gutting (1982: 106-107) suggests, for many theists religious belief “represents the (relative) end of a quest for emotional and intellectual satisfaction; [here] religious belief represents a total commitment to its implications and is incompatible with continuing reflection on its truth”.

The phobia of reason represents a categorical rejection of reason as a source of religious authority. In virtue of being human, reason can never be a source of ultimate religious authority; and if reason were to become an authority, we would then undermine our notions of community, faith and tradition. For the purposes of this paper, I will not attempt to directly address these concerns. I will, in the section to follow, argue for a pluralistic ethnophilosophy which can better facilitate the dialogue between modernity and Islam.

5. A Pluralistic Ethnophilosophy

In the encounter between Islam and Modernity, the ethnophilosophical imperative is for each community to: a) articulate their notion of self; and b) to willingly look beyond their respective traditions. While I hope many ethnophilosophers may agree with the sentiments I’ve expressed, those familiar with Okafor’s paper will also point out that the approach I’ve taken contravenes key principles of ethnophilosophy. My critique would point out that, in addition to the definition of ethnophilosophy provided in my introduction, Okafor also notes three essential principles of ethnophilosophy (or, folkphilosophy) which I seem to have ignored. The principles are:

It is a philosophy of ‘folkness’ predicated on the existence of a communal mind.

There is an absence of abstract logic: it is devoid of the kind of universal ideas characteristic of Western philosophy.

It is a philosophy of anonymity: it is not of a particular individual, but rather of a ‘commonwealth’; the individual philosopher only interprets and unveils the philosophy (1997: 336).

In relation to the first principle, I would argue that the Muslim community does indeed have a communal mindset, in that Muslims often refer to their own community as an *Ummah*, an Arabic phrase usually translated as nation or community. Okafor’s second principle is where my approach can be challenged. Islamic philosophy is very much part of the ‘Western’ philosophical tradition, and also espouses a sense of universalism. I would, however make an important observation; the

universals Islamic ‘folk philosophy’ is prone to promote (e.g., the existence of God, the truth of revelation, and the dangers of reason as a source of religious authority) arises not from an interest in philosophy but from tradition. For those familiar with the tradition of Islam, understand that Muhammad was no philosopher; by all accounts he was barely able to read and write. Accordingly, the universalism of Islamic ‘folk philosophy’ arises as part of the revelatory experiences of Muhammad, and not from any process of abstract rationalization. As a result, one would question Okafor’s characterization of ethnophilosophy as necessarily being devoid of universalism: given that Islamic Universalism while philosophical in character, is deeply grounded in the ‘folk philosophy’ of seventh century Arabia. As for the third principle, I would again question Okafor’s notion of anonymity. I agree that communities do have a shared notion of ‘folk philosophy’ which often transcends individuals, but this overlooks the possibility that ‘folk philosophy’ can also encompass individuals who are representatives of that tradition. One can, for example think of Abraham as of an exemplar of faith to Jews, Christians and Muslims.

Given these concerns, a pluralistic ethnophilosophy would differ from the received view on two counts: firstly, the pluralist approach would not regard universalism and ‘folk philosophy’ as being mutually exclusive; and secondly, ‘folk philosophy’ need not be a philosophy of anonymity. The pluralistic approach, I advocate would retain the idea of ethnophilosophy as primarily a philosophy that is responsive to community, people and tradition. Furthermore the pluralistic approach would incorporate the Traditionalist fallacy as precautionary heuristic; in that the phobia of reason, as evident in some sector of Islamic tradition – while embedded in tradition – is not thereby immunized from critical evaluation. As a Muslim, I would also argue that the Qur’an is very much in harmony with a pluralistic ethnophilosophy. Consider the following two Qur’anic verses.³ The first points to human diversity, while the second suggests the role diversity must play in human culture:

Don’t you see that God sends down rain from the sky? With it We (i.e., God) then bring out produce of various colors. And in the mountains are tracts white and red, of various shades of color, and black intense in hue. And so amongst men and crawling creatures and cattle, are they of various colors (Chapter 35: Verses 27-28).

O mankind! We (i.e., God) created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise (each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is (are those who are) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things) (Chapter 49: verse 30).

The Qur’anic message points toward diversity as a universal feature, and regards diversity as a nexus for inter-subjective understanding. Consequently, the challenges of modernity and the phobia of reason should not become intractable points of contention; rather, modernity and Islam would need to seek out a common understanding. I suggest any future dialogue would continue with the following questions: How does modernity understand itself? How does modernity view Islam?

Now, as a practicing Muslim, I doubt if I should be the one to answer these questions.

What I can claim, however, is that the arena of a pluralistic ethnophilosophy allows for this dialogue to take place. Ethnophilosophy in its pluralistic form captures the Qur'anic spirit of recognition and mutual understanding. Within the framework of a pluralistic ethnophilosophy one is entitled to have their say; and tradition, be it universalistic or non-universalistic, can represent itself. Moreover in allowing me the right to self-expression, my duty now is to welcome the voice of another into my tradition.

Notes

1. I derive the Traditionalist fallacy from the Naturalistic fallacy which involves drawing a conclusion about how things *ought to be* based solely on information about how things *are in fact*.
2. Consider al-Ghazali's, *Tahafut al-Falasifah* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers) and Ibn Rushd's, *Tahafut al-Tahafut* (The Incoherence of the Incoherence).
3. The Qur'anic verses cited are sourced from Abdullah Yusuf Ali. *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, Brentwood, Md., U.S.A: Amana Corp., 1993.

16. The Dialogical Self as Debated Among the Contemporary Shiite Thinkers

Mahmoud Masaeli

Abstract: Recently, a new tendency is emerging among some Muslim intellectuals, who tend to critically assess traditional theology. The underlying issue in this new tendency is the notion of dialogue. The questions raised are: Who are we? Where are we standing in this world? Why should we ask about our religious beliefs? And, why should we try to understand them historically? I discuss the background wherein such questions have been raised and cast analytical light upon the circumstances that encouraged the Muslims to ask those questions. I also explain how the dialogical self is convincingly discussed versus the traditional doctrine. The essay ends by a conclusion on the impacts of this notion on Shiite political philosophy. **Key words:** Islam, self, identity, Shiite political philosophy.

The emergence of a new tendency among the contemporary Islamic thinkers to consider themselves as the self-reflective agents as opposed to the orthodox vision of the Muslim is the chief debate in this article. Traditionally speaking, Muslim is defined in terms of submission to God. Submission as the fundamental condition of Muslimness is a vague conception that has been mostly interpreting in such a way as to demolish the capacity of human beings as a self-reflective agent. What comes out of this vision of Muslimness is a blind believer, whose duty is to keep the integrity of the religion as it has been constructed by *Ulama*. This is definitely an abstract approach considering Muslims lack of dignity and capability to reflect upon themselves independently. By assuming the absolute priority to religious responsibility and obedience over the rights and dignity, this approach disregards the social context in which Muslims may ask themselves whom they are and where they are standing. This is a terrible ignorance; a blindness to view wisdom as the essence of the Islamic faith.

The emergence of the political Islam has further deteriorated the notion of Muslimness. Political Islam may use the notion of Muslim instrumentally to achieve the power-oriented aspirations. Such a heated orthodox vision of Islam and Muslimness, as it is seen in the cases of hardliners throughout the Islamic world, encouraged some thinkers to reflect upon themselves as the selves in modern philosophical sense. Therefore, the notion of dialogical self among the contemporary Islamic thinkers reflects rapture with the past, allowing Muslim to demonstrate their adherence to Islam rationally; as a self-reflective agent. This is a renaissance in Islam; a humanitarian turn.

I tend to explain the narrative of this transformation in definition of the Islamic identity, while keeping it open to further discussions and clarifications. The importance of such a narration is undeniable since it subsequently signals the unprecedented socio-political changes in the Islamic worldview. I will draw light upon the Iranian context, because,

firstly the Political Islam (the Islamic revolution) comprehensively and formally took place in Iran and enormously expanded its scope over the Middle East and the surrounding areas. Secondly, the renaissance is shaping rapidly in Iran, where the thinkers are calling the orthodox vision of Muslimness with all of its destructive socio-political outcomes into question. There is a vital quarrel beyond the controversies over Islam and modernity and the likes. A new identity is emerging; a promising renaissance.

Islam means submission to God, and a Muslim is one who follows divine injunctions. A Muslim discovers those injunctions and extends them to the contingent world by following the Prophet, the Companions, and the learned Scholars (*Ulama*). Thus, a Muslim is identified by his faith to God's way of life, but as it is understood by the *Ulama*, not by his own deliberation. This general orthodox assertion is recently being challenged by the idea according to which man is required to uncover the reasons lying behind the divine injunctions. These two visions sound fundamentally contradictory: The former conceives of the Muslims as submitted, obedient, and dependent believers to divine law; the latter thinks of the Muslims as the selves, in its modern sense, whom determine their own path to life under the light of divine illumination. Is it possible, from an Islamic point of view, to conceive of a Muslim as a self-reflective/interpretive agent in its modern sense? In an attempt to answer this question, we are faced with another: Which of these contradictory visions represents the authentic view of Islam?

I suggest that, the Qur'an essentially considers a Muslim as a self-reflective dialogical agent: "... a blind man and one who sees are alike? Will you not then reflect?" (Qur'an: 6:51). Islam recommends Muslims to think of themselves as rational agents and grants them the right to interrogate the way in which their identities are defined and their own place in the scheme of creation and the purpose of life. Reflection is the major quest for truth from an Islamic point of view. Thus, Muslims are supposed to ask who they are, where they are standing, and what they are supposed to do in order to be true Muslims. From this perspective I consider Muslims as dialogical selves. This claim is based on a tendency that is rapidly spreading in Islamic societies, especially in Iranian Shiite context. This tendency signals a new intellectual horizon: We should reflect upon our identity as the self-reflective selves if we want to be true Muslims.

After a brief explanation of the modern notion of the self, in this essay I shall present the background in which the above-mentioned questions are being raised. Lights will also be shed upon the circumstantial factors motivating Muslims to reflect upon their own social place and, as a result of this, step beyond the orthodox and narrowly instructed path of life. I shall emphasize the modern notion of the self versus the orthodox notion of a Muslim. To this end, I borrow Charles Taylor's notion of dialogical self in order to develop the theoretical framework of my argument. However, the major focus is to examine the idea of Shiite theologian and political thinkers: Mohammad Mojta-hed Shabestary.

The self, in its modern sense, came into life with Descartes, who conceived of the human being as a disengaged personality. This notion

was further re-defined by Kant as a rational agent capable of conducting his life according to his own desired direction. The modern self, therefore, versus the pre-modern notion, which was defined by subjection to the community, became characterized as a disengaged agent, one who is the master of the earth, and whose mental preference, by full volition or will, amounts to actions disengaged from any causal force and pre-designed destination. The ability to act upon one's volition, whatever it may be, without any external compulsion or restraint (Locke II xx: 7-12), disengaged the agent from his social context. The modern notion of the self reflects the fact that human being has been entered into a new historical condition in which all accommodations are provided to him to determine his own path to life free from any external constraints except those created by his own consent. The capacity of voluntary control along with objectification, which gave an objective, universal, and necessary knowledge beyond subjective appearances, allows the human being to be an independently reflective self, who is capable of constructing truth about the world himself, freely, without interference of outside authority. What is new in this definition of man is the great faith given to the self as a free subject, without previous attachment to the wider cosmic order. This root to modern self constitutes the basis of a moral agent who takes responsibility for his acts (Taylor 1989: 173).

Taking this notion of the self into consideration, individuals are presumed to be the building stones of the modern society in which everyone is considered equal both in terms of human dignity and rights, enjoying simultaneously the full capacity of his own autonomy and free will without interference from others. The human being became, indeed, a subject, not an object, moved by reason, by conscience purposes that are his own, not by external causes (Berlin 1958: 16). Central to this account is the idea that, as humans, we are to be the agents of our own authentic rationality in order to develop our capacity; to flourish in a way that is consistent with our own dignity as humans. Therefore, our ability to develop our capacity determines our identity and best answers the question of who we are.

Although we know who we are in the modern sense of the self, we still need to know where we are standing in a social context because human capacity develops in the context in which we are living. At this point the paradox of the atomistic notion of the self appears simply because the social context implies some communal ties in which individuals bear their rights and carry out their responsibility. In this stance, what is most recognizably human is the social context, but not in an atomistic sense. From this premise the idea is drawn that although the human being discovers himself in an authentic way, he remains prone to a dialogical stance with others. What defines the human condition is, indeed, its fundamental dialogical character (Taylor 1997: 33). Human identity is defined through its dialogue with others who recognize their identity in us and vice versa. In other words, we can become full human agents capable of identity through our dialogue with others and recognition of each other (Taylor 1992: 45).

If man needs to stay in dialogue with others, and if dialogue takes place in the social context, thus the scope of the modern self extends

beyond the mere self-reflexivity. Our character, as the self, is defined based on our background in a world in which certain things matter to us; the history, family life, and friends, for example, all define dialogically our identity. It follows that, as Taylor explains, the self is identified based upon both socially derived and inwardly derived elements. Consequently self-identity is a matter of culturally and socially mediated self-definitions, which are relevant to one's orientation in life. This grants to the self a moral dimension in a public space in which the self itself becomes subject to the changeable circumstances. In light of the cultural and social context, the self questions about the strongly valued goods (Taylor 1989: 31) and convinced that moral goods are different and often incommensurable (Taylor 1991: 306). Thus, the self cannot be an abstract entity negligent of the social contingencies.

Another line of argument allows Taylor to defend the dialogical character of the self. He argues that the disengaged self relies on a monological consciousness resulting in an account of subjectivism. If man, by the virtue of his inner self is capable of deciding, how can this inner self be related to the external world? Taylor states that to escape from the monological consciousness, we need to take human acts and practices into consideration. However, human practice is undertaken in a social dialogue. In so far as "much of our understanding of self, society, and world are carried in practices that consist in dialogical action", (Taylor 1991: 311) the notion of identity cannot be individually defined in the social context. "We defined ourselves partly in terms of what we come to accept as our appropriate place within dialogical actions" (Taylor 1991: 311). Once this line of argument is followed, an irresistible conclusion appears: we are constituted in conversation and, as a result, we need to recognize each other through the dialogue. In other words, dialogue takes place in a social context whose characteristic is to recognize others' social space. Since social space is formed by historical background, dialogue necessarily implies recognition of others' background.

Convincingly, the notion of dialogical self provides a theoretical framework to understand the depth and burdens of the new debates among some of the Shiite thinkers. I refer to this notion because dialogue has resemblances and deep roots in hermeneutics of Shi'ite thoughts. Neither they nor Taylor refer to one another. However, their conceptual and hermeneutical similarities and values may allow us to examine the notion of the dialogue among the Shi'ite thinkers under the light of Taylor's account.

The Islamic revolution in Iran, and the subsequent events in the Islamic world, is a convincing turning point. The world of the 80's witnessed a huge demand for islamicization of human affairs, especially in politics and power-oriented areas not only in Iran, but also in almost the entire Islamic world. The defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan by Islamic resistant; the resurgence and spread of traditional Islamic law, or Shari'a in such diverse countries as Egypt, Pakistan and Nigeria, for instance, all shows demand for islamicization of their affairs. The gravity of the demand was centered on political Islam originating from and feeding by jurisprudential or official interpretation of the Qur'an and Sonnat (tradition), and guided by the

governance of the jurists. However, Ayatollah Khomeini's vision of an Islamic political system was fundamentally different from the others in the Islamic world. He drew a portrait of Islamic society governed by a wise and virtuous figure; similarly close to the notion of philosopher ruler in the Platonic tradition. This theory was extracted from Ibn Arabi's *irfan* and relates to a deep ethical commitment for purification of the soul and thought leading to the virtues of the ethical conduct in social and political context. Purification of the soul deserves the highest importance because, according to Ayatollah Khomeini, if the people are purified, the whole society is purified. This aim, for Ayatollah Khomeini, was possible if the leaders were likewise purified (Khomeini, 1970: 60); otherwise both society and people themselves would become corrupt. For him, any objection against the path of Islam was an act of oppression. Thus, the non-Islamic rulers were all characterized as oppressors, necessarily because none of them "are based on justice or a correct foundation that is acceptable to reason" (Khomeini 1941: 221). Versus the oppressive rulers, he introduced a vision of Islamic state, which alleged rational and progressive met political demands: freedom, independence, and Islamic republic. The difference between his vision and the Platonic one, which resulted in the chaotic factional policies in post-Khomeini era, is that in the former the ruler should be a *faqih* (jurist). "The true rulers are the *foqaha* (plural of *faqih*) themselves" (Khomeini, 1970: 60). Ayatollah Khomeini also argues this vision in his earlier work *The Revealing of the Secrets*.

We do not say that government must be in the hands of the *faqih*; rather we say that the government must be run in accordance with God's law, for the welfare of the country and the people demands this, and it is not acceptable except with the supervision of the religious leader (Khomeini 1941: 224).

The idea of an Islamic state originated out of some proceeding developments in the Iranian political context, when the clergy were prodded by anti-religious factions during the reign of Shah. However, the revolutionary movement against the monarchy had its roots in the potential political forces of Islam combined with the rational demands for freedom and independence guaranteeing the ethical values of political life in terms of voting process, parliamentary system, division of the forces, and an accountability of state. Islamic republic, thus, according to Ayatollah Khomeini, would "guarantee the freedom of the people, the independence of the country, and the attainment of the social justice" (Khomeini 1979). Although Ayatollah Khomeini represented a doctrine, which was seemingly commensurable with democratic values, and though the Islamic Republics constitution promised what the people wanted, the political system turned immediately into an absolutist Islamic regime – especially in second decade of Islamic revolution, fueled by the naïve hermeneutics of traditionalists, tending to perform the less-workable Islamic law or Shari'a in all aspects of life. It was not, thus, surprising if the ethical promises and democratic values were soon ignored, because Islam as it was understood by the orthodox jurists was a totalistic system of thought. At this stage, the inherent paradox existing in the philosophical foundations of

Islamic political system appeared; the demands for democratic values were driven in the margin, and the whole revolutionary slogans were eclipsed. The unprecedented requirements of the revolutionary situation and the necessities of the complex governance favored the doctrine of the ideal Islamic state; instead the pragmatic response to the contingencies of the situation was adopted. The primacy of state interests was sanctioned over both revolutionary slogans and Islamic spirit, and even the coercive power of the state was used to silence the prominent theologians, thinkers, and all those who openly opposed the pragmatism of the political system.

Although esteemed and accepted in Islamic constitution, the human dignity and individual freedom, the principle of republic were entirely ignored in a pragmatic system, which aimed to keep all aspects of life under the supervision of the orthodoxy. Not necessarily experiencing what was taking place in Iran nor its paradox, the Islamists of the Middle East and North Africa struggled to realize their own Islamic vision using the Islamic law. Taking together, enthusiasm for a world Islamic revolution resulted. Accordingly, the emergence of the fundamentalist waves throughout the Islamic world exhibited a facet of Islam that is far away and even hostile to the humanitarian messages of the Qur'an. Gradually in some cases such as Al-Qaeda, Islamists committed themselves to actions that are in sharp contrast to the Islamic spirit. This situation, in turn, led to the massive dissatisfaction among Muslims and particularly among the youth to disenchant with Islam. At this stage, some thinkers were encouraged to reflect upon capacity of shiism to give diverse interpretation of the Qur'an in such a way as to serve the modern life. Plenty of theologians and thinkers, then, have been trying to represent a humanitarian – not apologetic – vision of Islam reconcilable with human rights and democratic values. Others have been argues for a separation of Islam from politics; secularism. Both movements request a humanitarian turn in Islamic thought having some roots in the past. We need to consider further these roots and their casual proponents.

Discerning between two variant interpretations of Islam is helpful for understanding of those roots: Islam as a devotional way of life and Islam with potential political capacity. While the former has always tended to be a path of purification of soul abstaining to get involved in politics and the mundane affairs, the latter has essentially viewed Islam from a totalistic perspective pertaining to all aspects of life, an all-embracing system with socio-political potentials. Ayatollah Khomeini, who inspired Islamic political uprisings in almost all around the world, a man whose decrees shocked the world for two decades, defines well the latter attitude: "This is a duty of all Muslims must fulfill, in every one of the Muslim countries, in order to achieve the triumphant political revolution of Islam" (Khomeini, *The Islamic Government*: 48). Although the political facet of Islam embraces divers visions such as the progressive Islam of Sayyid Jamal al-Din Asad Abadi (1838-97), the evangelical movement of Muhammad ib Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792), and from the individualistic and consensus-based interpretation of Rashid Rida (1835-1935) to the dogmatic political Islam of Abu'l-A'la Mawdudi (1907-1979) in India or Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) in

Egypt, however, this facet is characterized by aspiration for political Islam. In all visions, the common belief is that divine will, which is the base of sovereignty, pertains to both political issues and legal matters in Muslim affairs, and touches upon the ideology of the Islamic revolution.

In colonial and post-colonial periods, the political facet was further strengthened, because Muslims were encouraged to interpret Islam in such a way as to serve their anti-colonial struggle with nationalism or socialist tendencies. Accordingly, Islam was being interpreted based on the political necessities arising from a sense of powerlessness. This sense motivated Muslims surmount backwardness on the one hand, and satisfy the requirements of political independence on the other. Muslim thinkers were, therefore, very much preoccupied with how to mobilize the population by religious rituals against colonists. Islamic anti-imperialist movements were also benefiting from the interpretations that best deserved revolutionary aspirations. Ali Shariati, the Iranian Shi'ite sociologist, shows well this aspiration: "One is the Islam of Caliphate, of the palace, and the rulers. Other is the Islam of the people, of the exploited, and of the poor" (Shariati, 14-15). This interpretation is centered on the oppressed, who are the objects of exploitation by oppressive systems and unequal social structures, or in words of the Qur'an those, who have been marginalized (Qur'an 4:97, 8:26 & 11:27). Ironically, in several cases, a political reading of Islam has deviated from the authentic method of interpretation, and as a result of this, political Islam endorsed by extremist became dominated to the point that drove the richness of Islamic humanitarian legacy in into the shadows. In such a condition, a facet of Islam was introduced that was ignorant of normative imperatives and the intellectual subtleties of the ethical tradition; instead the emphasis of religious faith falls upon superficial embodiment of Islam as seen in the case the Taliban.

Subsequent to the Islamic revolution of Iran, a fundamentally different and unprecedented political reading of Islam appeared claiming the islamicization of the every aspects of social life under the unquestionable authority of the supreme leader, who is only responsible for the integrity of Islamic order and law. The term *velayat-i faghih* (The guardianship of the jurists) was coined in order to grant to the most competent and just jurists in charge of the islamicization of the community in all aspects. According to Ayatollah Khomeini, this term has its roots in Shi'ism. Endorsed by some Qur'anic proofs (4:59, 4:105, for instance), the core assertion of the Guardianship of jurists is that Islamic law is essentially sufficient to address not only the Islamic affairs but also new questions of domestic and foreign affairs. Apparently this system of thought is based on an anti-secular philosophy believing in absolute supremacy of divine law, as it is understood by orthodox jurists. Any attempt to separate the public from private sphere became un-exemplified sin.

This vision of political Islam resembles many elements of other Islamist groups in certain points. One is that Islam is a perfect system of life capable of addressing the entire objective, spiritual, and ethical questions of Muslim affairs by virtue of the perennial legal, social, and political packages taken from the Qur'an and *Sonnat* by jurists. This

claim is justified by referring to the Qur'anic verse according to which Muslims are supposed to obey God, the Messenger, and those charged with authority over their affairs (Qur'an: 4:59). This verse, which is considered an authoritative order of God, is used by the orthodox jurists to justify the theoretical foundations of the Islamic political system. According to the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the person in authority over people is apparently presumed to be the Guardianship of jurists assigned the ultimate source of authority (Constitution, Article 5).

Another resemblance that has caused both spiritual and socio-political paradoxes among the Muslims, as Mojtabeh Shabestary argues, is the unreasonable conviction of the jurists, who view themselves in a sacred mission to fulfill the Islamic law in society (Shabestary 2000a: 11). This conviction granted the leader unquestionable power to lay down Islamic orders and impose political restrictions on individual rights and interfere in all aspects of the modern life, nationally and even sometimes internationally. As a result of this unquestionable authority regime has frequently faced with crises. Indeed, an officially orthodox reading of Islam has replaced the modern political philosophy overwhelmingly violent to individual dignity and rights. In this vision of political Islam, democratic values apparently become meaningless and individual political rights eclipsed. In such a circumstance, "The national sovereignty, individual political rights, right of voting and electing all lose their authentic political-meaning, entirely became the instrument of justification and fulfillment of juridical verdicts" (Shabestary 2000a: 30-31). Political Islam, in this sense, emerged from the theory of the Guardianship of Jurists according to which the absolute supremacy of the legal Islamic orders laid down by the Guardianship has been esteemed and sanctioned.

Due to these two resemblances, the entire society faced with the spiritual and socio-political sorts of crisis at once, whose scope extends over the whole region and those who had already been counting on the promises of Islamic revolution. Furthermore, due to lack of coherent philosophical foundations, as Shabestary argues, the official reading of Islam lost consistency and, as a result, its validity (Shabestary 2000a: 31). What results from the crisis in the official reading of Islam is twofold. First, as noted earlier, an increased apathy among people especially among the youth, which itself originates out of the unworkable nature of the orthodox vision on Islam. Second, an emerging constructive trend among thinkers for a moderate view of Islam that is commensurable with and encouraging of the civil and political rights. The Idea of modern self among the Muslim thinkers takes its roots and validity from the very constructive trend.

In searching for an accurate definition of who a Muslim is, the most authentic source to refer to is the Qur'an. It distinguishes between a Muslim and a true believer (Qur'an, 49:14). Although this verse prioritizes the true believer, the Qur'an does not exclude those who enter into the Islamic faith by acknowledging only one pillar of Islam that is *shahada* (Verbally acknowledging the truth that there is only one God and Mohammad is His messenger). One is Muslim even if

one does not perform the other pillars: daily prayer, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage to sacred sites in and around Mecca. If Muslims were supposed to be all obedient to the jurist's decrees as traditionalists claim, millions of people, who adhere to Islam by *shahada*, but do not perform the other ritualistic pillars, would not be considered as Muslims. There are verses in the Qur'an acknowledging that the acceptable way of life is only submission to God's will (Qur'an, 3:119). Furthermore, true believers are supposed to accept Islam by *shahada* as it has been mentioned in the same verse, and not to be necessarily subjected to the decrees of jurists. The reason for this is that Muslims are free to accept even the existence of God by reason and without coercion as it is frequently and evidently mentioned in Qur'an: "There is no compulsion in religion. Verily, the Right Path has come distinct from the wrong path" (Qur'an, 1:256). Being free from any coercion and outside any constraint is the fundamental to Islamic faith. So, Muslim is a Muslim because of his capacity to reflect personally and independently about his or her way of spiritual and mundane life.

Accordingly, returning to the question put forth at the outset of this essay: In order to be a Muslim, are we compelled to be subordinated to the jurists understanding of Islamic faith, or the traditional legal Islam with all of its socio-political and moral derivatives? By referring to the Qur'an, the answer is negative. Negative because, if the Islamic faith is all about authentic words and will of God, everyone ought to strive to understand it consciously, freely and independently. In doing so, Muslims belonging to different time and space and horizons, might articulate a diverse version of Muslimness. Indeed, there are circumstantial elements through which Muslims might identify themselves. Thus, no specific understanding is perfect and *a priori* as pertaining to the fundamentally different present condition of time and its complexity. Nobody has the right to impose over others any curtail theological or juridical vision, Shabestary argues (Shabestary 1998: 100). The jurists may interpret Islam according to their own juridical fore-knowledge in such a way as to conflict with the contemporary socio-political knowledge. Since fore-knowledge is subjected to historical horizon, and since time and history is under the constant development, the act of understanding itself is temporal and under constant development (Shabestary 1998: 14). Acknowledging God and His messenger is the only *a priori*; the other sorts of knowledge are the historical experience and circumstantial understanding; *a posteriori*.

To understand accurately the religious beliefs of a society and in order to formulate the appropriate policy, both internationally and nationally, one fundamental point should be considered. The religious beliefs of diverse societies are changeable over time, and the reason for this claim is the occurrence of developments in notions and religious interpretations of those people. We must consider how the followers of different religious belief manifest their ideas differently in every period of time... The changeable religious interpretations are a reality that policy makers must take into consideration (Shabestary 1998: 168-69).

The temporality of religious knowledge, the notion of religious liberty, and objections to the orthodox primacy of jurists' view over the

civil and political rights of individuals, all place the notion of the modern self at the center of the contemporary Islamic thought. These challenge the traditional historical monopoly over the right to interpret Islam and its tenets. From a socio-political perspective, this reflects a humanitarian turn in Islamic political philosophy abandoning the blind obedience to the self-proclaimed Islamic state; esteeming individual's decisions and actions as to be rewarded or punished on the Judgment Day (Qur'an: 38:26). This notion of individual Islamic belief is reminiscent of the modern notion of the self according to which all courses of action, socially and politically, are determined based on the free will of the rational agent. There is no surprise to assert this claim because individual critical reflexivity and continual striving to reach new understanding are the core tenets of the Islamic *erfan* (Theosophy or mysticism). In such changeable circumstances neither Islamic theology nor Islamic traditional law or Shari'a can perform its traditional mission. The contemporary mission of religious faith should be human-centered and on one's place in the world. The contemporary preoccupation is all about who I am, as self-reflective, and where, as a bearer of both duty and rights I am standing and what as an ethical rational agent is my duty; or in other words how, in the complexities of the modern world, does religion guide me to find my proper way of life and its fulfillment. This preoccupation with the individual agent even posits questions about the accountability on the Day of Judgment as Shabestary argues: "The modern human being is even looking for the Last Day and spiritual salvation in this mundane world" (Shabestary 1998: 189). Even, the ethical/political requirements of the contemporary world can no longer convince us to wait to receive reward or punishment of our actions on the Last Day. Actions are committed by individual agents freely, and thus they should be accountable, according to Shabestary, in this world: "In the present intellectual world of individuals, the questions about God, religion, and the Day of Judgment, are all critical and experimental issues not pertaining to the next life" (Shabestary 1998: 190).

To the extent that the modern notion of an individual human being is considered in contemporary debates among some Muslim scholars, the idea of civil and political rights of Muslims also come to the fore in the sense that political rights have preference over religious responsibility. This tendency, in contrast to the traditional conception of religious responsibility of the Muslim, is increasingly being developed among moderates who contend that submission to God's absolute sovereignty does not necessarily confronted with human rights; rather both are inevitably intertwined. Some thinkers defend individual freedom to the extent that even questions the traditional mediatory role of *Ulama* (Learned Muslims) in gaining Islamic understanding. They contend that even "lay people could educate themselves in religious matters without any retrogressive mediating authority" (Moosa: 118). In attempt to theorize the supremacy of individual political rights over religious responsibility, Shabestary argues that Muslims are free to articulate the appropriate laws actualizing and protecting their civil and political rights. Although these rights, surely, should not be opposed to divine decree; the preference is upon individual freedom to choose the

way of life in order to protect political rights (Shabestary 2000a: 261-62). The emergence of the idea of individual freedom as the fundamental element of religious faith is the cornerstone of the humanitarian turn. Shabestary argues:

The logic of faith necessitates the believers to look for the socio-political realities, the making of the political power, and the kind of government within which one can believe freely and also purify ones for the sake of God. Such a society cannot be a totalitarian political system... This is the most important criteria in interpretation and *ijtihad* (Shabestary 2000b: 79-80).

The humanitarian turn into allows, Muslims to be released from the dogmatic idea of blind obedience of Islamic law. The new emerging concern is all about spiritual experience and ethical flourishing, which are the truth of faith, and not official Islam. No dogmatic mind would be capable of consciously submitting to God's way of life, no external interference can enter the individuals into a truly Islamic belief, and nobody has the right of imposing regulations over Muslims except by their consents. "Your duty is only to convey the Message" (Qur'an: 2:20), "And you are not a disposer of their affairs (to protect their deeds)" (Qur'an: 42:6), or "The messenger's duty is nothing but to convey (the message)" (Qur'an: 5:99). Truly, faith is the freest choice of human being. Any conviction or action leading to corruption of this freedom-even if accomplished in the name of religion, is treachery and antagonist to the true faith (Shabestary 2000a: 287). Ignorance of individual freedom contrasts to be a faithful Islam because, according to Shabestary, true faith is founded on trust or moral responsibility and honesty and all the duties which God has trusted (Shabestary 2000a: 290-91).

Convincingly, faith is incompatible with coercion: "And, We have not made you a watcher over them or a *Wakil* (disposer of affairs, guardian, and trustee) over them" (Qur'an, 6:107). Coercive and totalitarian systems corrupt the essentials of faith, because faith – Judaism, Christianity and Islam, is all about love, moral duty, and justice. Being free from any coercion, according to the Qur'an, an individual being stands at the center the Islamic faith. Accordingly, faith flourishes with freedom. How, then, could spiritual and humanitarian flourishing be achieved without considering the truth of individual religious and political liberty? Shabestary is convinced to assert truly that freedoms endorsed by universal declaration of human rights allow the Islamic faith to flourish. Thus, Muslims should accept the universal norms of human rights, because under the light of democratic systems endorsed by human rights, Islamic faith is flourishing. By striving to achieve the social connectedness based on modern human rights, Muslims would be capable of being faithful to Islam, love, ethics and justice (Shabestary 2000a: 265-311). How is such an achievement actualized?

The Holy Qur'an is the most authentic source representing the methods of actualizing freedom in achieving true faith: "Invite (mankind, O Muhammad) to the way of your Lord (i.e. Islam) with wisdom and fair preaching, and argue with them in a way that is better" (Qur'an, 16:125). This verse emphasizes upon dialogue

between Muslims as God's interlocutors and non-Muslims. The relation between God and man is a personal one in which the individual is invited to God by dialogue free from any coercion. This invitation to God's way of life encourages us to respect freedom and human rights regardless of religious beliefs or affiliations. The above-mentioned verse best identifies human dignity and allows Muslims to recognize the secular human rights through the religious lenses and, Shabestary argues, even enriches it by spiritual faith (Shabestary 2000a: 311). At this point, Shabestary introduces the notion of the self, which respects the modern human dignity, yet is further enriched by a dialogical characteristic. Abandoning the monological character, the dialogical self allows followers of different traditions to treat each other based on equal dignity and dialogue for the purpose of not only resolving the misconceptions and mistrusts, but also creating justice based on equal human rights.

Justice oriented interpretation of human rights and attempts to actualize them as a way of life are the constructive answers to God's appeal for justice and human dignity (Shabestary 2000a: 317).

In short, new cultural, philosophical, and socio-political developments have created about unprecedented theological and legal questions for Muslims. To answer these questions, one group takes a reactionary position aiming to keep the supremacy of the traditional Islamic law. This limits intellectual awareness among Muslims and severely emphasizes the historical monopoly of interpretation leading to blind obedience. The other group positively welcomes the new situation tending to re-understand the essential and the meaning of the Islamic faith in order to achieve a constructive reason and vivification of Islamic spirit. The former tendency demonstrates an official reading of Islam leading to irresolvable socio-political impasses that cause on the one hand widespread faithlessness and even nihilism among the Muslims, and skepticism about the humanitarian capacity of Islam on the other. Second tendency exhibits a moderated facet of Islam that is not only compatible with modern life, but also esteems the primacy of human rights over religious duties. It also promises a modern notion of the self, by interpreting humanly the Holy Qur'an assigning a dialogical social connectedness. This tendency, which I would call the Islamic humanitarian turn, allows the Muslim, in contrary to the past condition, to proceed along a new way of life based on respect for human rights, and even encourages them to stay in a constant dialogue with all religious traditions to surmount the complexity associated with the social connectedness. The emergence of the dialogical notion of the self reflects an epochal rupture with the problematic past originated from monopoly of *Ulama* in reading of Islam. It also has revived spirits in Muslims. This is promising, because it is designed to actualize the human rights-based notion of justice. It is, indeed, a new beginning, a new appeal for reconciliation as Shabestary argues, based on mutual respect and equality of human dignity, according to which the true meaning of the religious faith is revealed (Shabestary 2000a: 318).

17. Between Social Reform and Terrorism: Ethics as a Topic in the Muslim Renewal – A Case Study for some Elements of the Development of Islamism in Egypt, Pakistan and Morocco

Martin Leiner

Abstract: Discussing the examples of Egypt, Pakistan and Morocco, this article gives an overview of the development of Islamist ethics from the Muslim Renewal to the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Centre. It shows how the creative ethical and social aspects of the beginning of the Muslim Renewal (Iqbal) have been replaced first by “integrist” (late al-Banna), then fundamentalist politics (al-Qutb). On an “integrist” or fundamentalist basis, with or without a more or less strong influence from wahabism, a plurality of Islamic groups and attitudes have prospered in many Muslim countries. Only some of them clearly chose the politics of Hijraism and going one more step further the politics of violence, the declaration of jihad and the acts of terrorism. **Key Words:** Islamism, Muslim Renewal, Terrorism.

1. Introduction

One of the most troubling aspects of the re-ethicizing of the mind in the 20th century and today is the relationship between Muslim Renewal, with its ethical ideals and principles, and, grounded in part in this renewal, the terrorism advocated and practiced by a small Muslim minority.¹ This exposé aims to contribute to the study of this relationship, its historical development and the state it is in today. Focusing on these three factors, I shall present a case study for three countries, Egypt, Pakistan, and Morocco. The focal point of the study will be Egypt, the country in which social development and production of texts is most developed. Taking Egypt as an example, I will establish the difference between Islamic Renewal, Integristism, Fundamentalism and Traditionalism. In its early stages Islamism can be understood to be a renewal of the Islamic tradition, which, in today’s world is challenged by the conflicting values of occidental culture and Christianity. Together with the Muslim tradition, the ethical and social values of Islam are re-actualized. Often these values are somewhat analogous to Western values such as social welfare, democracy and respect for all human beings. Integristism is a word that has its sources in the 19th century. Originally it described the view held

by the Roman Catholic Church, namely that the defense of Roman Catholic values is necessary for the life of the individual, and for society as a whole. Despite its non-pluralistic political ideals, Integrism in some cases allows for a certain practice of idioethical values, for example the responsible decision of the individual that takes into account the singularity of a particular situation, or ethical creativity in expressing the Eternal Truth of a new age or environment. Fundamentalism rejects these characteristics. It stresses total obedience to the letter of the sacred texts. As the understanding of these texts is difficult, in practice this means total obedience to the fatwas of the few religious leaders deemed by the fundamentalist group in question to be legitimate. Consequently, Fundamentalism becomes a kind of authoritarian clericalism. Fundamentalism, therefore, creates people who behave in external conformity to many ethical principles but who have no ethical framework with which to assess their feelings and opinions, no real recognition of their responsibility and no knowledge of ethical creativity. The commandment to submit to God's will is the only commandment. It absorbs and destroys all other ethical orientations. In this context, Traditionalism encompasses a belief that the true religion was the religion of the past. One should go back to that time and its mindset. This belief is well established in Islam. The Hanbalitic school of law and the Salafitic exegesis of the Koran (Ibn Taimiyya 1263-1328) came to hold sway due to the reform movement of wahabism in Saudi Arabia. The volte-face to traditionalism within the Islamist movement was influenced by Muslim intellectuals, and Saudi Arabia's economic prowess ensured that the movement received the financial support it needed.

A second factor in evaluating Muslim renewal is its position in respect of those Muslims who are not committed to the movement in question. There is a dualistic point of view instituted in particular by Sayyid Qutb who considers that most Muslims believe in God no more than the kuffars (non-believers). These movements practice so called "active excommunication" (takfir). The conception of a pure Islam with truly committed believers in opposition to the 'bogus' Muslims is essentially a social fiction that does not take into account the phenomena of transculturalism, transdifference or hybrid forms of life and ethics, which contribute to the religiously pluralistic Egyptian culture, in which the Coptic minority plays a significant part.

A third question is the Islamic stance on violence. In Islamism there is no notion of Pacifism. A majority of Islamists claim that in the current situation, no violence should be permitted. However, this does not prohibit the permitted or even ordered use of violence in another

situation in the sense of a just war, for example against the colonial powers. Only some small groups have declared Jihad. Reflections on terrorism are not the key to understanding these groups. For most of them the choice between terrorism and a more or less official and organized military action (e.g. Taliban in Afghanistan) is primarily pragmatic.

On the basis of this still rather general mapping of Islamism and Muslim Renewal, I would like to discuss the re-ethicising and the de-ethicising of the mind in connection with the question of the Egyptian identity and of the influence of the West and of Saudi-Arabia.

Towards the end of this exposé I will test my theory of Muslim Renewal using a small case study on Pakistan's and Morocco's Islamist movements.

2. The Terrorists of 9/11 and Their Motives

One of the most interesting sources on terrorism is the so called "Spiritual Guide" of the terrorists of September 11th. The discovery of this text is in itself particularly remarkable. When one of the main terrorists, Muhammed Atta, changed airplanes at Boston, one piece of his luggage was not transferred to the connecting airplane. Instead the luggage stayed in Boston and within it the police found a text in Arabic that can be considered to be the terrorists' main ideological source. Of course, there have been many doubts about the authenticity of the text. But there are two major pieces of evidence suggesting that the text is authentic: Firstly, other partially identical texts have been found left in a taxi and in the apartments of other September 11th terrorists; secondly, it is not very likely that the text was faked since it includes no passage that could be easily used for political aims. It contains no declaration of war against the USA, nothing insulting directly the American people or the Christian religion, and no language that could discredit the terrorists in the eyes of more traditional Islamists besides the expressions confirmed by authentic material or the actions of the September 11th terrorists. Because of these arguments, experts such as German researchers Hans Kippenberg and Tilman Seidensticker have accepted the authenticity of this so called "Spiritual Guide" and, in 2004, decided to publish a critical edition of the Arabic text with a German translation.

This text, if it can be taken as a source that influenced the terrorists' thinking, could provide the key to understanding the motives behind September 11th. All those who had affirmed that there is no understanding of terrorism, that terrorism has no political program and that it is only based on the wish to create fear, would be proved wrong.

The terrorists' goal was the realization of Allah's plan, the accomplishment of his will. The action is placed in the frame of a war against the non-believers; Allah shall defeat them with his endless power in the moment he shall decide. The terrorists are not the adherents of an apocalyptic policy, which believes that history will soon come to an end, nor do they believe that their acts of terrorism will shorten the time towards this end. From a European perspective, the *Spiritual Guide* is in some way a Romantic document. Like Romanticism it regards the past as an ideal period. In the context of Islam one could say that the authors of the "*Spiritual Guide*" are influenced by salafitic and wahabitic tendencies. The text uses Muslim war rhetoric and it tries to relate these elements to the origins of Islam. Many times it calls to mind the necessity to repeat various texts of the Holy Koran, to repeat, uninterrupted, various prayers and to trust completely in God, who shall decide whether the action will be successful or not. There are new religious elements to be observed. Among those the most important are: Firstly, the idea that the victim should be sacrificed ritually, just as the lamb is sacrificed in the Feast of the Sacrifices (Id al-Adha). This element is new in Muslim war rhetoric. It seems not only to degrade the victims below the human level (cf. Kippenberg & Seidensticker 2004) but also serves to justify, and even applaud the murder of other human beings in the name of Allah. The second element is the concept that the victim is, as it were, 'booty' – tangible evidence of the terrorists' success. This idea is introduced by evoking an ancient Muslim tradition. However, this is an odd interpretation of the ancient texts. It is perhaps merely invented by those who created this so called "*Spiritual Guide*". Thirdly, any element of fear regarding the consequences of killing Muslims is removed. All the commandments of the Koran and the Tradition predicting eternal pain in Hell for those who kill others, particularly those who kill Muslims, are no longer present. This idea has been connected, plausibly, to the teaching of the Muslim Renewal preacher Sayyid Qutb in Egypt. Here we find the most manifest link between contemporary terrorism and the Muslim Renewal. This is also a reason why we have to examine Egypt first.

Before doing this let us recall that the "*Spiritual Guide*" is a document of a salafitic influence combined with Fundamentalism. Its ethical viewpoint rids the terrorist of any duty of compassion when acting towards other human beings or Muslims. It does so because the only obligation seems to be to obey blindly the will of God in the way it is interpreted by the spiritual leaders. They consider suicide

bombings and Jihad to be the most appropriate course of action. This motive must be acknowledged and understood.

3. Islamism and Re-ethicizing of the Minds: The Muslim Renewal in its First Period

One of the most important doctrines of Sayyid Qutb was that in our day the vast majority of people who call themselves Muslims are not in fact 'genuine' Muslims; rather they are servants of the wrong gods (Cf. Qutb 1962). The small group of genuine Muslims is confronted by the same situation as was the prophet, who stood firm against the majority of the population of Mecca and other non-believing people. Qutb was a member of the Muslim Brothers who stood for a new and more intense commitment to Islam and for its ethical and social implications. Before the radicalization their thinking was more of a collection of social ideas than a clearly defined political project. By way of example I quote Nasr Hamid Abu Zaid, who describes his youth in the Egypt of the 50ties:

Although I was still young I became an official member of the Muslim Brotherhood. [...] I loved Brother Ibrahim Ragab and I still respect him today. Also the other Muslim Brothers in our village were friendly and sincere people, who helped the poor and campaigned for justice. The hadiths and the stories they told us about the prophet and his followers did not ring of obscurantism. They were stories that called for an active faith. They also stressed human freedom and human dignity. In our village, it was the custom that the younger kissed the hands of the elder to welcome them. The Muslim Brothers – and also my father who sympathized with them although he was not a member – rejected this sign of humiliation. One was to submit only to God. I became enthused by the idea that all men, young and old, rich and poor are equal. It was phenomenal for me that a child like me could address the rector of the school as his brother. The Muslim Brothers I knew in the village never said bad things about the Christians or about other religions. They criticized only the colonialists. In the "young lions-group" in particular I learned a lot, for example the worth of working. The Muslim Brothers were very serious about work, no matter what work it was. They stressed working hard a lot. This gave them a good reputation in the village. In the elections, however, the people voted for the liberal Wafd-party. To them this was no contradiction, since they didn't look upon the Muslim Brothers as a political organization (Zaid 1999: 42-43).

This text is relevant to our topic for several reasons: It shows that re-ethicizing the mind does not mean that there has been no ethical concept before. Men always live, decide and evaluate others within a moral view of reality. This moral view has its roots in ethical discussions held until the time this view has been established. After a while it becomes tradition. The custom to kiss the hand of older people

is the result of a very ancient moral point of view that stresses respect for the elderly. Nowadays this custom is still respected in many countries in the Muslim world. The re-ethicizing of the mind that the Muslim Brothers evoked, which took place in Egypt from the 30's to the 60's, replaced this traditional view with another one. It radicalized the respect people owe to God and it diminished the respect owed to certain groups of human beings. In this way the Brothers introduced to the ethics of Egyptian society the very modern and, if you like, "European" concept of respecting all human beings equally. There were also other values within the Islamic tradition emphasized by the Muslim Renewal. In Egypt, Muhammad Abduh, who in his book *Risalat-at-Tawhid* carried out a rational exegesis of the Koran, was the most influential author in the Muslim Renewal. He established the principle that nothing in the Koran can be understood in a literal way, if the interpretation in question apparently contradicts the findings of science. The Muslim Renewal especially reinforced the social aspects of Islam, such as the creating a feeling of brotherhood, and helping the poor. For Egypt this period was the real period for re-ethicizing the minds of a larger percentage of society. The higher classes had already accepted similar values, but in a more Western form and mixed with other elements of the Western way of life often considered as unacceptable from an Islamic point of view. It might be surprising, but: in some way the Muslim Renewal shifted the engagement in the great concepts of the French Revolution such as equality (*égalité*), brotherhood (*fraternité*) and the socialist discussion on solidarity to a traditional Muslim context. The first *idée-force* of the French Revolution, freedom (*liberté*), established itself as freedom from colonial powers, self-determination and in some cases of a kind of Islamic version of democracy. At the same time, the ethics of the Muslim Renewal is typical for a religiously committed group composed essentially of poor people struggling for greater influence and better positions in society. The emphasis Muslim Renewal places on working hard is consistent with similar phenomena concerning work, as in the present Pentecostal movement in Brazil, in the Methodist Church in the UK during the 18th and 19th centuries, and in the importance of Protestant Ethics described by Max Weber in connection with the very beginning of modern capitalism.

In the first years the Muslim Renewal seemed to prepare people to climb the social ladder. In many cases it transmits values of the Europeanized upper classes to the majority of the people. In this way the renewal's instigators opened the door to a new interpretation of the Koran. The choice of values they made reinforced the tensions between

rich and poor, particularly if the rich did not accept their duty to share with the poor. The Muslim Renewal is much more an answer to the conflict with European thought than a development organically grown out of Islam. It must be understood as a product of the will to overcome Western critics of Islam. Today, as in the past, figures throughout the Islam world use oft-repeated superlative rhetoric to suggest that Islam is superior to other religions, including Christianity. To understand the Muslim Renewal, we must listen to the Eurocentric view of Islam which confronted representatives of the faith within the intellectual environment of its early period. The French Jesuit priest and palaeontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin who stayed in Egypt between 1905 and 1908 is representative of this view:

This test proves that nothing of worth is left in Islam – everything is becoming extinct, perhaps even more quickly than, for example, the agnostic moral code and Confucianism. Granted, Islam has managed to maintain the idea of God's existence and of his greatness (a seed of righteousness sown in the past can suddenly bear new fruit). At the same time, however, it (Islam) has miraculously transformed this god into a nobody, into something ineffective and sterile that contributes nothing to knowledge and to making the world a better place. After destroying much and creating only ephemeral beauty, Islam presents itself today as an institution of fixation and stagnation. It is totally conceivable that something of worth may come out of this powerlessness, something that converges with Christianity. This process, it seems, has already started amongst a group of modern, educated minds. However, until this renaissance dawns on a wider scale Allah remains a god for hermits. He cannot not inspire the creative energy of truly civilized man. [...] Today there is only one inherited religion that is feasible; without doubt that religion is Christianity (de Chardin 1965: 137-138).

The Muslim Renewal can be seen as an answer to the conflict with western culture and Christianity. Along with the shape of the question it shares the direction of the answer (Heidegger: "das Erfragte"): the search for a social and just model of a society living in freedom. Nevertheless searching for the answers in the canonical texts of Islam (Heidegger: "das Befragte") hardly corresponds with the likely modern western approach to a similar problem.

On the other hand, Muslim Renewal stressed the differences between an Islamic and a western way of life. With time this element became stronger and stronger. For example, 'true' Muslims began to distinguish themselves from Occidentalized Muslims through their appearance (clothing, veil, beard etc.), thus creating a visible division in Egyptian society. In the 1920's and afterwards, the Muslim Renewal represented a proper ethical Muslim identity and was interested in finding Muslim ideals analogical with European values.

4. The way to Integrisim: the Muslim Brothers under Hassan al-Banna

Not only the values, but also the institutions and the world-view of the Muslim Renewal were somewhat 'European' in their nature. The Muslim Brothers, founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna, established congresses (the first was Ismailia, 1933), revues, educational work, projects, youth organizations, (in 1941 there were 3,000 Muslim scouts; in 1948 – the year of the organization's interdiction by the government they had 80,000), cultural clubs (nadi) and sport clubs (during some times they had 36 football clubs in Cairo alone). In 1941 Hassan al-Banna decided to form a political party.

Hassan al-Banna developed a political program of re-islamization of the hearts and families of Egyptian society and of all Muslim societies. He anticipated the breakdown of the occidental culture and hoped that in the long-run Islam would rule over all mankind. Al-Banna stresses the political aspect of Islam even in its global dimensions, but in the very centre of his thinking there is still the re-ethicizing of the mind. I quote one text among many from his letters:

You have learned, dear reader, that the Muslim Brothers have as their first aim the education of the hearts, the renewal of the souls, the reinforcement of morals, the development of the true force of character in the human being of the nation. They are convinced that this is the foundation on which the regeneration of nations and peoples is to be built (al-Banna 1983: 71).

The most important concept concerning ethical commitment in the letters of Hassan al-Banna is *ar-rabbaniyya*. This word means "to connect ones heart to God and to act through the source and the light of the intensity of this connection".² Increasingly, Hassan al-Banna stresses the need for total commitment to *ar-rabbaniyya*. The true Muslim must be ready to die for his faith. However, as far back as the Muslim Brothers' earliest days, when they had a membership of just seven, al-Banna demonstrated his commitment to life and death in the first version of the so-called "confession of faith" of the Muslim Brothers (1928): "We want to be a group that establishes a sincere alliance with God to live for His religion and to die in his way" (Quoted from Hassan al-Banna 1986: 83).

The 1940's was a crucial decade in the development of the Muslim Brothers. During this decade the alliance of the Occidentalized Egyptian upper-class and the colonial or quasi-colonial forces like Great Britain, France and the US became targets, due to the bans they

imposed upon Muslim Brothers during elections, and upon their institutions. The opposition against western oriented Muslims, already present in the “confession of faith” of 1928 became even more important. At the same time the modern elements of Muslim Renewal are replaced by the now radicalized idea that all truth is to be found in the Koran and that ones whole life should follow the rules of Islam. In this way Hassan al-Banna can be considered a kind of Integrist. Integrism can be understood as the concept that the whole truth is to be found in a religious text or teaching and that ones whole life should be built upon this truth. Integrism does, however, allow for a certain ethical creativity in expressing the eternal truth for a new age or environment. In contrast to fundamentalism which teaches blind submission, Integrism does at least respect human freedom and individual responsibility. Nevertheless, Integrism is an anti-liberal and anti-pluralistic vision of society. In his letters al-Banna writes:

We think that the rules of Islam and its teachings embrace all aspects of the life of the people, here below and in Heaven above. Those who think that Islam affects only the cultural or spiritual aspect of our lives, and does not touch upon other areas are wrong; for Islam is belief and adoration, fatherland and nationality, religion and state, spirituality and action, the Koran and the sword. Every word in the Koran expresses this and at the heart of Islam is the command to be sincere and faithful in all these areas (al-Banna 1983: 119).

In the time of al-Banna many elements of the terrorist ideology had already been established: Integrist ideas and policies, militant commitment to a “pure Islam” and a social tendency to the poorer classes were combined with a strong opposition to Occidentalized Muslims in Egypt and the goal to “free” all the Islamic countries from the presence of infidels. This latest point, we find in the statutes of the Muslim Brothers from 1945 the commitment “to free the banks of the Nile, all Arabic countries and finally the Islamic fatherland, along with all its regions, from the presence of all infidels by supporting Islamic minorities across the globe”.³

By 1945 the Muslim Brothers were a radical anti-colonialist movement based on a total commitment to an Integristic understanding of Islam. They had their greatest success in the lower classes and were still promoting a re-ethicizing of the mind and social reform. The Occidentalized upper classes had no concept of a proper east-western or modern Islamic identity; their identity was largely based on economic success and on nationalism and not on the internationalism of the umma. There was no question in their minds of an independent pluralistic modern Egyptian identity.

5. De-Ethicizing Through Fundamentalism and the Excommunication of the Majority of the Population: Sayyid Qutb and his Followers

The next step towards a radicalization of the Muslim Brothers was the teaching of Sayyid Qutb especially in his writings of the 1960's. We have already mentioned Qutb's idea of "takfir", of the "excommunication" of the majority of Muslims who are not committed to militant activities for an Islamic country. They are considered to be like the inhabitants of Mecca during Muhammad's first years there. They live in complete ignorance:

In our day, the whole world lives in a state of ignorance (jahiliyya) regarding the source of the rules of life. The ignorance is so profound, that no material welfare and no scientific discoveries can diminish its effect. This [ignorance] stems from the opposition to God's power and dominance on earth. [...] This operation [of not submitting to the power of God] is no longer realized in the primitive manner of the jahiliyya before the Hijra; rather it is manifest in permitting men the right to establish values, to make laws, to built systems, and to take positions within these systems without taking into account the divine will upon ones life. Even those things that God has forbidden are permissible within this system" (Sayyid Qutb,1980: 10).

In this quote we can see how all individual ethical principles have been merged into one single commandment to serve God. All individual creative ethical action, such as formulating values or passing laws, is forbidden. If ethics is to do with freedom, responsibility and creativity, then the re-ethicizing of the mind must cease among Qutb and his followers. Only in this state can the doctrine be called fundamentalist. It demands belief in the literal truth of a sacred text and imposes total obedience to the interpretation of this truth made by fundamentalist leaders in their assessment of the current political situation. Any sort of self-determined responsible ethical construct is wiped out by this kind of absolute clerical fundamentalism.

This teaching is combined with a dualistic view of society; namely that in Egyptian society. On the one side are the true Muslims, on the other the kuffars, the non-believers. These two groups cannot live together in peace:

Islam knows only two types of society: Muslim or jahilite. In the Muslim society, Islam is expressed through faith, adoration, behavior, legislation, the organization of society and the concept of creation. The jahilite society does not live by Islamic principles: it is not ruled by faith, nor by the Islamic world view, nor by its values, nor by its legislation nor by its customs” (Sayyid Qutb 1980: 116).

Sayyid Qutb did not declare jihad, but he touched on this subject. Tariq Ramadan quotes the following passage from Qutb’s “Signs on the way”: “If it is necessary to talk about a defensive war to qualify Islam, it is in the sense of a man’s resistance to anything that hinders his freedom or his activity, e.g. political regimes that maintain power through economical or social manipulation”.⁴ The followers of Sayyid Qutb came to a similar conclusion. Most of them decided to leave the Muslim Brothers and to establish and work in their own groups.

6. Israel, USA, and the Growth of Hatred

Colonial powers in Egypt like Britain and France were considered by the Muslim Brothers as enemies, but history showed that these enemies were relatively easy to make to leave the country. What these older colonial powers did, had in the eyes of many Egyptians at least some positive cultural and technological aspects. The construction of the Suez Channel and the system of railroads, many aspects of the educational system are strongly influenced by Great Britain and France.

The foundation of the State of Israel, the way it treated the Palestinians, however, created hatred during a long time. In the first decades, the Islamists were not at all the most violent enemies of Israel. Many of them considered the Egyptian defeat in the Six-Day-War in 1967 as Allah’s punishment for the Anti-Islamistic regime of Nasser. With the daily information about Israel’s activities in the occupied territories, the upcoming idea that the USA are “the great Satan” who helps the “small Satan” Israel and the peace Egyptian president Anwar as-Saddat signed with Menachim Begin in Camp David, Muslim Brothers changed into a strongly Anti-Israel and Anti-USA mentality. The soldiers that killed Saddat in 1981 were members of a group of Muslim Brothers.

7. Wahabism or the Influence of Saudi Arabia

To complete our portrait of the shift from Social reform to terrorism we must look to the wahabitic influence on the one hand and the idea

that the current wave of terrorism stemmed from abroad, namely from Saudi-Arabia.

Today public opinion in Egypt considers Fundamentalism and terrorism to have been imported by rich Saudi Arabians. We have seen that this idea does not reflect correctly the historical development of doctrines in the Muslim Renewal movement. There has been a development in Egypt itself that has led to terrorism and much of the radicalization of Saudi Arabian fundamentalists is influenced by ideas developed in Egypt by Sayyid Qutb and his followers. This leads to the paradoxical situation, in which many Saudis believe terrorism comes from Egypt and many Egyptians locate its origins in Saudi-Arabia.

On the other hand, after 1969 wealthy Saudi-Arabians gained a lot of influence in Egypt, and supported in particular Integrist and Fundamentalist developments in Egyptian Islam. Due to this financial support wahabitic and salafitic colors were given to many Islamists. The money from Saudi Arabia was sometimes used to buy arms and to prepare for terrorist activities.

What is the result of all these developments in Egypt? Owing to the influence of Saudi-Arabian wahabism, the doctrine of excommunication and withdrawal (hijra) and the effects of recent terrorist attacks, the social role of the Islamist has changed dramatically. The originally pro-identical Egyptian Islamism movement has become increasingly isolated. The small groups of terrorists in Egypt are no longer associated with a social reform program which favors poorer people, but rather with money and political interests from abroad. Their only sociological basis is the still wide-spread sentiments against Israel and the USA and the social and cultural divisions of the Egyptian society. I would like to examine similar developments in other Muslim countries.

8. Pakistan

Another country that is often considered as a possible breeding-ground for terrorism is Pakistan. Indeed, developments here show a number parallels with the Muslim Renewal in Egypt. In Pakistan, at the beginning of the 20th Century, doors suddenly opened to Western culture, which manifested itself in particular during a liberal Muslim renewal that took place at this time, of which an important representative was Sir Muhammad Iqbal (1877-1938). He advocated a fusion between Western intellectual knowledge and Eastern ideas of welfare and love. As a kind of national poet his work influenced the education of many people in Pakistan. Iqbal is a liberal thinker and a great poet who in many ways has nothing in common with the Muslim

Brothers in Egypt. However, his writings sometimes expressed ideas that could be interpreted in a rather similar sense to those of Al-Banna in Egypt. Apparent commitment to the true Islamic cause unto death - Iqbal sums up Islam in the word of *ijtihad* – and to an Integrist society could be found in his writings. For example, speaking about the idea of a moral superiority of Islam, Iqbal said:

Believe me, nowadays Europe is the greatest stumbling block for the ethical progress of Man. A Muslim, however, is in the possession of these ultimate ideas on the basis of a revelation [...]. For him the spiritual basis of his life is a constitutive conviction for which even the less enlightened would give their lives. Let us hope that the Muslims of our days will be able to appreciate this position, and reform their lives the light of these ultimate principles.⁵

Iqbal wanted Muslims to create a spiritual Islamic democracy. A second period commenced when in 1941 a social reform organization was founded by Abu al-A'la al-Mawdudi *Jama'at-i-islami*. Prior to Sayyid Qutb al-Mawdudi's statement that most of the Muslim population lived in *jahiliyya* and that the "true" Muslims should separate from those unbelievers, Al-Mawdudi and his party were stressing Islamic solidarity with the poor, building schools and campaigning in the 1958 Pakistani elections. The Integristism in both Egypt and Pakistan could at the same time be referred to as "Hijraism".

The separation from India and the creation of a religiously homogenous country encouraged some Islamists to lay more and more emphasis on Integrist and Fundamentalist politics and ethics. The influence of Wahabitic thinking is strong, especially since many Pakistanis live in Saudi-Arabia for long periods of time in order to work there. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to assume that in Pakistan Islamists are isolated. Unlike in Egypt, many Pakistanis believe that terrorism, Fundamentalism and Integristism do not necessarily originate from overseas, they could well be home-grown. This opinion is due to a number of possible reasons, such as the conflict with India, Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan and the strong influence of Muslim teaching in a still fairly backward society.

9. Morocco

If Pakistan is tending increasingly towards Islamic fundamentalism, Morocco gives more the impression of a traditional, relatively liberal Islamic monarchy. The links to Europe, especially to France, Spain, Belgium and Italy are stronger and impinge on more levels of society than in Pakistan or even in Egypt; the influence of Saudi-Arabia is less

important than in these countries. We can make no absolute parallel with the developments we have explored in Egypt and in Pakistan.

Many Moroccans hold the point of view that terrorism and Fundamentalism come from, and are practiced abroad. The number of people committed to groups active in Al-Quaida terrorism is confined to a small minority of some 3000; members of this group are very often considered to be influenced by Saudi-Arabians. Other fundamentalists are considered to be influenced by the FIS or other Algerian movements.

Of course this view is also somewhat one-sided. The wish to accuse strangers of terrorism even led to the belief spread by the Media in Morocco that the organizer of the Casablanca-attacks on May 16th 2003 was a Frenchman. However, the group responsible for the attacks, Salafia Jihadia, has strong links to al-Quaida and Saudi-Arabia.

This development has been made possible due to the work of Moroccan Islamism amongst students and in the slums. Shaik Abdulsalam Yassine, the leader of the largest Islamist group has a more Integrist than Fundamentalist point of view. He wishes to come to power in order to create a state that “Islamises modernity” (*Islamiser la modernité*)⁶, that is, rejects any doctrines of Western science which seem irrational, unconvincing and which are not backed up by the Koran, e.g. Darwinism, and reclaims any rational Western doctrine which corresponds with the teachings in the Holy book. The lack of reflection in Yassine’s concept, and the absence of any real re-ethicizing of the mind or of a concentrated effort to create a Muslim Renewal in Morocco show that this country has undergone rather different changes to those of Egypt or Pakistan. It is probable that the different steps taken in the past will generate atypical developments in the future. The politics of the monarchy and the economic success or failure of this country could be crucial in deciding the future consequences for Moroccan society.

10. Conclusion

The historical developments that led to Muslim Renewal, social reform and small groups turning to terrorism are similar in the case of Egypt and in Pakistan. In these two countries Muslim Renewal started with a “re-ethicizing of the mind”. Soon small groups of Muslims turned increasingly from Integrist to Fundamentalism, and the practice of excommunicating the majority of the population was introduced by a group who considered themselves to be “true Muslims”. Fundamentalism under the control of authoritarian leaders left no room

for the individual interpretation of ethical teaching. Since the majority were excommunicated, a small, select group of imams controlled the interpretation of the Koran, and the issuing of fatwas. Fundamentalism and the active takfir resulted in a de-ethicizing of Islamic movements. This leads to a crucial question concerning the future of many Islamic states: What will be the eventual outcome of the social reform and the re-ethicizing aspects of Muslim Renewal? Will we take this possible outcome into account and prepare for it, or will it disappear in the struggle between terrorists and the majority?

Notes

1. One recent example in German mass media is the article of Richard Herzinger in *Die Zeit* 2004/20 with the title: "Radikale Botschaft – sanft im Ton. Islamisten in Deutschland predigen nicht nur Hass, sondern werben mit ewigen Werten. An ihrer Gefährlichkeit ändert das wenig". This article shows that German society understands Islamism as a pluralistic phenomenon which in many forms includes aspects of ethical renewal only now. Herzinger recognizes that terrorism represents only a small minority of the Islamic movement but he also argues that sometimes there are intermediate zones between Islamism and militant programs like totalitarianism or terrorism.
2. See Tariq Ramadan, *Aux sources du renouveau musulman, D'al-Afghani à Hassan al-Banna un siècle de réformisme islamique*, Paris 1998, 227. This book was helpful for me to find some important references in the works of al-Banna.
3. Quoted from Ali `Abd al-Halim Mahmud: *Minhaj at-tarbiyyat 'ind al-Ikhwān al-muslimin*, Cairo 1989, p. 250.
4. Sayyid Qutb, *Ma'alim fii at-tariq*, Cairo 1980, 60 (see Tariq Ramadan, *Aux sources du renouveau musulman*, Paris 1998, 427).
5. Muhammad Iqbal, quoted from the French translation: *Le Livre de l'éternité* (Paris: Djavid-Nama, 1962), p. 193.
6. "Islamiser la modernité" is the title of his book published in Rabat in 1998.

18. Contemporary Arab Critique of Islamicization as a Form of Re-Ethnicization

Elizabeth Suzanne Kassab

Abstract: One of the most dynamic processes of re-ethnicizing the mind has been taking place in the Arab world during the last three decades under the banner of Islamicization. Its advocates have been claiming Islam to be “the solution” to the mounting political, economic, social, cultural and intellectual problems of the area. Their claims have been rebutted by critical thinkers who have warned against the dangers of essentialism in conceiving identity, of particularism in producing knowledge and of theocracy in ruling their countries. They have emphasized the importance of re-centering the historical, the human and the other in approaching these matters. There is a difficult but important struggle, led under most forbidding circumstances. This contribution presents briefly some of these critical theses, putting them in their historical and postcolonial contexts. **Key Words:** Arab, Islam, Postcolonial, Culture, Critique.

1. What do we Mean by “Re-Ethnicizing” the Mind? The European and Post-Colonial Contexts.

The title of our anthology contains the repetition prefix “re-” in “Re-ethnicizing the mind”, suggesting the comeback of a phenomenon after its disappearance or temporary retreat. Before considering this comeback, I find it useful to identify briefly the characteristics of the early “ethnicized mind” and to recall the factors that led to its partial or momentary “de-ethnicization”. The assumption made here is that by “ethnicizing the mind” we mean the emphasizing of intellectual and cultural particularities specific to a group of people, be that an ethnic, national, linguistic, religious and/or racial group – particularities that define the mind, i.e., that define the way of thinking and viewing the world in a more or less deterministic way. This inquiry immediately presents us with different histories and different contexts separated, among other ways, along the colonial divide, notwithstanding the differentiated courses on each side of the divide.

1.1. Ethnicizing and Re-Ethnicizing the Mind in Europe

In very broad terms, one could speak in Europe of a nationalistically ethnicized mind, in the wake of the 19th century nationalist move-

ments, especially the ones associated with the Romantic current. The latter emerged, as we know, in reaction to the universalist principles of the Enlightenment, which advocated cognitive, ethical and political values based on the universal nature of human reason, abstracted from concrete historical and particular conditions. It also came in reaction to politico-military circumstances, such as the Napoleonic occupation of German territories and the subsequent emergence of German romantic nationalism as expressed in the writings of Fichte. The 19th and 20th centuries witnessed attempts at negotiating the claims of nationalism with the principles of the Enlightenment, mainly those of the individual, associational and political liberties. The critique of the chauvinist forms of nationalism and the sobering reflection on the crimes and violations committed in the name of fascism and/or workers' party dictatorships renewed the commitment to those principles. In the aftermath of the First World War European thinkers such as Paul Valéry feared for the spirit of Europe and during the rise of fascism thinkers like Edmund Husserl and Emmanuel Lévinas exhorted Europe to return to itself, to the fundamentals of its real being, namely Greek philosophy and the search for perennial truth. The post-WWII debates about the European Union referred to the "Idea" of Europe. Was the specificity of this idea ethnic or conceptual? Was this a descriptive or a normative idea? In what sense was it "European:" historically, metaphysically, prescriptively, and in each case, on what basis? Jacques Derrida called for a critical examination of what he called the "*arche-teleological*" scheme of thinking Europe, a Europe believed to be grounded in Greek philosophy and destined to reach Enlightenment. He invited Europeans to reflect upon the selective history upon which the "Idea" of Europe is constructed and he emphasized the importance of recognizing the prescriptive nature of this identity construction.¹ The discourses on Europe are an illustration of the complex motivations and purposes involved in discourses on identity in general. More recently, the reaction to economic and cultural globalization, perceived by many Europeans as the combination of a self-serving uniformization imposed by multinational companies and a growing hegemony of the United States of America, has come in the form of a renewed insistence on European and national cultural particularities and the defense of economic and cultural protectionist policies. These defensive attitudes have also arisen in reaction to the increased presence of non-ethnic nationals and immigrants in most European countries. Apart from this last non-European factor and to some extent from the global factor, the European discussions and movements, concerning the ethnicizing and universalizing positions, have been

largely self-referential, i.e., dealing with ideas and forces produced within Europe and meant for Europe. By contrast, the phenomena of intellectual “ethnicization” and “re-ethnicization” outside Europe have been for the most part with reference to Europe and they have been connected to the experience of colonialism.

1.2. Ethnicizing and Re-Ethnicizing the Mind in the Colonial and Postcolonial World

The “ethnicization” of the mind outside Europe came in the first wave of response to the European colonial definition of the colonized. This definition emphasized the civilizational ineptitude of the colonized and served to justify the so-called “civilizational mission” of the colonizer. It took different forms in the different colonial regions. For instance, in Black Africa it claimed that the African mind was inherently incapable of logical and theoretical thinking and consequently incapable of producing an advanced culture. In Latin America European culture was to fill the civilizational gap that was created by the defeat of supposedly “uncivilized” local populations. Arabs, in turn, were seen to be captive of an oriental, religious worldview, intrinsically inimical to reason and progress. These definitions, imposed from a power position, carried the weight of an alleged scientific truth, coming from the scholarly and political authority of “superior” civilizations. They came to be the established truths among the colonizers as well as the colonized. It is in the course of the anti-colonial struggles that they started to be put in question, especially by the colonized, who engaged in a long search for an empowering sense of self, rejecting those negative definitions and seeking a mind of their own – a quest that has proven to be arduous and exposed to numerous pitfalls, compounded by the conditions of poverty and dependence under which it had to be carried out². Not only was there a need to affirm a positive definition of the self, demarcated from European identity, but also a need to change and modernize the self, paradoxically after the model of European culture, which had undeniably proven to be in many respects the model of an advanced civilization. The latter need called on the one hand for an understanding of the factors in oneself that caused one’s culture to be backward and dominated. Often this led to a self-denigration that pressed in turn for total Europeanization. It led on the other hand to an apology of the self, blaming the fall into backwardness and weakness to factors external to the core of the self, and celebrating the distinctive superior qualities of the latter. This was accompanied by an exhortation to return to that core and to build on what was truly one’s own: one’s own tradition, one’s own religion, one’s own language, etc.

For many this meant the rejection, or at least the caution against, all things foreign. This search for a thought of one's own, for a culture of one's own came to be known as the search for authenticity. In many cases it turned into a cult of authenticity. Ironically, whether in self-glorification or in self-hatred the contours of the self were those set by the colonizer. They were adopted by the colonized and were either given a positive value or made into an object of total criticism. In both cases the essentialist nature of the definition of identity was maintained and even re-emphasized. This is best exemplified in the ideology of "*négritude*" as a response to European racism, with the same components of sensualism and emotionalism as the latter, but now celebrated and valorized instead of being a ground for prejudice. It is also illustrated in the affirmation of Islam as the distinctive "nature" of Arabs and Arabhood. This was the first wave of ethnicization of the mind in the colonial world. It was not limited to the question of cultural identity but encompassed also the cognitive field. The whole debate around ethnophilosophy in Africa dealt with the possibility of a distinctively African philosophy based on the oral traditions of thought and wisdom. In the Arab world, discussions were engaged on the necessity of Islamicizing knowledge. In post-colonial countries an effort was made to build indigenous sciences, especially in the social field, that would serve the needs and priorities of the local societies and that would relate to the local cultures.

The first wave of ethnicization was revisited and reconsidered in the course of the 20th century, particularly in the latter part of the century, when more and more post-colonial thinkers understood the dangers of essentialism and drew attention to the problems involved in an uncritical understanding of authenticity. Some of them came to condemn altogether the questions of identity; but most of them started to advocate a search for an empowered self that avoids the deterministic deadlocks of essentialism and to support a critical project of modernization and Enlightenment that rejects the idealization both of European and native traditions. This late post-colonial critical thought is increasingly self-reflective, drawing on a painful learning process concerning ideologies of the self and the other in the post-independence era. However, this era witnessed not only the growth of critique, but that of ideologies of authenticity as well, as a result of local repressive politics of post-independence states, of dependent economies, of neo-colonial policies, and of hegemonic globalization forces. It has been most "explosive", both in the metaphorical and literal (though not always) sense, in the Arab world, with the re-ethnicization of the mind in the form of a call to "re-islamicization". The ethnicization as well as

the re-ethnicization of the mind in the post-colonial world have been complex phenomena. They have not always been given the required careful attention for their understanding. Still less attention has been devoted to the critical response to them within the post-colonial world. Here I wish to shed light on the critique with which this call for the re-ethnicization of the mind has been received by Arab contemporary thinkers. First, I present briefly the place of ethnicization in the early proposals of cultural critique in the 19th century and sketch the line of its ebb and flow in the course of the 20th century, until its pronounced rise in the last few decades of the century. Then I focus on the contemporary critique of re-ethnicization in the Arab world.

2. Ethnicization of the Arab Mind in the 19th and Early 20th Century

In the historical outline I will present the main theses of some of the major thinkers of the “*nahda*” (Arabic for rise), the epoch known as that of the modern Arab Renaissance, running from the early 19th century to the early 20th century.³ The Renaissance refers to the renewed debates on cultural decline and revival, on interaction with foreign, mainly Western, cultures, on the state of knowledge and art, of language and religion, on society and politics, after centuries of intellectual and cultural stagnation. It was the time of self-definition and self-assessment in the face of an imposing and intruding other.

2.1. The 19th Century Opening to Europe: Tahtawi’s Search for the Principles of Progress

These debates were triggered, as is well known, by the growing interaction with Europe, starting with the brief but dramatic occupation of Egypt by Napoleon (1798-1801).⁴ The latter came with an occupation army, but also with a team of scholars to study it, and established the famous *Institut d’Egypte* in Cairo.⁵ Muhammad Ali Pasha who governed Egypt after the departure of the Napoleonic armies (1805-1849) led a modernizing campaign, mainly in the army and in the administration for the sake of empowering Egypt and strengthening its autonomy vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire to which it officially belonged. In this modernization process Muhammad Ali sent to Europe, mainly to Paris, groups of students to acquire training in the modern fields of knowledge. Among them was the illustrious Sheikh Rifa’a Tahtawi (1801-1873) as a supervisor of one of the groups. Tahtawi wrote down his observations made during his stay in Paris between 1826 and 1831 and published them after his return to Egypt in an effort to disseminate knowledge about Europe and modern culture.

These observations offer an invaluable insight into the perception of an Egyptian cleric of that culture, experienced first hand in Paris. This travel book, now a landmark of the *nahda* period (cf. Newman 2004), presents reflections on a wide spectrum of French social, religious, political, institutional, familial, professional, economic and artistic life. The overall impression is positive, informed by an intrigued curiosity and an inquisitive liberty. Tahtawi begins his report by explaining why a good Muslim would travel to the lands of the Infidel to seek benefit. He says that Islam commands believers to seek the good and the useful wherever they can be found and that the wisdom he was searching for in those lands was not that of Christianity but the wisdom achieved by human effort. Apart from a few apologetic notes of this nature here and there, the general tone of the text is not defensive. Tahtawi does not seem to feel threatened in his cultural, religious or linguistic identity by his encounter with what he sees to be a an advanced civilization. On the contrary, he seems at ease with himself, but eager to grasp and bring home the human principles of progress that have benefited this foreign culture. Among these principles and the most important for him, is that of justice based upon a political power restricted by a fundamental law. He translates in his book article by article the French Constitution of the time emphasizing those elements of restriction as well as the rights granted by the law to the people, including the various liberties. Although the Constitution is neither drawn from the Holy Book nor from the tradition of the Prophet, he adds, it contains important ideas of justice. Just political rule is for him the key to prosperity and progress. It is interesting to note the primacy of the political for this early *nahda* figure. Obviously, the priority is not yet that of cultural protectionism, as it will be the case toward the turn of the century. Clearly for Tahtawi reforming Egypt does not consist in making it become French, but in adopting certain basic principles of progress. Among these principles is also the valorization of knowledge both within the community of scientists and among the population at large, male and female. He repeatedly notes the eagerness of the French to know, the extent of literacy and the role of the press in disseminating serious knowledge. He underlines the importance of having rulers who support science, as was the case in the golden age of Islam. He thinks that this Western science is a product of the early Islamic science and that adopting it would only bring home what was once Islamic, and hence what is not foreign. Another phenomenon that fascinates Tahtawi is the French interest in novelties, in change as such, like the opportunity for sons to choose professions different from those of their fathers; in other words, the encouragement for liberation

from conservative traditions. Moreover, he is impressed by the thriving economic activity, protected by the rule of law and by political justice. He praises the work ethic and punctuality of the French. It is these principles of progress that Tahtawi advocated upon his return to Egypt. He, like most *nahda* thinkers, insisted on the importance of encouraging and reforming education for boys as well as for girls, for lay people as much as for clergy. He headed for many years a school of translation that translated into Arabic and Turkish hundreds of works, mainly from the French. He was concerned with the “indigenization” of those principles, i.e. in finding their parallels in Islam. For instance, he affirmed that the rational principles of the European sciences were the same as those of Islamic jurisprudence, that the French notions of equality and freedom corresponded to those of justice and good works in Islam, that the French love of fatherland was equivalent to the love of religion and its defense in Islam, and that there was a concordance between the *Shari'a* (Islamic law) and natural law. Clearly, Tahtawi was neither advocating full-fledged democracy nor secular modernity. But nor was he a religious revivalist, obsessed with the defense of a distinctive mind. Apparently the distinctness of his (and his people’s) mind was secure enough not to have to insist on ethnicizing it. His project was not of ethnicizing the mind but of breathing into it certain principles of progress.

2.2. The Turn of the Century Confrontation with Colonial Europe: The Reaction of Cultural Defensiveness

The situation becomes quite different a few generations later when European powers become occupying powers, threatening more and more the weakening Ottoman Empire. In 1881 France occupies Tunis and the following year Britain occupies Egypt. Europe is now perceived as an aggressor, a colonial power that endangers the region and its peoples. Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897), an influential thinker and political activist moving between Cairo, Istanbul, Paris and London, sets the defense of the region against this aggression as the most urgent task. According to him, two elements are necessary for this defense: unity and power. Unity is to be sought in religion, because it constitutes, more than language, the strongest bond between people; and power is to be found in science. In some of his writings, Afghani admits that religion often impedes the freedom of thought and the progress of science, and this not only in Islam, as claimed by the French Orientalist Ernest Renan, but also in Christianity. But he does not propose to resolve this tension between religion on the one hand and the unimpeded pursuit of science on the other in any systematic

way. His primary concern was actually to mobilize a Pan-Islamic solidarity in the face of European hegemony and to urge Muslims to appropriate for themselves the means of civilizational power, namely science, even if it was to be borrowed from Europe. He wanted on the one hand to refute the derogatory claims about Islam made by Europeans and on the other hand to reform Islam not only or primarily as a religion but mostly as a civilization. It is his disciple Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905) who systematized these ideas of reform and became the father of Islamic modernism. Abduh believed that Islam more than Christianity harmonized with modernity, because it did not center on mysteries, miracles and the clergy, as Christianity did. His project was that of conciliating modernity with Islam, claiming that true Islam was the religion of reason, science and civilization, and that the present decline was a result of a deviation from the right path. He too, like Tahtawi, showed the equivalences between the principles of modern culture and those of Islam. But the times had changed: while at the time of Tahtawi, Islam was the dominating worldview of people, the question was how to accommodate certain elements of modernity in it; at the time of Abduh, the question was how to adapt Islam to the sweeping force of modernity.⁶

2.3. The Early 20th Secular Proposals and the Turn to Romanticism

The affirmation of Islam as the distinctive and empowering constituent of the self for facing inner backwardness as well as European colonialism was not the only mobilizing force for change. Other voices were calling for secular modernization, but till the end of WWI they were mainly those of Arab Christians, somewhat marginalized in the predominantly Muslim world. It is between the two World Wars that Muslim thinkers such as Muhammad Hussein Haykal, Taha Hussein, Ismail Mazhar and others, will start advocating secularism publicly. Some of them, like Sheikh Ali Abdel Raziq, who argued that Islam did not contain a political doctrine and did not prescribe a specific form of government, came from the Islamic clerical establishment. These secular views were of course condemned by the mainstream establishment, but they were disseminated in a growing number of books and periodicals. The rise of these secular ideas came to a head in the mid-thirties, when many of their advocates realized that the seeds they were sowing did not correspond to the soil they were in. In a dramatic shift of position, they retracted their views and explained how mistaken they were to believe that change could be initiated without engaging the people, who in their vast majority were tradition minded, and that

these people could not respond to ideas that were detached from their Islamic tradition. Their mistake, as they confessed, was to think that addressing people and addressing issues could be done on the level of pure reason, neglecting the imaginary and the emotional levels. For some the proposals for secularization were invitations for abandoning their own identity and adopting that of others. The overall reaction was a turn to a romantic sense of self and a return to the conciliatory position of Abduh according to which Islam was the reference for any act of acculturation. The nationalist ideologies of the time, even the secularist among them, such as Pan-Arab nationalism or Syrian regional nationalism, were made to integrate and accommodate religion, Christianity, but mostly Islam.⁷ Arab socialist doctrines, such as that of Abdel Nasser, did the same. The governments that came to power in the mid 20th century in the name of these doctrines and ideologies failed to deliver their developmental and emancipatory promises and turned out to be oppressive regimes. Their ultimate failure was the 1967 Pan-Arab defeat against Israel, the major turning point in the Arab intellectual history of the 20th century.

2.4. The 1967 Defeat and its Intellectual Repercussions

The 1967 defeat threw great prejudice on the conciliatory positions and radicalized critique in two opposite directions: an islamicizing direction which claimed that “Islam was the solution” and a secular critical direction which called for a radical critique of ideology, of ready made solutions and of authoritarian forms of paternalism, whether in the name of God, tradition or the nation. These reactions were also expressed in oppositional political movements broadly characterized as Islamic and Leftist. The governments in place repressed both movements and played the one against the other, using the Islamists to crush the Leftists in labor unions, on campuses, in the media and in associational activities in general, all of which were co-opted by the state, leaving the latter in a bitter power struggle with the Islamists in the last two decades of the century. The secularist thinkers were thus systematically targeted, intimidated, jailed, tortured, assassinated, exiled and at best marginalized, rarely, if ever, receiving any support from the outside world. However their voices were not totally extinguished. Resisting the repression of the state as well as the onslaught of the Islamists, they continue to warn against certain ways of conceiving authenticity and identity and to defend individual and associational liberties. The 1967 defeat and the subsequent escalation of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, handled according to most Arabs in a biased way by the international community in favor of Israel, aggra-

vated the sense of being the object of Western aggression. This feeling was exacerbated by the first Gulf war in the early 90s and then by the recent Iraqi invasion. The relative secularization processes of the mid-century and the later adoption and/or imposition of neo-liberal socio-economic policies in addition to the effects of globalization added a cultural component to this feeling. Among the most widespread complaints of the last third of the century were about the “cultural invasion” (al-ghazu al-thaqafi) or the “intellectual invasion” (al-ghazu al-fikri). Islamicization came in part as a reaction to these perceived threats.

3. The Contemporary Arab Critique of Re-Ethnicization

For numerous contemporary Arab critics, the problem in the re-ethnicization of the mind in general and in its islamicization in particular is not in the search for a sense of self *per se*, but in the way this search is conducted and in the assumptions made in it about identity, history, culture, modernity and tradition. The call for islamicization claims that Islam is *the* fundamental identity of Arabs, that it contains the needed answers to the pressing questions, that it is an accomplished tradition to which one can and ought to return and that it is a civilization that is distinctive and self-sufficient. Consequently, it demands a reshaping of individual and political life according to Islamic principles and a re-production of knowledge, especially social scientific knowledge on Islamic bases. Here are briefly some of the main oppositional theses to these islamicization propositions, formulated and defended by some major figures of contemporary Arab thought.

3.1. Critique of the Islamic Essence of Arab Identity

The Syrian historian based in Europe, Aziz al-Azmeh,⁸ criticizes the description given to the recent islamicization current in the Arab world, both by Islamists militants and by many observers, as being the return of Arab societies to their natural core, namely, Islam. This core is supposed to be the essence of Arab being, superficially erased or disfigured at times, but invariably there, waiting to be re-acknowledged and re-invigorated for the re-normalization of the cultural and political life of these societies. Obviously, this Islamic core is taken to be unchanging over time, unaffected by the vicissitudes of historical circumstances and events, monolithic, self-evident and self-sufficient. For al-Azmeh, this is an essentialist, ahistorical, and deterministic view of Arab societies, that produces a populist and sentimentalist discourse, and supports a Jacobin view of politics, based on uniformization,

voluntarism and at best vitalistic romanticism, akin to the German late romanticism. The self is taken to be an evident given and knowledge of the self is supposed to be unmediated, intuitive, dispensing with discursive and historical investigation. This is a view that ignores, according to al-Azmeh, the historical complexity of Arab societies that witnessed in the last two centuries important secularization processes, albeit partial and problematic. He emphasizes the importance of taking these historical realities as a basis for discussing secularization in the Arab world, rather than the usual focus on the theoretical compatibility of “Islam” with secular ideas. Moreover, he sees in this essentialist view of identity a cult of difference that echoes that of some post-modern trends. What this view has in common with these trends is the censure of the Enlightenment principles, missing an important difference in context: while the post-modern critique of the Enlightenment comes on the basis of the modern achievements of the Enlightenment, such as those of democracy and critical thinking, the Islamist critique comes in the pre-modern context of authoritarianism and despotism. Al-Azmeh, like many other Arab and post-colonial thinkers, warns against the unwarranted transposition of post-modern theses to post-colonial contexts. The Syrian philosopher, Sadeq Jalal al-Azm (2000), also condemns the Islamist cult of difference. He characterizes it as a form of counter-Orientalism or of an Orientalism in reverse that claims for Arab societies the same reductionist identity that Orientalists conferred upon them. For many Arab thinkers, including feminists such as Marnia Lazreg (an Algerian sociologist based in the US), Islam remains, even for contemporary Western feminists, the defining framework within which Arab feminist and other issues are confined (cf. Lazreg 1988). This framework is also adopted by the Islamist thinkers, who are critical otherwise of Western scholarship about their societies.

3.2. Critique of the Conflation of Religion with Civilization in “Islam”

Another problematic aspect of the Islamist proposal is the blurred understanding of the reference term “Islam”. The Lebanese literary critic, Nadeem Naimy,⁹ thinks that the Islamists confuse Islamic civilization with Islam, the religion. They base their call to return to Islam to a great extent upon the evidence that “Islam” had in the past succeeded in producing a powerful state and a remarkable civilization. It is true, he says, that Islam as a religion was the rallying point of a rapidly growing community and that it was the legitimacy principle upon which a state, and then successive Empires were established. But those

political entities and the outstanding civilization they gave rise to were the product of human efforts and historical circumstances. A return to the successes of those times would necessitate the re-activation of those efforts and a proper understanding of those circumstances. The same confusion operates, according to Naimy, in the customary comparison between modern Arab “Islam” with the West. Instead of comparing a civilization to another, in this case the Arab-Islamic to the Western, a religion is compared to a civilization, namely Islam as a revealed religion to modern Western culture. By the very setting of the terms of the comparison, he says, the reasoning and its consequences are bound to be flawed: a religion that is by definition absolute and fixed is compared to a culture that is by nature contingent, relative and changing. According to this comparison, for harmony to be at all possible, either religion would have to become changing and contingent or, culture would have to become fixed and absolute. Both alternatives are absurd. Often the confrontation of “Islam” with Western rational modernity is compared to its confrontation with the Hellenic rational culture in the Middle Ages. Islamists, says Naimy, do not realize that the foundations of Western modernity are different from those of the Hellenic ones: the Aristotelian metaphysics of logic, truth, static substances and primary beings, which could have been harmonizable with religious metaphysics, have been abandoned in favor of experimental, dialectical and skeptical notions of truth, logic and reason. Hence, the past forms of conciliation that were adopted in the classical age of Islam are no longer valid today. But the past success of the conciliatory attempts helps to maintain the illusion of their suitability to the present age. What Naimy suggests is a comparison between prevalent forms of government, modes of knowledge and social values, in search of the better for the present Arab world, without the religion of Islam being the exclusive determining factor.

3.3. Critique of the Conciliatory Pattern of Thinking and of an “Islamicized” Social Science

The ills of the conciliatory form of thinking have been also deplored by al-Azmeh, al-Azm and by the Bahraini thinker, Mohammad Jaber al-Ansari. The latter has devoted an extensive study to its manifestations in the history of Arab thought, from the classical age up to our own.¹⁰ Like Naimy, he thinks that modern Arab thought in all its conciliatory forms, combining Islam with nationalism, capitalism, communism, socialism or scientism, misses the aforementioned metaphysical break. It also fails to make room for the existential tensions of faith, the

struggles and conflicts of human life and the anxieties of modern skeptical reason, and insists exclusively on doctrinal certainties. It has tried to evade the painful choices, postponing the clear settlement of issues and thus moved from one impasse to another.

The conciliatory pattern of thought is what the Syrian political scientist based in Germany, Bassam Tibi (1988, 1995, and 2001), calls the “dream of semi-modernity”, namely, the attempt to conciliate Islam as a religious worldview with technological modernity. This “dream” chooses to ignore cultural modernity, founded to a great extent upon the ideals of the Enlightenment, namely, the belief in the human cognitive and moral capabilities, in the human liberties, in rational critique and in tolerance. Tibi sees in it a project of undoing the disenchantment of the world, hoping to achieve the prosperity and emancipation of the Islamic world with a selecting borrowing from the West. Tibi is very well aware of the hegemonic character of the West, especially in its political and economic aspects. But he does not believe that the revengeful Islamist counter-hegemonic project is the right answer to it. Rather than an Islam-centered world, Tibi advocates a multi-focal world of cultural plurality, within a universal human framework to which Muslims could make an original contribution. Moreover, he thinks that the universal framework is also important to maintain in the cognitive field. There may be legitimate ground to raise questions about the validity and purpose of the social scientific knowledge produced by Western scholars about the Arab-Muslim world. But again, the reaction to these suspicions cannot be in a knowledge that obeys the dictates of an Islamist worldview. In this cognitive field too, what Arab critics, such as Bassam Tibi, Taher ben Jelloun (1977), Abdelkader Zghal (1973), Abdelkebir Khatibi (1985), and Mohammad Bennis (1985), including feminists such as Soraya Altorki (1982), Cynthia Nelson, Reem Saad, Soheir Morsy, and Hania Sholkamy (1991), attack is not the idea of an indigenous social science that relates to local cultures and answers their needs and priorities. On the contrary, most of them agree on the necessity of such a science, especially in the post-independence era. What they attack is the unexamined idea of the indigenous. On the one hand, they reject the naïve particularistic understanding of the indigenous, whether in nationalistic or Islamist terms; and on the other hand, they draw attention to the freedom of thought and expression that is necessary for such a cognitive production, a freedom that has been sadly lacking under post-independence governments. These have preferred to curb local social scientific research, in order to avoid critique. Islamists are not likely to be more tolerant of critique.

3.4. Critique in Islamic Theology

In the field of Islamic theology, critical thinkers emphasize the importance of acknowledging the human component in the exegesis of the sacred text, in the legislation of religious law and in the compilation of the sayings and acts of the Prophet Muhammad. They draw attention to the human role in the constitution and transmission of religious tradition, a role that was active in the past and vital for responding to the changing needs and issues arising in the history of Muslims. Recalling this human aspect is to encourage today's Muslims to engage like their ancestors in re-appropriating their multifaceted tradition in creative ways, instead of accepting it passively as a sacralized and transhistorical authority, as a completed stock of already formulated answers for all times and places. Feminists, like the Moroccan Fatima Mernissi (1991) and the Egyptian Leila Ahmed (1992), point out the sexist bias of the makers of religious tradition, a tradition presented hitherto as the neutral, objective and correct understanding of Islam. They investigate into the concrete historical circumstances that gave rise to particular trends and practices that came later to be taken as universal Muslim conceptions of things. Not only tradition was to be historicized, but for some theologians, revelation as well. The Egyptian Hamid Nasr Abu Zayd¹¹ struggled against fierce Islamist opposition to open the sacred text for literary disciplines that would allow an appreciation the historical language and culture through which the divine message was revealed and communicated to the humans. This need not, according to him, put in question the divine character of the message. Abu Zayd distinguishes between the historicity (*tarikhiyya*) and the temporality (*zamaniyya*) of the revealed text: the former, contrary to the latter, preserves the divine character while acknowledging the human side to it in the form of the revelation. Similarly, the Algerian scholar of Islamic Studies based in Paris, Mohammad Arkoun (2002), argues for opening Islamic theology to the human realm of the imaginary, inevitably operative in the form of the revelation, and for benefiting from the modern disciplines of semiotics, linguistic and the social sciences, in view of enhancing the reading of the sacred text. Arkoun also advocates a comparative study of Islam, especially with respect to Judaism and Christianity that would open Islam to a wider horizon of interpretation and exploration. All of these critical theological proposals go against Islamist views that regard Islam to have been interpreted and understood once and for all, ready at all times to provide already elaborated answers and solutions, rather than an inspiring ground for new questions and reflections.

3.5. Critique of Violence and Intellectual Terrorism

Finally, for secularists, such as the Egyptians Farag Fouda¹² and Fouad Zakaria (1986 & 1989), the problem with the Islamists, is not in their religious worldview, but in their exclusive claim over truth and virtue, in their violent methods and in their paternalistic attitudes. Farag Fouda proposed a historical analysis of the Islamic past that is idealized by the Islamists and presented as the model of pristine piety, justice and glory. Fouda's historical reminder is to demystify this past and to recognize in it the all-too-human flaws and realities. For Zakaria, this history is to serve as a stock of experience from which one is to learn and benefit instead of being seen as an empty time of decline from an unequalled time of excellence. If Islam is the solution, then Islamists should present concrete socio-economic and political programs that one could, according to Fouda and Zakaria, discuss on the level of socio-economy and politics. For them, it is extremely important to keep the debate on the human level in order to maintain the very possibility of debate. Their struggle is for the freedom of thought and the freedom of expression and their problem is with the demagogical manipulation of religion and with the practice of intellectual terrorism. Fouda was gunned down by Islamists in broad daylight in Cairo in 1992. Abu Zayd was condemned for apostasy, was divorced from his wife and forced into exile in the early 90s. He teaches and lives now with his wife in Leiden. Zakaria rightly characterizes the late 20th century secularist discourse as a defensive discourse that faces a wave of unfavorable factors.

Yet, in spite of these adverse circumstances, the strong tendencies to Islamicize the mind in the Arab world continue to be resisted by thinkers who see and say the dangers of an essentialist conception of identity, of a particularistic view of knowledge and of a theocratic system of rule. Their resistance consists in re-centering the historical, the human and the other. Theirs is a difficult but important struggle.

Notes:

1. See my article entitled "Is Europe an Essence? Lévinas, Husserl, and Derrida on Cultural Identity and Ethics" in *International Studies in Philosophy*, 34:4, 2002, 55-75; for an analysis of the complex descriptive/prescriptive components of Western philosophies of culture see my essay "Phenomenologies of Culture and Ethics: Ernst Cassirer, Alfred Schutz and the Tasks of a Philosophy of Culture" in *Human Studies*, 25, 2002, 55-88.

2. It is interesting to compare this process of cultural decolonization with that of a powerful post-colonial country, namely the United States of America. For an analysis of the mid-20th century debates on cultural selfhood in the US see my article entitled “The Search for US Cultural Selfhood in Two Mid Century Debates” in a forthcoming anthology edited by Linda Martin Alcoff and Mariana Ortega called *Race and Nationalism in the New “United America”*.
3. The reference book for the intellectual history of the period is still Albert Hourani’s *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798-1939* (Cambridge University Press, 1962); also helpful are Hisham Sharabi’s *Arab Intellectuals and the West. The Formative Years, 1875-1914* (The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970) and Nazik Saba Yared’s *Arab Travellers and Western Civilization* (Saqi Books, 1996).
4. We are here focusing on the intellectual movements of the Arab regions, but it is important to remember that modernizing ideas and reform projects were also emerging in the Ottoman Empire, both in the power center as well as in the opposition movements. They had an impact on the various provinces of the Empire including the Arab ones. For a succinct and helpful presentation of these reforms see Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (Tauris, 1993).
5. A chronicle of the occupation was offered by the Egyptian Abd al-Rahman al-Jabarti (1753-1826). Part of it is translated in a volume edited by Robert L. Tignor called *Al-Jabarti’s Chronicle of the French Occupation. 1798 Napoleon in Egypt* (Markus Wiener Publishing, 1993). The volume also contains the report of Napoleon’s Private Secretary as well as an excerpt from Edward Said’s *Orientalism* devoted to the *Institut d’Egypte*. The findings of this Institute were published in twenty three big volumes between 1809 and 1828 under the title *Description de l’Egypte*.
6. Excerpts from al-Afghani and Abduh can be found in John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds), *Islam in Transition. Muslim Perspective*. (Oxford University Press, 1982).
7. The Syrian political scientist based in Germany, Bassam Tibi, describes in a very interesting way the shift in Arab nationalist ideologies from the French Republican model to the German romantic model between the two World Wars, after the imposition of French and British colonialism in the region. See Bassam Tibi, *Arab Nationalism Between Islam and the Nation State* (St Martin’s Press, 1997).
8. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Islams and Modernities* (Verso, 1993). Particularly relevant are the following chapters: “The discourse of cultural authenticity: Islamist revivalism and Enlightenment universalism” and “Culturalism, grand narrative of capitalism exultant”. His two books on secularism in Arabic are: *al-‘ilmaniyya min manzur mukhtalif* (Secularism from a Different Perspective), Beirut: Center of Arab Unity Studies, 1992 and *Dunia al-din fi hader al-‘arab* (The World of Religion in the Present of the Arabs), Beirut: Dar al-Tali’a, 1996 (2002).

9. Cf. Nadeem Naimy, "Ishkaliyyat al-fikr al-islami fi 'asr al-nahda" (The problematic of Islamic thought in the age of the nahda) in *'Asr al-Nahda: Muqaddimat liberaliyya li al-hadatha* (The Age of the Nahda: Liberal Beginnings of Modernity). Beirut: Al-marqaz al-thaqafi al-'arabi, 2000, 51-74; and "I'adat tashkil al-siyasa al-thaqafiyya: tashji' al-ibda' wa al-musharaka fi al-hayat al-thaqafiyya" (Re-shaping cultural policy: Encouraging creativity and participation in cultural life" in *Nahwa Siyasa Thaqafiyya 'Arabiyya li al-tanmiya* (Towards an Arab cultural Politics for Development), Matba'at al-munazzama al-'arabiyya li al-tarbiya wa al-thaqafa wa al-'ulum (ALESCO), 2001, 18-33.
10. Cf. Muhammad Jaber al-Ansari, *Al-fikr al-'arabi wa sira' al-addad. Kayfa ihtawat al-tawfiqiyya al-sira' al-mahzur bayn al-usuliyya wa al-'ilmaniyya wa al-hasm al-mu'ajjal bayn al-Islam wa al-gharb. Tahkhis hala li al-la hasm fi al-hayat al-'arabiyya wa al-ihtiwa al-tawfiqili al-jadaliyyat al-mahzura* (Arab Thought and the struggle of Opposites. How Conciliatory Thought Contained the Forbidden Struggle Between Fundamentalism and Secularism and the Postponed Settlement Between Islam and the West. Diagnosis of the No-Settlement Situation in Arab Life and the Conciliatory Containment of Forbidden Dialectics). Beirut: Al-muassassa al-'arabiyya li al-dirasat wa al-nashr, 1999.
11. For a concise and informative presentation of his case see "The Case of Abu Zaid" in *Index on Censorship*, 25:4, 1996, 30-39, and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, E. Colla and A. Bakr, "'Silencing is at the heart of my case': Nasr Abu Zayd, interview" in J. Beinin and J. Stork (eds), *Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report*. London: Tauris, 1997, 327-334. For his own writings see Abu Zayd, *Mafhum al-nass: Dirasah fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an* (The Concept of the Text: A Study in the Sciences of the Qur'an). Cairo, 1990, *Al-tafkir fi zaman al-takfir. Didd al-jahl wa al-zayf wa al-khurafa* (Thinking in the Time of Anathema. Against Ignorance, and Falsehood and Myth). Cairo: Sina, 1995 and *Dawa'ir al-khawf. Qira'a fi khitab al-mar'a* (The Circles of Fear. A Reading in the Discourse on Women). Al-markaz al-thaqafi, 2000.
12. On him and his case see the 1992 issues of *Index on Censorship*, particularly issue 2, 23-24. His rebuttal of the Islamist theses on history are found in *Al-Haqiqa al-ghaiba* (The Absent Truth). Dar al-Fikr, 1988, 3rd edition, book signed in 1986.

19. Iraq and the Question of Philosophy

Bassam Romaya

Abstract: This paper sets out to analyze some of the philosophical dimensions plaguing the Iraqi intellectual subject, in its contemporaneous reaction to a social predicament of cultural, economic, and international imperialism. In turning to Iraq's intelligentsia, we find the philosophical seeds for sowing the promise of stabilization and mobilization. The globally imperialist cultural occupation of the mind has generated an undeniable turning point in academic circles, social movements, and geopolitics the world over; all the more reason to begin the analysis of ethnicized philosophy in Iraq, the *Cradle* of the world's *Civilization* itself. **Key Words:** Iraqi philosophy, Iraqi War, Iraqi Future, Iraqi history.

1. Preamble

Iraq is at the forefront of the world's attention. Perhaps more so now than any other time in world history; the fate of Iraq, and consequently the entire region, is at the center of major academic, political, religious, economic, and cultural debates, the world over. With each passing day, we are confronted with newer and more apocalyptic consequences of a so-called 'war' the world has yet to accept or comprehend.¹ Iraq is in the news every single day, as it has been for the past three years, and will continue to be so in the years to come. Many of us inquisitively and passively glance over the events merely as observers – powerless, irate, and growing more apathetic. The events change as quickly as the day's weather; we have grown accustomed to skimming through them with an equal level of removed, *disaffected* interest. Not even the shrewdness of a well-crafted philosophical argument may console our minds in times of epidemic madness. While philosophy (and by extension 'rationality') seems altogether insufficient in helping to illuminate our conceptual haze, it helps to serve as a guide, by which we may come to access a modicum of vision, a glimmer towards tolerance, patience, and understanding of the incomprehensible. I attempt to take such a direction in uncovering the all too often slighted mechanism of optimism; I do this by turning to Iraq's past philosophical heritage, and consequently, its prospect for future developments, in an effort to render the present pathological moment, more accessible. Thus, in this essay, I set out to accomplish, at least, three basic objectives: first, I briefly consider the extent to which the promise of philosophy must live up to its rudimentary, sociopolitical communal expectations, in helping us to achieve a greater degree of clarity and understanding in a muddled and hapless *global* situation. Second, keeping the promise of a philosophical emphasis in mind, I examine the five stages of Iraqi philosophical thought, starting with a historic account and leading up to the present times. Along the way, I revisit and seek to answer the question as to what kind of philosophical enterprise may (and should) thrive during Iraq's so-called 'post-war'

era, the age of U.S. imperial encroachment, and its effects on cultural, economic, and political infrastructure of the country. Finally, I consider some potential objections to this undertaking and suggest some ways to meet these concerns. Accordingly, no effort will be made to advance a new or original argument in favor or against the invasion of Iraq; readers seeking grounds for such positions will have no trouble securing a substantial body of literature already available to help them achieve such aims. The general direction of this work is not interested in advancing an outsider's pretentious philosophical motif about a distant war; rather, I impute my own experiences to this study, as an Iraqi-American, who has lived in both and in-between both countries. In this spirit, I strive to pay close attention to the philosophical links, traditionally and contemporaneously, which provide Iraq with an optimistic turn to stabilize its sociopolitical and cultural life. Finally, I ambitiously consider the present impact of 'democratization' and foreign cultural influence upon its indigenous thought. Ultimately, it is also hoped, that such a turn will shed some brighter light on the pervasive social and political impact of international corporate and cultural globalization, ethnicization, and the all too familiar imperial globalization project bestowed upon Iraq's social and intellectual fabric – and no doubt bestowed upon the fate of innumerable other nations.

2. The Promise of Philosophy

At the outset, it is important to establish a running distinction as to what the concept of philosophy holds/may hold in the Arabic-speaking world, vis-à-vis the general conversational or colloquial usage conveyed in the so-called 'Western' hemisphere (assuming this can be done at all). The Arabic usage is not entirely dissimilar to its Euro-American-Canadian-Australian counterpart. In tandem with other terms used to capture or depict the vocations of other contributors of thought and culture (e.g., poets, artists, and writers) in the Arabic-speaking worlds, philosophers too occupy an often marginalized, yet seminal and pragmatic, social position within their respective societies. As with 'Western' traditions, Iraqi universities likewise house philosophers as both students and faculty; of course, this doesn't entail that the practice, profession, or the term itself, serves the same exact functions in this region as it does in others.

The conception of philosophy that I am evoking (and consequently its promise or potential) is not one confined to myopic academic limits, but one that holds a more lucid usage, not exclusively academic or scholarly in scope. This may strike a cord with some Euro-American-et al. audiences who subscribe to the view that *philosophy*, par excellence, as it has been traditionally practiced in the so-called 'West', has only occurred in two known places: Ancient Greece and India.² The extent to which other civilizations or traditions (i.e., African, Latin American, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Judaic, etc.) have engaged in a similar practice, equivalent (and often surpassing) in scope and breadth the canonical *Western* sense, is a moot point which cannot be easily settled here. In the postmodern age of post-colonialism and ubiquitous cultural globalization, it makes no sense to

bifurcate the world into diametrically opposed halves; hence, no mythical polarity as the *East* and *West* persist.³ What's more, contemporary Euro-American-et al. distinctions such as 'analytic' and 'continental' have no meaningful applicability given the conditions under which we are framing our philosophical subject.

To clarify, in Iraqi-Arabic (conversational rather than colloquial), there are two major uses of the word "*falasuf*" (pronounced 'fay-la-soof'), or more commonly, *philosopher*. The first, is an infrequent usage, it is a genuine evocation of the term which closely resembles 'Western' professional usage. Another, more common usage alludes to absurdity and mirthfulness; it is even kin to a mild insult. Thus a "falasuf" may be a philosopher of some sort (hence a legitimate professional) but more often, in the pejorative sense, a bombastic 'know-it-all' who quite well, may know nothing. He is skilled at verbiage (usually used as a verb by the phrase "talfalsaf", 'to philosophize' or "talfalsaf ib rasi" literally, 'philosophizing in my/the head'), and so a character not taken seriously, in the secondary usage. Of course, for our purposes here, I am evoking the 'falasuf' of the quintessential philosopher, and not the pejorative one.

At any time and place, looking to the promise of philosophy in the quest to better understand the human predicament, comes with no guarantees. While Euro-American-et al. philosophers (and likewise political analysts, social theorists, economists, and no doubt every Middle East 'expert') have included their input regarding the motivations and consequences of the current occupation-imperialist globalization project in Iraq, very little attention has been paid (media or otherwise) to the Iraqi voice itself, much less the philosophical perspectives of such voices. Of course, we must not be naively optimistic in our quest to hypothesize the role of philosophy within the scope of the Iraqi nation; philosophy, just as with any other discipline, comes with its own set of benefits as well as limitations. Philosophy does not cure cancer, but it will provide us with insight into the Iraqi intellectual subject and its prospects for overcoming the globalization of the mind that has invaded its cognitive apparatus.

The promise of philosophy, at the very least, asks a three-fold question: first, how should the philosophical community, as a whole (nationally or internationally), react against a psychological and physical imperialist act of aggression upon any one nation? Second, what, philosophically speaking, may be done in support of any loosely-reached conclusion (if one is even attainable) in this regard? Third, more specific to our study, how and where does philosophy stand historically and presently for Iraqi society, and consequently, what is its future potential in helping to minimize or eliminate the effects of its cultural and psychological globalization? In a sense, by providing a response to one part of the question, we inadvertently provide answers to other parts in this three-pronged question; for the promise of philosophy itself is a multidimensional topic. To help illustrate and simplify some of these points, we may briefly consider the political stance of the American Philosophical Association in this regard. As an acting body, the APA (in all its regional divisions) drafted a resolution against the war in Iraq and forwarded it to Washington during the

spring of 2003, in the early days of the invasion. While there can be no doubt that APA members do not act as one (like any other professional organization), the APA, as a philosophical community, worked in unison to express its disgust and disapproval with the U.S. government's foreign policies and practices (just as the APA, as a collective body, has taken a stand against capital punishment and included this position in its by laws and mission). But if philosophy is an action, an action intended to bring about some sort of progressive understanding and social change, much of its dynamic work remains unfinished – the drafting of scathing resolutions did not stop the bombs from dropping on Babylon.

3. The Question of Philosophy

The philosophical traditions that have surfaced and taken shape in the region today known as Iraq extend as far back as antiquity. I have identified five key stages, or general directions, to capture the seminal philosophical modes that occupied thinkers of the region throughout the ages. The first two stages are characteristic of commonly ascribed Iraqi thought; they are intended to serve as a preliminary basis for thinking about more contemporaneous ones. Of course, this is not an exhaustive survey, it is likely that other stages may be forthcoming and likewise worthy of consideration, and subcategories within each stage are also probable. For simplicity, I generally limit my discussion to the five philosophical stages in thought; namely, early Iraqi philosophy, Marxist and communist thought, Abu Ghraibism, “religious” fundamentalism, and the occupation-imperial globalization project. As previously noted, it is important to keep this characterization distinct from one that attempts to narrate the philosophical story of a nation in the ‘Western’ sense. The sheer historic, cultural, ethnic, and geographical complexity of this region does not lend itself to an assessment of ideas solely marked by an emphasis on genres, individual thinkers, or their works; rather, the focus is on the general direction of intellectual heritage, and specifically, its cultural and philosophical identity.⁴

3.1. Early Iraqi Philosophy

Iraq's Golden Age is best known through the mass cultural and scientific achievements that took place during the Middle Ages – yet not at all limited to this period. Pre-Islamic Iraq is the site of the world's most ancient civilizations, dating back to Paleolithic times. For those not familiar with Iraq's past, it helps to briefly recount some of this rich cultural heritage. It was in Iraq where Sumerian, Akkadian, Babylonian, and Assyrian civilizations flourished in pre-biblical times. Iraq is the site of the world's first known cities, states, empires, irrigation systems, monuments, hospitals, and universities (Gibson 2003: 23). It was in Iraq that writing was first invented; this is where the clay tablets of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the oldest known work of literature, were discovered. It is here, in ancient Mesopotamia, that hundreds of thousands of precious archeological sites are buried, sites which contain vast details about ancient human cultural origins – the excavation of which has never been fully completed. It is here that the Stele of Hammurabi was found, the stele enumerates the first legal code in the

world which later served as predecessor to the modern *mens rea* principle in the 'West'. In Iraq, we find ancient monuments such the Ziggurat of Ur and the Ishtar gates, and crucial biblical cities such as Nineveh (once the capital of the Assyrian empire, well-noted in the Old Testament) and Babylon, where the biblical Tower of Babel and the Hanging Gardens, one of the seven wonders of the world, can be found – it all originated here, in what was once dubbed, the '*Cradle of Civilization*'.

Iraq was once known as the 'Cradle of Civilization' primarily because of the cultural, academic, and scientific achievements that took place between the 7th to 13th centuries A.D. in Baghdad (ironically, once called "Medinat Al-Salam" literally, 'city of peace'). Iraq's philosophical renaissance took shape in Baghdad, its modern capital. Built during the 7th century by the Abbasid Caliph Abu Ja'far Al-Mansur, the city quickly became the epicenter of knowledge and remained so throughout much of the Middle Ages; its status did not dwindle until the Mongolian invasion of 1258 (Inati 2003: 36). In its heyday, the city itself was the center of learning, commerce, and science. Before the trade route from Europe to Asia/India was established, Baghdad not only functioned as a nexus of commerce, but also a cultural hub where poets, artists, philosophers, and other intellectuals debated the topics of the day. Philosophers were often spotted in "*Kahwas*" ('coffee shops') and "*Souq Al-Warraq*" (the 'book-binder's market'). The city quickly became home to dozens of universities and trade schools, libraries, historic mosques and churches, zoos, palaces, baths, and the world's first known hospital (known as 'Bimaristan Al-Rashid'). It was in Baghdad that poets, artists, musicians, scientist, astronomers, jurists, theologians, and philosophers flocked from as far away places as Spain, China, and India, in hopes of partaking in and learning from its lucrative academic and cultural setting (Inati 2003: 37-39).

In Baghdad, Iraq's philosophical heritage flourished. One of the first well-known philosophers of the time was Al-Kindi, who was the impetus in the translation movement that introduced Greek philosophers (especially Aristotle and Plotinus at first) to the Arabic-speaking world. Al-Kindi taught in Baghdad and was one of its most famed philosopher, astronomer, musical theorist, and theologian. He also headed the House of Wisdom (not unlike Plato's Academy) where innumerable translations of Greek scientific and philosophical manuscripts took place. Another key Islamic philosopher of this time was Al-Farabi. Originally from Damascus, Al-Farabi moved to Baghdad to study with the most accomplished philosophers of his day, and before too long, became the leading logician of the times. Today, he is primarily credited with reconciling neo-Platonism and Islam, and producing a vast array of commentaries on Plato and Aristotle which remain influential even today (Inati 2003: 42). It was here that another well-known Islamic thinker, Al-Ghazali, taught at Al-Nizamiyya University in Baghdad, he is noted for his work in jurisprudence, theology, and philosophy. Anyone who wanted to partake in the intellectual boom came to Baghdad to be in the company of great thinkers.⁵ However, this inquisitive explosion was not limited to the

philosophical enterprise, the Arabic-speaking world's most prestigious poets established their reputations in Baghdad; poets from Kufa and Basra flocked to Baghdad during the 8th and 9th century A.D. to make a name for themselves; the infamous Abu Nuwas, Bashshar Ibn Burd, and Al-Jahiz are a few well-known examples (Kadhim 2003: 104).

Some may contend that Iraq's thinkers of the Middle Ages merely borrowed ideas from the Greeks and passed them off as their own; such a take overlooks the extent to which thinkers contributed to the progression of original thought on their own merit, as a result of being influenced by the Greeks. Moreover, they were the first key figures to reconcile philosophical practice alongside a wave of religious dogma, a trend not seen in the 'West' until attempts by Thomas Aquinas, centuries later (Inati 2003: 43). Many other points of comparison may be drawn between the discoveries of early Iraqi astronomers and mathematicians, which often preceded and exceeded their 'Western' counterparts. Furthermore, it is also well-known that the invention of Algebra as well as the heliocentric view of the universe was first made by Iraqi mathematicians and astronomers of this time (Inati 2003: 40-41). Therein lay some bare notes on the early intellectual heritage of Iraq; next I consider a more modern evolution, Marxist and communist thought.

3. 2. Marxist and Communist Thought

Departing from the first millennia and the Middle Ages, another significant intellectual development may be traced through Iraq's intellectual heritage of the 20th century. When Iraq formally acquired independence from British rule in 1932, Marxist influence among political and social classes was already firmly grounded in place. As early as the 1930s, and throughout much of the 20th century, much of Iraq's intellectual thought (and most 'Leftist' movements in opposition to Iraqi monarchies) were spearheaded by the Iraqi Communist Party (henceforth ICP). Marxist and socialist (and later Stalinist) thought dominated the struggles of grass-roots working class movements and oppositional Leftist intellectuals against the feudal rule of British-sponsored and appointed monarchies (Ali 2003: 42-101). The ICP contained members from all sects of Iraqi society and was supported (and to some extent still is) by a conglomerate of Iraqis, viz., Kurds, 'proletarians', the peasantry, as well as students, academics and the like. Although the ICP never governed Iraq at any time, for decades, it served as the primary oppositional force behind demonstrations, coups, and uprisings which took place in Iraq during the 1950s and 1960s, prior to the rise of Ba'athism in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s.⁶ When Saddam came to power in 1979, the Ba'athists attempted to annihilate the ICP, which was seen as a competitive political threat to its established hegemony.

The ICP did not act as a unified body, especially since party leaders often had competing interests. Accordingly, the rise and fall in membership fluctuated greatly, which is to be expected given the sectarian diversity of the party. With coup after coup, the political hegemony of Ba'athism (which first masqueraded as socialist), effectively eliminated any political rivals, particularly the ICP; yet,

remnants of the party secretly remained in various subterranean circles, especially in northern Kurdistan, which was relatively free from governmental surveillance and interference.⁷ As it is commonly known, political dissent under Saddam's watch was impermissible and punishable, often by imprisonment, torture, or death, depending on the extent of the violation. Notwithstanding the violent crackdown on Iraq's motley assortment of Marxists, communists, and their supporters, anti-establishment ideology continued to thrive in *sotto voce*, as opposition to the totalitarian regime never became fully extinct. The various social tendencies that resisted Ba'athification and its U.S.-backed imperialism strategies popularized various denominations of Marxist philosophical and political thought throughout the past three decades under Saddam's rule. This shift marks a second major stage for Iraq's intelligentsia, its Marxist and communist roots.

Although far from extinction, the long-standing influence of Marxist and communist thought on the Iraqi intellectual subject is still visible in much of today's social institutions and academic circles. As political exiles returned to post-war Iraq, hoping to partake in the 'new' government's formation, the country moved beyond the failures of the ICP and instead headed in a competitively volatile, politically pluralistic direction; this took shape in light of the so-called 'democratization' strategy erroneously masquerading as Iraq's newly elected government. While Marxist, communist, or socialist thought (being quite distinct things) are not necessarily incompatible with democratic reform, there is some hope in the hearts and minds of party supporters that their mission may one day gain momentum, and attain some form of recognition and sovereignty alongside Iraq's U.S.-appointed puppet regime.

This very crucial dimension of Iraq's intellectual heritage marks a second stage in its socio-political and philosophic social development; a stage that while far from having been dissolved, may continue to win over the philosophical consciousness of anyone willing to listen – especially those in the ivory towers. Without a doubt, Marxist philosophical, economic, and political thought has deeply influenced and generated Iraq's intellectual avant-garde of the 20th century, just as it did in Egypt, Syria, and other Middle Eastern countries which at one time or another, had well-established proto-communist platforms of their own. Of course, this does not mean that something like a Marxist class struggle or revolution will occur in Iraq, but only that such a stage has become more fruitful given its influential past in the region, the present hyper-capitalistic conditions flooding the country, and an atmosphere of perpetual political turmoil which continues to plague its powerless government.

3.3. Abu-Ghraibism

The contention is often made that Germany's defeat in the first World War paved the way for an ultra-nationalist, ethnocentric conception of the self that ensued immediately before the Nazi party rose to power; on to which, Hitlerian propaganda offered a viable method for overturning the post-war socio-cultural humiliation, and effectively exploiting it to advance its own political and economic ends. We have

seen similar patterns develop in many times and places – arising for different reasons. A comparison may be drawn with Israel’s ambiguous identity question; many thinkers have observed that in affirming Israel’s exclusively *Jewish* identity, and overcoming past historic (pre-1948 or otherwise) religious and cultural humility, the ultra-nationalist socio-cultural conceit that ensued in its society was/is a natural consequence of past (and present) systematized anti-Semitism. Cycles of hyperbolic socio-cultural affirmation regenerate and flourish under the right set of conditions. One can easily observe this manifestation in the rise of modern Zionism and its denominations. Any movement’s pervasive social arrogance is only affirmed by the destruction of another’s identity; resolutely inherited by a deflected generation of victimhood; in this case, Palestinian society itself, the heir to an abusive throw which has resurfaced in newer dimensions. The cycle proceeds in the belief that in order to affirm one’s demoralized identity, the abuse of another is rendered necessary (irregardless of the other’s actual degree of accountability). In the U.S., the pattern subtly resurfaced; the blind, patriotic ultra-nationalism with which many flag-waving Americans aligned themselves, permeated throughout the mass consciousness during the months immediately following 9/11. The reasons for this are very similar to other examples; they stem from the need to affirm identity by way of honor or honor culture, one which is not the product of any particularized society, but rather, bares the general mark of defect in human nature. It is the hallmark of the majority of civilizations, even ones which seemingly share very little in common with one another – Iraq and the U.S. are both paradigmatic honor cultures in this regard.⁸

Honor culture weaves the social fabric of Arab-speaking and Islamic societies. With regard to Iraqi society (and by extension, most of the Arabic-speaking world), an individual’s social reputation is predominantly defined by shared communal credibility, viz., one’s family name, socioeconomic standing, and an informal socio-cultural consensus among member of one’s own community, culture, and nationality – reputation is the primary and distinguishing characteristic upon which an individual’s social identity and credibility rests. Thus, to belittle or destroy one’s reputation in ways that humiliate, abuse, shame, defame, subordinate, or diminish one’s moral and human-worth, is in a sense, to wipe away one’s socio-cultural human standing, a socio-cultural identity that largely shapes and defines our humanity, a sense of humanity predicated on an esteemed socio-cultural (and often religious) national identity. It comes as no surprise that as events at Abu Ghraib made international headlines, Iraqis (and by default, the entire Arab and Islamic world) were socially, culturally, nationally, and religiously denigrated and humiliated, all easily achieved by one sweep. It exposed the powerlessness, submissiveness, and vulnerability of the Iraqi honor culture.⁹

The events at Abu Ghraib transpired as a direct result of the American public’s own humiliation, one fully exploited by its own pathological government. Yet still, despite the international scandal, many Americans exhibited resolute indifference, an indifference clouded by the contention that since Saddam’s government routinely

tortured and executed its own people, the torture of Iraqis at the hands of Americans was dismissed as insignificant by comparison. To some, it was even *justified* by the normative racist consequence of the shared American vision of the Arab as a backward, contemptibly violent Orientalist oddity which needs to be tamed – an exotically inferior Bedouin that must be civilized by democratization and rescued from his fundamentalist, animalistic passions – such visions of the Arab account for ‘leashing’ Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib facility.

While Abu Ghraib opened the floodgate for other innumerable reports of abuse to come forth, it is the demographic consequences of such actions that are of particular significance to us.¹⁰ In any situation where systemic abuse, subjugation, and imperial cultural arrogance belittles its subject, a destructive cycle of abuse regenerates the need to reclaim one’s destroyed identity, to affirm one’s value as a human being fully deserving of the respect, dignity, and moral worth granted to all people. The abused often become worse abusers themselves, exceeding their perpetrators in magnitude and scope; accordingly, it is in halting the cyclical dimension of cultural subjugation that our attention must be placed. In this example, the people of Iraq are not strangers to their plight; Iraqi societies have endured a long history of invasive brutality and humiliation of its people as early as the Mongol invasion of 1258, when the army of Genghis Khan’s grandson, Hulagu, destroyed its capital and made a pyramid of skulls from its philosophers, poets and theologians. In modern times, Iraqis have been humiliated by British occupation forces in the early 20th century, the feudal monarchies of the mid-20th century, by Saddam’s iron fist since 1979, the devastating 8 year war with Iran that ensued, the failed invasion of Kuwait of 1990, the years of economic sanctions that ensued, and the ongoing U.S. invasion and occupation of the present. Abu-Ghraibism, as a social, mental, and physical state, left a lasting colonialist impression upon its people, an impression that will last longer than the racist graffiti inscribed on Babylon’s walls by American soldiers – such is a systemic humiliation campaign, a psychological war waged against a nation’s consciousness.¹¹ Not surprisingly, a stage has been set for an impending ultra-nationalist, ethnocentric, hyperbolically patriotic social movements to emerge within its social and political intelligentsia, whether such a hypothesis lives on to materialize in full force, only the passing of time will reveal; its significance as a philosophical foundation for grass-roots social movements is all too simple, pervasive, and often gone unrecognized.

3.4. “Religious” Fundamentalism

Although not a direct philosophical movement in itself, some form of religious so-called ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ is likely to come about in the wake of reactionary national mobility against what is perceived as a defamatory, ‘infidel’, genocidal occupier of sacred lands. Many analysts argue that U.S. actions both at home and abroad (i.e., the invasion of Iraq, the problem of Palestine, the *Newsweek* report of U.S. interrogators flushing the Qu’ran down detainees’ toilets at Guantanamo, American soldiers’ cremation of deceased Taliban fighters, and other well-publicized violations of International and Human Rights laws) are contributing to the rise in fundamentalism, perhaps both political and religious in scope. Such a point is well taken, and further complicated by an erroneously preconceived media contention that Iraq’s instability and lawlessness are a result of the amalgam of a so-called anti-American ‘insurgency’ and ‘Saddam loyalists’ in need of de-Ba’athification by American ‘liberation’ forces. Any mention of the likely scenario that ordinary Iraqis have a right and an interest in supporting the resistance, in their struggle for *freedom* from occupation, to drive the occupying army out of their country, is entirely absent – a point easily overlooked by audiences with no history or recollection of a military occupation by a foreign nation.

The point to be taken from the direction that may contribute to the rise in extremism (whatever that may turn out to be), one that may serve to spearhead impending social thought, is that it may not exclusively develop as the work of a few dozen ‘terrorist’ organizations who have mobilized to wreck havoc upon the stability of Iraqi society, a.k.a. ‘foreign fighters’ who have infiltrated from neighboring countries (as we’re told); nor is the chaos a result of so-called ‘sectarian’ divisions that, once again, we are told, are driving the country into ‘civil war’. It is important to note that Iraq has never had a civil war of its own; it is just as probable that claims of strife along its social or ethnic lines (i.e., Shiites, Sunnis, Kurds, Turkmen, Chaldeans, and others) are brought about by external mediators interested in securing a home for their military bases, but especially in destabilizing the country and consequently the region. The failed and masquerading democratization-liberation project has in fact given way to a boldly genocidal plight, but not one brought about by *fundamentalism* for its own sake, but one where destabilization is the end game, and only the key players are cognizant of it. The rise in fundamentalism, if one were to exist at all, and in such a way so as to contribute to a hegemonic intelligentsia, is not one brought about by a so-called insurgency or an ‘impending’ civil war, over a decade’s worth of crippling sanctions, wars of aggression or the like, but by an entire region with the unalterable realization that it has no direct sovereignty over its own territory or peoples – it basks in its own powerlessness and continued humiliation. Fundamentalism, as a by-product of political ineffectiveness and utter desperation, marks another probable stage for massive mobilization; whether philosophical, theological, or political, the boundaries of which are of no real significance, as long as its distraught adherents are promised autonomous stabilization and religious sanctuary free from imperialist rule.

3.5. The Occupation-Imperial Globalization Project

This final category is of critical significance. It highlights a recent and least-understood development. While the transitional phase of Iraq at the turn of the 21st century has enabled innumerable marginalized voices the long-awaited opportunity in which to broadcast their *real-politik* ideologies and to some extent, philosophies, it is rather difficult to distinguish genuine grass-roots development from influences of the culturally-imperialist globalization project.

The present conditions have generated a long-standing transitional phase in which old enemies are free to settle bitter scores; lawlessness, daily terror, food and fuel shortages, increased poverty, psychological disorders, resentment, insecurity, and the horrors of an ongoing aggressive military rule mark a so-called transitional phase otherwise known as “progress”. Apart from its undeniable ugliness, the conditions have set a ripe and volatile stage in which to stimulate the Iraqi public’s patience and creativity in various manifestations (not limited to the work of the *falasuk*). Secularized, pluralistically innovative, and especially, indigenous philosophical pluralism will no doubt flourish in these delicate years (a parallel may be drawn with the recent renaissance of the Iraqi theater and fine arts). With the minimization of state-controlled cognitive oppression, there is indeed room for improved theoretical pluralism and the diversification of social thought: neo-Marxist thinkers, rhapsodic existentialist Abu Ghraibists, radical theological philosophers, and Iraqi feminists taking center stage in a patriarchal scene. These are not new emergences, but previous visions regenerated and actualized.

Iraq’s future cultural property will continue to be as politically-motivated as ever; just as Iraq’s social change has recently been shaped by much imported thought and imported capital, its ancient cultural heritage and affairs of contemporary life will continue to captivate and contribute to the perpetually changing fate of the academic enterprise, the world over. Academic or otherwise, no one alive today can escape the undeniable global impression that the illegal invasion of Iraq has sparked, such is the upside.

The downside in this stage of philosophical development is undoing the damage to an imperially-occupied Iraqi mind; first monopolized by Ba’athism, and second, under the import of cultural aggression, a.k.a. *democracy* by any means necessary. Cultural, and to a lesser extent, corporate, globalization is often accused of minimizing or eliminating indigenous social traditions and practices, in favor of adopting newer (usually ‘Western’) homogenized ways of knowing; subsequently creating perverse, technocratic, calculated uniformity in manners of dress, provision, taste, habit, and doxastic systems doled upon entire regions, not unlike Huxley’s parable in *Brave New World*.

The U.S. entertainment industry and image-makers wasted no time flooding Iraq’s televisions and radios with pro-American sensationalism. The effects of imperialist psychological warfare upon Iraqi society is perhaps already irreversible; American products, media (in Arabic and English), and lucrative industrial contracts have made a permanent home in the *Fertile Crescent*. This can be observed even on

a small scale, take my own example; in December of 2003 (only nine months after the invasion) my parents attempted to wire money to relatives back home in Baghdad, to no surprise, there were no Western Union agencies serving Iraq at that time. By the fall of 2004, when we wired money to relatives back home, we had no trouble finding more than 15 Western Union branches all over Iraq – an example of globalization at its finest. One should not be too startled upon encountering shopping malls, Baghdadi highways, or historic districts such as Al Rashid or Al Mansour renamed after American corporations or political figures.

The occupation-imperial globalization project will continue to reshape Iraq's (and no doubt the entire region) future intellectual heritage. Conversely, Iraqi society's influence on mainstream Americana is likewise unavoidable (even the number of U.S. soldiers who have returned home with Iraqi wives is staggering). The Iraqi intellectual subject has already become *re-ethnicized* and *re-colonized*, its future cultural prospect is not simply reducible to a watered-down imperial globalization project, but in its potential for dialectically actualizing any and all of its five main stages of philosophical development, and consequently, emancipating itself from its internally indigenous and externally imperialist conceptual disorders.

4. Critical Perspectives

Some may object to this characterization as one marked by a naively optimistic and limited vision of philosophical promise and potential philosophical progress, thus leaving no room for amalgamations or envisioning alternative developments, given the country's diverse cultural composition. This is a vital and significant concern; however, the assessment is not intended to exclude or designate, rigidly, the *only* possible stages of intellectual development for Iraqi society to take on during the post-Saddam era. The aim, rather, is to identify and enumerate the most elemental stages of this development, both historically and contemporaneously. It is possible that subcategories may co-exist in between any of the categories that I have identified, and it is also probable that trends which may seem inconceivable at the present time may likewise emerge. I offer these stages as probable guides, and not as finite exclusionary entities of any one particular future possibility.

Another running objection may address the role of the occupation-imperial globalization project upon Iraqi consciousness itself, arguing that such a move has constructively enabled marginalized Iraqi voices to be "liberated" from the social oppression under which they have been silenced for over three decades. While it is undeniable that there are more opportunities for diversifying social thought in the country today than has ever occurred under Saddam's rein, it is far from the form of liberation truly deserving of its title. As the occupying armies have no foreseeable time-table for withdrawing their forces, there can be no freedom to speak of under occupation because occupation itself is *cultural terrorism*. There is no liberation to speak of when one form of tyrannical rule is simply replaced by another; in fact, the lives of many ordinary Iraqis have exponentially worsened

since the invasion; this due to pandemic unemployment, lawlessness, crime, theft and looting, food/fuel/water/medical/power shortages, destruction of schools, hospitals, and structures that supply basic services, not to mention the vast environmental devastation and health hazards that have plagued the nation due to the U.S. military's use of chemical weapons such as white phosphorous shells and weaponized depleted uranium in Iraq and upon civilians (Catalinotto et. al: 2004). The ruthlessness of a past regime has not been eliminated, but doled anew by petrol-hungry 'emancipators'. The occupation-imperial globalization project ensures that nothing stands in the way of its profits, and any journalist who dares to challenge its actions will be dealt with accordingly – such is democratic reform à la Iraq. Perhaps we're better off siding with Plato's demonization of 'democracy' (so eloquently captured in the *Republic*). Whatever so-called 'free' thought may jet from the occupation-imperial globalization project, it must be unfettered and genuine, surpassing all limits of thought control presently imposed upon the Iraqi intellectual subject by its master.

5. Afterthoughts

This essay has attempted to situate the philosophical enterprise in a region not normally thought to be affiliated with progressive philosophical thought – in the canonical manner employed by so-called 'Western' audiences. In identifying the five stages of Iraq's *philosophical* developments, I have combined relics of the past, along with modern and contemporary tendencies in forecasting one of many, philosophical promises that stand to shape the Iraqi social order in light of the senseless plight that has tainted its great soil. In this regard, it is hoped that some light has been shed about the way in which our philosophical enterprise may stand in the face of pandemic madness; as the patient and strong Iraqi public has taught us, overcoming an imperial psychological warfare is arduous but not insurmountable.

In affirming the Iraqi past alongside its present social, political, cultural, and philosophical heritage, we come to diagnose its strengths and weaknesses in virtue of a climate deeply entrenched in external social and economic control. I have left some philosophical stones unturned in hopes that these stones beget jewels, ones that will illuminate a real sense of *liberation*; only then may we speak of freedom.

Notes

1. At the very least, we must recognize that what is taking place in Iraq today is *not a war* – it may be called a host of other things, viz., blatant disregard and violation of International Law (and Geneva Conventions), brutal military occupation, an imperialist colonization project, a prelude to genocide, blueprint for a New World Order, or a long-term operation to redraw the socioeconomic and geopolitical map of the Middle East; but for all the things that it could be, it is/was never a "war" per se, but a different strategy altogether. Since the days of early war-talk, the term has been applied/misapplied by media puppets with the intent to convince and generate support for an internationally-prohibited, unjustifiable, illegitimate and unethical act of aggression; there is not even a provision in the U.S. constitution which permits pre-emptive military acts of aggression. Thus, the

U.S. presence in Iraq does not qualify as war per se (and does not fulfill the tenants of just war theory), a war has not been waged on Iraq, but an overt imperialist business transaction more abhorrent than just war theory may legitimately accommodate. For a basic background on just war theory, see Michael Walzer's *Just and Unjust Wars* in the bibliography.

2. I would even extend the point by suggesting that Greek Philosophy itself, the paradigmatic 'Western' protégé, is not inherently *Western*. Historically and presently, Greek society and civilization does not share much with what we today conventionally identify as the 'West' versus the 'Rest'. By virtue of its geographic location alone, it is not clear why Greece is 'Western' and say Turkey, is 'Eastern'? The categories we impute upon these and other regions are a matter of conceptual and linguistic convenience; for theoretical boundaries are not, in themselves, naturally present in the world, but a damaging consequence of the human tendency to bifurcate and segregate (and to ultimately dominate its subject). Greek philosophy eventually made its way throughout the Europe continent, but only after first passing through Baghdad (hence the translation movement) and the greater Middle East.
3. Aside from the nonexistent East/West dichotomy, another distinction which merits noting is the philosopher's exclusively philosophical role. Much like canonical 'Western' philosophers prior to the 20th century, Arabic philosophers were/are not exclusively 'philosophers' in our contemporary canonical sense; they were/are also esteemed scientists, mathematicians, astronomers, linguists, politicians, anthropologists or whatever (e.g., Al-Kindi, Muhammad Ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi, Al Hariri, etc). In the 'West', this multi-disciplinary nature of the philosopher has given way to specialization within the field of philosophy itself, a trend that Middle Eastern philosophers have also been heading towards.
4. Some of these apparent obstacles are due to the difficulty in pinpointing where many of the philosophical figures in question originated from, especially given the many civilizations that have existed in this region, the migrations that took place, and the choppy historical evidence that was often left behind.
5. Indeed there are many more worth mentioning, such as the Christian Iraqi Logician, Yahya Ibn Adi, and the Judaic-Atheist, Ibn Al-Rawandi, who was also a famed logician, just to name a few.
6. While there were many such revolutionary uprisings, the most recounted is the *Al-wathbah* uprising of 1948, and the revolution of July 14, 1958, in which a staged military coup d'état resulted in the killing of the monarchy.
7. Of course, this is a crudely oversimplistic account of pre-Saddam Iraqi politics. For an in-depth picture, I urge the reader to consult Hanna Batatu's *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* in my bibliography.
8. The honor culture has a long-standing history in many societies, and has been known to be present in all class denominations within a society; for an excellent survey on male honor culture and its code (particularly in science and medicine of the 'West'), see Robert A. Nye, "Medicine and Science as Masculine 'Fields of Honor'" in bibliography. His insightful argument may easily be extended to politics, arts, philosophy, or any other field where a masculinist honor culture dominates the social fabric.
9. This can be done in a variety of ways, including mass indiscriminate killings. In his forthcoming book *Kill! Kill! Kill!*, staff sergeant U.S. marine Jimmy Massey, recounts various examples of genocidal killing of Iraqi civilians. It serves as only one minute testimony of the U.S. military's deliberately abusive and racially-motivated violence perpetrated against Iraqis of all walks of life; especially encouraged and sanctioned by impunity when committed against Iraqi prisoners (a majority of whom we now know were/are detained without charges). Such barbarism is not the result of the actions of a few, poorly-trained, low-ranking

guards, as the U.S. media so ardently attempted to convince world-audiences immediately after the Abu Ghraib scandal unfolded; but it is the institutionalized and systematized aggression sanctioned by the Pentagon itself. For instance, there is no way any common U.S. soldier would know to set vicious dogs on detainees as an 'interrogation technique'; this requires familiarity with a culture that is known for its fear of dogs, a knowledge-base no average American possesses, unless of course they happen to work in the Pentagon.

10. The humiliation may be religious, cultural, sexual or social in nature. Accounts of detainee abuse are common and have been documented from Guantanamo Bay to hundreds of other secret U.S. prisons around the world, where it is not uncommon for detainees to be 'accidentally' killed while in captivity. The recent 2005 Amnesty International report that has documented and condemned the U.S. government's human rights violations in Iraq and elsewhere, prompted a volatile reaction by governmental officials, in their pitiful struggle to discredit and denounce Amnesty's findings. The details of this report may be read online at <http://news.amnesty.org/pages/usa-news-eng>.
11. The vandalism and destruction by U.S. troops of Iraq's irreplaceable monuments, artifacts and archeological sites further underscore and exacerbate the effects of degradation, by wiping away a people's history and cultural identity, through the deliberate destruction of its past (much like the defacing of the Sphinx at Gizeh by Napoleon). For details on some of the negligence and damage caused by the U.S. military in Iraq's archeological sites, see McGuire Gibson's article, "Ancient Mesopotamia: World Heritage under Threat", in bibliography, along with "U.S.-Led Troops Destroy Iraq's Heritage", 2004, archived in <http://english.aljazeera.net>

20. Judaizing Ethical Politics: Levinas, Difficult Freedom, and the Messianic City

Miriam Bankovsky

Abstract: After detailing Levinas's rejection of Western philosophy's account of thought's nascence in "being-in-common" and his own alternative conception of thought as "being-taught" (Sections 1 and 2), the paper explains how Judaism recognizes and practices thought's welcoming nature (Section 3). While it will be shown that Judaism's insight and effort is attainable by Jews and non-Jews alike, the paper suggests that Levinas occasionally errs by making the affirmation of Jewish exemplarity the *condition for* and not the *effect of* a universally applicable ethics, compromising his capacity for sound judgment regarding Israeli politics (Section 4).
Key Words: Levinas, Freedom, Judaism, Politics, Ethics.

1. Introduction¹

French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas's positive appraisal of Rabbinic Judaism is founded on an account, first, of the nature of thought, and second, of the implications that follow for the task of living in the world. According to Levinas, Judaism is unique inasmuch as it correctly recognizes the essential structure of thought, and courageously practices thought's nature on a day to day basis. Framed by the events of the Holocaust and by his own experience as a Jewish prisoner of war in Nazi Germany, Levinas's writings analyze and reject Western philosophy's account of thought's nature, underlining the complicity of its rejection of the real value of difference in the phenomena of anti-Semitism and National Socialism, in the Shoah, in anti-Zionism, and in xenophobia more generally. According to Levinas, Western philosophy traditionally understands both thought and language as originally structured in terms of a relation of being-in-common with others, grasping what is shared or what can potentially be shared. For Levinas, however, thought's nature lies not in "being-in-common", but rather, in "being-taught", a movement that recognizes the finitude of human comprehension and that welcomes difference.² Thought is thus outwardly turned. Comprised of two inseparable movements, thought is both a "being-affected" and a response to the fact of being-affected.

Moreover, according to Levinas, Judaism explicitly bases itself on the defining feature of thought. Judaism not only theistically thematizes thought's hospitable welcome of difference in terms of a humbling relation with a monotheistic god who is revealed in the face of the other person as "neighbor", Judaism also attempts to deal with the practical problem of actually living the relation with this face. The fundamental significance, for Levinas, of the originally oral Rabbinic debates lies in trying to work out how to concretely *live out* thought's essential nature as being-taught. Accepting Judaism's uniqueness thus becomes the key not only to a proper understanding of thought's genesis as exposure to difference but also to an ethical way of life, one which, if correctly understood, should have prevented the events of the Holocaust.

This chapter aims to present and evaluate the central elements of Levinas's account of thought as hospitality, and of Jewish exemplarity. Section one will outline the important elements of Levinas's rejection of Western philosophy's account of thought's nascence and his own alternative conception: inasmuch as Western philosophy traces thought's foundation back to a presumption both of shared commonality and of the essential *comprehensibility* of its object, Levinas will claim that thought's true character – a relation with difference – is continually overlooked. Section two will reveal that the religion and practice of Judaism gains an exemplarity status in Levinas's eyes precisely because it bases itself on the recognition of thought's outward movement. Section three will outline the reasons why Jewish exemplarity is, for Levinas, nonetheless relevant for non-Jews and for humanity in general. True humanism will be founded on the assertion of Jewish exemplarity: non-Jews will thus gain access to the true nature of thought and to the responsibilities of thinking by recognizing the universal applicability of the *Judaic* understanding of thought's nature as exposure to difference. However, while sympathetic to Levinas's motivations, section three will underline a problem that troubles Levinas's account. When the affirmation of Jewish particularity becomes the condition for a universal humanism, thought risks hierarchizing differences in absolute, unmodifiable terms with the effect that "Jewish difference" becomes privileged over every possible difference. Consequently, Levinas refuses to criticize Israeli politics, committing himself to dangerous positions regarding Israel's implication in the Six-Day War and in the 1982 massacres of Palestinian refugees in Israeli-occupied Lebanon. I will suggest that Levinas's own general account of thought's genesis as exposure to difference requires that he re-think the status of Jewish particularity: the affirmation of

Jewish exemplarity would rather be the necessary *effect of* and not the *condition for* the universally applicable.

2. Levinas's Rejection of Philosophy's Account of Thought's Genesis and His Own Alternative.

National Socialism's intolerance of Jewish particularity and its culmination in the catastrophe of the Holocaust was not, for Levinas, an unfortunate accident but rather the extreme effect of mistakenly locating thought's nascence and proper apogee in commonality. Levinas's criticism of philosophy's neglect of the defining feature of thought may be summarized in three main points which we will study more closely in a moment: 1. Philosophy, according to Levinas, misguidedly pre-comprehends its object by reducing it to the finite limits of human understanding. 2. Philosophy's predominant model of thought misrepresents its nature, rudimentarily structuring thought in terms of being-in-common: human comprehension is apparently something that can be shared in common with other minds. 3. Philosophy forgets the worldly and phenomenal experience which, according to Levinas, defines thought, an experience which terminates neither in understanding, nor in being-in-common, but rather in a certain "traumatism of astonishment" (1961/1969: 71). Outwardly turned, thought is a passive activity, both a "being-affected by an exteriority" and a "response". We will soon see that Levinas exemplifies Judaism because, quite simply, it thematizes thought's nature as exposure to difference in contrast to philosophy's predominant model of thought.

But first of all, what does Levinas mean by his first criticism, namely, that philosophy mistakenly pre-comprehends its object as essentially "comprehensible"? In *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (1961/1969) Levinas claims that philosophy attempts to reduce to the limits of human comprehension that which is in principle irreducible. Although Levinas thinks Descartes came very close to seeing the nature of the problem, philosophy has never truly noticed that thought functions by welcoming that which it cannot itself contain (1961/1969: 25). Philosophy has never really considered the true meaning of the difference between positive infinitude and the *thought of* positive infinitude, the difference between God and the *thought of* God, the difference between self and other and the *thought of* the difference between self and other. This difference, for Levinas, reveals the defining feature of thought: thought welcomes that which it cannot contain. Thought simply *is* the fact that I am taught by that which lies outside of my faculties for comprehension (1961/1969: 171). Where philosophy favors a Socratic-type maieutics by means of which the

self, through reflection, can become fully aware of itself and its capacities, Levinas favors a conception of thought as a “being-taught”.

Moreover – turning to the second of our four propositions – if thought takes place as a “being-taught” within a situation where finite human capacities come into contact with a positive infinity that they simply cannot contain, then thought is not founded, as philosophy suggests, on that which can be comprehended in common with other minds: the object of thought is essentially “incomprehensible”, irreducible to thought’s contours. For Levinas, the problem emerges most clearly in our relations with other people. The egocentric presumption of the essential comprehensibility of others and of the world must be relinquished: the finite self cannot think the other *as he actually is*. And yet thought certainly puts the self into relation with the outside world and with other people. Thought’s basic function is again not that of constructing something that can be shared in common: the finite self cannot, in principle, think the positive plenitude of the other’s particular difference. Thought consists, once again, in the possibility of being taught. Thought should thus take place in humility.

Although Levinas was inspired early on (1947, 1949, 1951) by the philosophy of Martin Heidegger whose account of the nature of our phenomenological relation to Being appeared at first to allow the very relation that Levinas was seeking to retrieve, namely, a relation with an exteriority of pure difference which resists the finite limits of human comprehension, Levinas soon reveals that his reflections are in fact “governed by a profound need to depart from the climate of this philosophy” (1947: 44). Heidegger’s account of the thought of Being in *Being and Time* (1953/1996) eventually returns to philosophy’s predilection for founding the thought of Being in being-in-common-with-others, thus reducing an irreducible experience of absolute exteriority to a finite pre-comprehension. Heidegger’s thought of Being is, for Levinas, a thought of finitude. While analyzing the complex critical stance Levinas takes to Heidegger’s conception of Being would lead us away from our project,³ it is nonetheless necessary to underline the relation Levinas sees between, on the one hand, philosophy’s insistence on thought as comprehension and as essentially structured as being-in-common, and, on the other hand, a certain emphasis placed on the proper and “faithful destiny” of thought, as Heidegger puts it, “in and with its generation” (1953/1996, 352). Where Heidegger often speaks of authentic human destiny in terms of being-in-common with others in the world, in and with one’s own generation, Levinas prefers to speak of human destiny as nomadic in order to remind us of thought’s outward movement. To the myth of Ulysses returning to

Ithaca, Levinas prefers the story of Abraham leaving his country forever for an as yet unknown land, even forbidding his servant to take back his son to the original departure point (Levinas 1963: 610). Moreover, Judaism expresses with peculiar clarity its recognition of thought's openness by certain recurring motives: for example, the endless search for a promised land, the impossibility of return, the notion of a monotheistic god revealed in the relation with one's neighbor, the accent placed on humility and on personal sacrifice and so on. In any case, suffice it to say that accenting being-in-common over and above the recognition of Being's absolute exteriority to its thought is for Levinas tied up with the xenophobic inclinations of anti-Semitism and National Socialism, tendencies which according to Levinas continue the essentially pagan practice of worshiping idols believed to represent, and thus guarantee shared access to, the essentially unrepresentable. And although there is a lot to suggest that Jacques Derrida does not entirely agree with the Levinasian reading of Heidegger, he nonetheless writes in "Violence and Metaphysics" that Levinas's need to depart from the "climate" of Heidegger's philosophy is one "whose natural legitimacy we would be the last to question" (1967/1980: 145).

In what, then, does thought consist, according to Levinas? Levinas's phenomenological writings on the nature of rationality in fact sustain a positive appraisal of what he calls Judaism's rational faith. As we have seen, thought resides neither in precomprehension, nor in access to being-in-common, but rather, in the traumatism of astonishment faced with a difference too large to be contained within finite human comprehension. Judaic faith is inseparable from the humbling discovery of the finite limits of human thought, a discovery that takes place when, comfortable in one's world, one comes face-to-face with a hungry person. In traumatic astonishment, the self realizes that its own comprehension of the world has, up until then, been structured around the animalistic drive to nourish its own self. For Levinas, the person who simply "lives from" the world in the dependency of complete egoism does not yet display what we call "reason" (1961/1969). The capacity to think, to weigh-up choices, and to decide freely in favor of one option over another, requires that one emerge from the state of "living from" via the realization that one's own world is also for others. The self's discovery of another person "living from" the world effectuates at least three changes. First, the discovery renders actual the fact of self's being-taught: the discovery is already something learnt. Secondly, the discovery reveals to the self its own vulnerability, the fact that the self's own existence owes itself to the

other person's generosity: the other has, up until now, welcomed one's own self. Thirdly, the discovery is an assignation: inasmuch as the well-being of this other in the world depends, in part, on one's own self and on one's own way of life, the discovery immediately assigns a certain responsibility to the self, the responsibility for the well-being of the other. Inasmuch as I, the self, can annul the other's difference by killing him, and inasmuch as my own existence owes itself to his own generosity in allowing me to live in his world, my discovery renders me responsible for his survival. The responsibility for the other's fate thus places a limit on my own freedom, while also being the very condition for its very emergence. Being-taught, freedom, responsibility and the capacity for reasoning are thus, for Levinas, fundamentally conditioned by the other's difference.

Moreover, to "be taught" requires that the other is not subject to my will. Thus, conceptualizing the other in terms of being-in-common effectively denies the very difference which provokes my liberty to choose. Judaism's basic intuition – namely, that "I am not *the equal* of the Other" – applies here in the strictest sense: "I see myself *obligated* to the Other" (1976/1990, 21). In fact, says Levinas, this motif is the basic teaching of the dialogue between God and Cain – "Am I my brother's keeper?" – which is, in turn, thematized by the Ten Commandments and in the Torah. This is why Jewish "election" is made up not of privileges but of responsibilities for and obligations to the other person. The Judaic focus on rationality as responsibility leads Levinas to "wonder whether there are not aspects in Judaism which indicate the 'rationality' of a reason less turned in upon itself than the reason of philosophical tradition [...] the rational subjectivity which we have inherited from Greek philosophy [...] does not entail [...] the responsibility for the other" (1982/1994).

Rational thought thus consists of two inseparable movements: the first, using Levinas's phenomenological vocabulary, is a "being exposed" to alterity beyond the self's capacities to comprehend that alterity as such, a vulnerability, a hospitality. The second movement is simply that of responding. With or without intending to, one responds to being-affected and one is responsible for this response. Judaism's perspicacity lies in its recognition of and practice of these two movements. But what exactly does this mean?

3. Judaism's Exemplarity and the "Difficult Freedom" of Life in the Messianic City

Judaism highlights thought's essential nature – being-taught – by desiring transcendence but by nonetheless refusing to pre-comprehend

the transcendence that is God. In Levinas's Judaism, there is no direct or immediate relation with transcendence *as such* (1976/1990: 14). A relation with the positive infinity that is God manifests itself rather through a personal relation with my neighbor; hence the tirelessly reiterated Biblical demand to welcome the stranger (1976/1990: 173). God is revealed in the unique *face* of my neighbor, who teaches me. Judaism "is perhaps defined by" the inequality between the self and the other man, or, in other words, the capacity to be taught, to recognize another mouth in the world, to welcome the positive infinity of a presence structured differentially, and to actually live one's responsibility for the fate of this difference. "A difficult condition, says Levinas. An inversion of the apparent order. An inversion that is always on the point of recommencing" (1976/1990: xiv). Which is why, says Levinas, education is so important to Judaic practice. "Education is perhaps the very definition of man" (1976/1990: 11): it seeks to effectuate "being taught". Its goal "consists in instituting a link between man and the saintliness of God, and in maintaining man in this relationship" (1976/1990: 14). The concrete attempt to live thought's nature as a "being-taught" is that which prevents Judaism from being the mere promotion of religious enthusiasm. The Judaic God cannot be worshiped in the form of an idol: representation would be simply too small for positive infinity itself. Nor can Jewish faith culminate in mere belief. Rather, what is important is the actual activity of "being-taught", instituted in the educative relationship between self and neighbor. Judaism, says Levinas, "has discovered man in the nudity of his face", demystifying the universe by demanding that idols be destroyed (1976/1990: 234). Judaic faith is thus rational for Levinas inasmuch as it rests on the fundamental gesture of thought itself: the relation with difference, beyond the insufficient representations of comprehension. Living the fact of being-exposed is holiness: humility in the face of the other man (1976/1990: 173).

Judaism foregrounds thought's second movement – namely, *responding* after having been affected – by demanding that thought's adventure be *lived*. If, after having been affected by exteriority, thought responds within the limits of its finite capacity, Judaism requires that thought's nature be lived as a heightened responsibility and, indeed, accountability for the well-being of the other person. Judaism recognizes, firstly, the utmost importance of what Levinas calls "the ethical relation" and it emphasizes, secondly, the actual concrete obligation to freely *live* this ethical relation in everyday life. Thought's openness, which for Levinas is ethics, must be freely practiced.

But how exactly does Levinas draw a link between being-taught, ethics and Judaism? We have already suggested that the condition of Levinasian freedom is the recognition that “living from” affects the other, such that the self is accountable for the well-being of the other. Freedom is not that of the Kantian sovereign subject giving itself a law that it has freely formed for itself. Freedom is not autonomous, as Kant believes, but rather heteronomous inasmuch as it is responsible for the fate of the other person.⁴ The extreme limit of Levinasian freedom would be the choice to murder the other thus annulling any future responsibility for the other’s fate. “In reality, writes Levinas, murder is possible, but it is possible only when one has not looked the Other in the face. The impossibility of killing is not real but moral” (1976/1990: 10). The ethical relation thus “appear[s] to Judaism as an exceptional relation: in it, contact with an external being, instead of compromising human sovereignty, institutes it and invests it” (1976/1990: 10). This is a truly “difficult freedom” as the title of his book of essays on Judaism suggests: a freedom born via the recognition of the demands the other places on me (*Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism* [1976/1990]). In a rabbinic debate over God’s supposed goodness, Levinas finds the strongest statement possible of the difficulty of a freedom subject to the other’s demands: “Why does your God, who is the God of the poor, not feed the poor?” a Roman asks Rabbi Akiba. The reply: “So we can escape damnation” (1976/1990: 20). The possibility of evil – the freedom to murder the other person – is thus necessary for ethics.

The second way that Judaism foregrounds the responsibility for actually living thought’s hospitable nature is by emphasizing the need for *effort*: Judaic teaching insists that one’s obligations be humbly lived in the here-and-now. “Law is effort [...] To know God is to know what must be done. Here education – obedience to the other will – is the supreme instruction [...] the Justice rendered to the Other, my neighbor, gives me an unsurpassable proximity to God” (1976/1990: 17-18). Exposed to the other’s difference, free to respond, accountable for the other’s fate, Judaism requires that thought’s responsibility be lived.

Levinas continually emphasizes that Judaism’s vitality and its continued relevance for the modern-day Jew is revealed most obviously in the fundamental motivation of the originally oral debates of the Rabbinic tradition written down in the Talmud, debates which preoccupy themselves almost exclusively with the problem of interpreting the Bible in terms of its practical implications for day-to-day life, or, as Levinas puts it, with the concrete problem of living the ethical relation in the here-and-now. The Rabbinic tradition – with the

emphasis placed on practical and relevant Biblical interpretations – must take precedence over the Bible itself. Although ostensibly outdated, the discussions take place in a spirit that remains basic to traditional and contemporary Judaism alike. Judaism is a “living tradition” (1976/1990: xiii) because its “ideal” is “terrestrial justice” (1976/1990: 211): thought’s hospitable nature must be lived *now*. The importance Levinas ascribes to certain aspects of Judaic practice is always underscored by what, for him, must remain fundamental, namely, the practice of ethics. Levinas will thus be anxious to demonstrate how each aspect – the denial of the extra-territoriality of salvation, the conception of messianism as a way of life, the affirmation of being-chosen as requiring exceptional duties not exceptional rights, and finally, the pursuit of daily ritual – reveals Judaism’s grass-root preoccupation with the problem of actually putting into practice thought’s hospitable nature.

If Levinas’s Judaism is eager to deny extra-territorial Utopias and pre-figurations of salvation, Jewish Redemption itself brings no special privileges: Salvation must be lived. Although willing to affirm Christian truth if it consists in the Jewish recognition of thought’s openness and requires a life of humility and self-sacrifice, Levinas wants to warn against certain aspects of Christianity which he feels clouds the primary truth on which Judaism is founded.

First of all, insofar as the evangelical New Testament – with which Judaism does not concern itself – interprets the Old Testament primarily in terms of the way in which it prefigures Jesus’ status as the Messiah, it screens out the real message of the Bible. For example, when the New Testament interprets Abraham’s act of receiving the three visitors as a pre-figuration of the Trinity manifested in Jesus, it overlooks what, according to Levinas’s Judaism, is *essential* to the act, namely, Abraham’s hospitality (1982/1994: 121). This is why, according to Levinas, modern Christianity, when it finally “moves away from dogma and its realist interpretation, feels empty” (1976/1990: 4). And if, in certain Protestant churches, religion *has* in fact merged entirely with morality and social action, the recognition of the ‘truth’ – namely, that thought’s nature as a ‘welcome’ must be lived – is a distinctly Jewish perspicacity. “This impression, says Levinas, is a complete illusion in the case of Catholicism [whose] recent promulgation of a new dogma shows the degree to which the Church remains faithful to a notion of the spirit that does not exclude the realist affirmation of irrational facts which draw their significance from some intimate and impenetrable experience” (1976/1990: 3) leading, as we shall see, to the problematic Christian separation of “the

terrestrial City and the City of God”, a separation that the good Jew simply cannot understand.

Secondly, while Levinas certainly does not wish to dispute the deep and distinctly Jewish principle of *The Passion* – namely, that Jesus takes on himself the weight of the world, living out the Christian slogan “to live and die for all men” – Levinas wants to remind us that Christianity again clouds a certain truth to which Judaism is perhaps more sensitive, namely, that there exists an obligation to defend the victims. According to Levinas, the true understanding of the person of Christ is Judaic: namely, those “who want to see the face of God and enjoy his proximity will only see his face once they have freed their slaves and fed the hungry” (1988/1994: 162). But this truth, says Levinas, is in fact the antithesis of Christ’s actual self-sacrifice. The “no defense for the victims” aspect of Christ’s martyrdom lends it a certain masochism that does not and should not characterize responsible living (1988/1994: 166). In contrast, Judaism emphasizes the value of defense for the sake of one’s neighbor: if someone attempts to kill both myself and my neighbor, defense is not merely a right but an ethical responsibility. Christ’s martyrdom – his own “no defense” – thus denies a certain responsibility to live for the sake of his fellow man. Nor did Christ “come down from the cross to stop the murderers [...] of the armies of the Crusades” (1988/1994: 166). Levinas’s “criticism, or [...] lack of understanding, of the ‘no defense’” appears to lie in his account of the fact of a certain assignation, a certain heightened responsibility for the other person such that I am called upon to defend my neighbor. The significance of Auschwitz lies not in any Christ-like martyrdom whereby the victims concede to their death to atone for the sins of many, but rather in the fact that not enough people took upon themselves their individual responsibility to defend their neighbor. The claim that “in alterity we can find an enemy” (1989: 294) is, for Levinas, played out in the level-headed, and sometimes ruthless, commitment to physical defense for the sake of the other Jew, the neighbor, a claim that we will need to return to in relation to Levinas’s troubling views on Israel’s actions in Palestine.

Thirdly (and consequently), if Christianity risks associating Salvation with the mere profession of faith and with the willingness to die for one’s faith, Judaism requires that one actually live out one’s difficult responsibility *for the sake of the other person*. Judaism offers nothing extra-territorial. No Utopist future salvation can make up for the lack of justice today. Jewish thought, Levinas tells us, is rather echoed in the famous verse by Bialik: “And if justice exists, let it appear immediately!” (1976/1990: 45). In “The State of Caesar and the

State of David” (*Beyond the Verse: Talmudic Readings and Lectures* [1982/1994]) Levinas suggests that the evangelical formula of Luke’s New Testament gospel, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s” (Luke 20:25), separates too easily the kingdom of God from the earthly kingdom, leading to a political sense of indifference that may well account for the fact that Christianity has so often served as a State religion (1982/1994: 177). While praising the humanitarian response of many courageous French and German Christians who risked their lives in order to defend precisely the lives of their Jewish neighbors during the war, Levinas feels equally compelled to indict the many other Christians who were somehow able to reconcile their faith with Nazism, perpetuating the most atrocious acts. The former responsibly recognized in their Christianity the humanitarian law of Judaism whereas the latter irresponsibly favored Salvation politics believing in future salvation via the privilege of predestination or mere profession of faith. It is in this sense that the “plausibility” of “the monstrosity of Hitlerism” “involved the primacy of supernatural salvation with regard to justice on earth” (1976/1990: 161). Thus, the only New Testament themes that Levinas feels capable of affirming are those which coincide with the Judaic conviction of the responsibilities that come with living out thought’s hospitable nature. If, for example, Levinas feels an affinity with the story of *Matthew 25*, it is because the message is fundamentally Semitic: “the people are quite astonished to learn that they have abandoned or persecuted God, and are told that when they turned away the poor who knocked on their doors, it was really God in person they were shutting out” (1988/1994: 163-164). “Being chosen” entails neither pre-destined Salvation nor exceptional rights nor automatic privilege. Rather, it entails humility, and self-sacrifice: the difficult practice of a freedom subject to the other’s needs. Redemption requires lived effort.

Which is why, for Levinas, the messianic era can indeed take place in the here and now. In a difficult chapter entitled “Messianic Texts”, Levinas finally turns to the question “Who is the Messiah?” finding, in the Rabbinic tradition, at least four answers. The Messiah will be a teacher, or a comforter, or a leper scholar, and in each case he will be of the living. Regarding the first, scriptures name Shiloh, Yinnon and Haninah, each name resembling the name of the teacher of the respective schools. Thus, the experience in which the messianic personality is revealed therefore comes back to the relationship between pupil and teacher, a relationship that does not consist in communicating ideas but rather in the very possibility of being-taught and of teaching. The second possibility, the comforter, suggests that

the importance lies in the particularity of the relationship. The teacher-pupil rapport might well concern itself with a collectivity whereas comforting suggests a personal relationship between two. In the messianic era the individual would thus be granted a personal recognition in the eyes of the comforter, a recognition beyond the one he receives by virtue of belonging to humanity in general or to the state. The third possibility, the leper scholar, suggests moreover that it is also the Messiah who suffers, and that he does so quite simply *because* he is just, because he has taken on the sufferings of others, because he comforts the needy. The trials, again, of a “difficult freedom”. The final answer, that he is of the living, suggests that the Messiah will come “today”: he might well be Rabbi himself, or even Me. Judaism thus conceives of messianism not as the end of History but rather as a personal vocation among living men. Each age, says Levinas, has its own Messiah, and “all persons are the Messiah if the fact of not evading the burden imposed by the suffering of others defines ipseity itself” (1988/1994: 163-164).

If Judaism’s exemplary status lies, for Levinas, in its recognition of and practice of thought’s essential taking place as “being-taught”, then one might feel the need to remind Levinas that Judaism is certainly not exhausted by these two characteristics: it is itself also its ethnicity, its own particular traditions, its books, its Hebraic language, its synagogue, and its specific body of rituals. Levinas certainly agrees and would in fact go a step further: he suggests that both recognizing and living out thought’s hospitable nature requires nothing less than a full engagement with one’s own particularity. Judaism is thus always *more than* and *nothing but* its particular ethnic and cultural tradition. First of all, Levinas consistently draws attention to the impossibility of rejecting one’s own particular enrooted-ness: thought can only be taught because it is essentially finite, particular and localizable. In this sense, the weight of Jewish ethnicity and particularity is itself the starting point from which Jewish thought begins to open itself outwards. Secondly, Levinas suggests that the practice of opening a system of thought requires a lived asceticism, “like the training of a fighter”, a certain preparedness acquired and maintained via the effort of practice. Hence, the importance Levinas places on the observance of ritual. While no intrinsic power or enthusiastic fervor should be accorded to the ritual gesture as such, the essence of Judaism lies nonetheless in the “virility of action and thought” (1976/1990: 219) manifest in ritual practice by virtue of which the Jew devotes himself to service with no thought of reward, accepting a burden carried out even at his own expense (1976/1990: 18). Ritual practice engenders

preparedness via, says Levinas, the effort of “the particular type of intellectual life known as the study of the Torah, that permanent revision and updating of the content of the Revelation where every situation within the human adventure can be judged” (1976/1990: 213). The “path is steep but the only one to take: it brings us back to the source, the forgotten, the ancient, difficult books, and plunges us into strict and laborious study” (1976/1990: 52). Jewish ritualistic practice is thus not merely the practice of one’s own particularity but also the practice of training oneself for a relation with the other, the means for preparing an essentially finite and localizable thought for its adventure. Finally, Levinas suggests that the respect for and observance of one’s own particularity is the means for offering hospitality also to one’s “closest” neighbor, one’s “next-door neighbor”, the other Jew. Thus it is precisely *by means of Jewish ethnicity* – the historically enrooted attempt to rigorously prepare oneself, via the effort of daily ritual, for the task of welcoming the difference of the other man – that Judaism remains relevant for the here-and-now. Full engagement with one’s own particularity is thus the very condition of an ethical relation with the other.

It is important to emphasize that, for Levinas, a relation with God via the face-to-face relation with the neighbor requires living both ethical *and* political obligations. Insofar as the ethical demands my personal responsibility for the particular person, politics seems to be unethical: the political decision, insofar as it applies to everybody, no longer does justice to the needs of the *particular* person. However, Levinas, at least in his later works, wants to say that being properly ethical – responding to the person in his very particularity – requires that one consider, nonetheless, all people in general. The other, too, has responsibilities to other people – there is always a “third” person on the scene – which means that ethics must compare the particular claims of different others, hence the move to the political. Ethical politics would require weighing-up the claims of individuals: politics too should never forget what Levinas calls the “hunger” of the individual person in the face-to-face relation. So while politics compromises ethics, it is nonetheless necessary for ethics: the extreme difficulty of a freedom subject to the other’s needs becomes compounded. Positive law must thus be grounded non-deductively in what remains the most irrevocable law: responsibility for the other’s well-being. It is in this sense that “the Messianic City is not beyond politics” and that “the terrestrial City in its simplest sense is never this side of the religious” (1982/ 1994: 183). Law would need to be grounded non-deductively in the ethical obligation. Jewish law – the Ten Commandments and the

Torah – would thus need to be understood non-deductively as a particular terrestrial attempt to thematize what essentially remains un-thematizable: the relation with the face of God, as a visitation and a transcendence at Sinai, manifest in the face-to-face relation with the neighbor.

4. The Relevance of Judaism for Non-Jews: From Jewish Particularism to Universal Humanism. Or Vice Versa?

However, if Levinas's intention was to avoid certain undesirable effects of philosophy's emphasis on being-in-common, his own exemplification of Judaic particularity risks making the opposite error, namely, excluding the rest of humanity from a supposedly Jewish privilege, or at least requiring, as the condition of universality, the recognition of Judaic exemplarity. Levinas certainly suggests that the truly Jewish person is probably more able to recognize the nature of thought's foundation as "being-taught" by inassimilable difference and, moreover, more used to living the required life of self-sacrifice: the weight of Jewish ethnicity teaches Jews to respect both their own particularity and to train themselves for a relation with the other. Moreover, Levinas often suggests that the historical fact of Jewish social marginality is inextricably tied up with its very exemplarity, its continual refusal to live a life which opts for being-in-common, and its insistence its status as "chosen" or "entrapped" in its particularity, culture, ethnicity, books, traditions, and rituals (1976/1990: 153). That said, to denigrate non-Jewish difference or to demand the conversion of non-Jews to Judaism would likewise deny thought's essentially hospitable nature. The task of thinking, and Levinas continually insists upon this point, is to welcome difference in a way that "lets difference be". How then is Judaism relevant and hospitable to non-Jews? How can non-Jews recognize and live thought's hospitable nature without needing to actually *be* Jewish? What is it that is universally applicable in Judaism?

Given that Judaism's supposed privilege relies on its being explicitly founded on thought's essence, it is thought's "hospitable" nature – its genesis as "being-taught" – that is generalizable. Judaism is exemplary, for Levinas, not because it alone has the capacity to found itself on this nature, but rather because it actually does. With perspicacity and with effort, other traditions can certainly both seek and live this source from within their own particular tradition. This is why Levinas still permits himself to use, on occasions, the words "humanism", "anthropology", and "universal truth". Judaism is thus relevant to non-Jews because non-Jews should also recognize the

universal applicability of that which makes Judaism exemplary. Instead of a humanism for the arrogant who need to learn nothing more, “the History of Israel invites us to create a new anthropology”, “the humanism of the suffering servant” (1976/1990: 170-171), of the one who indeed suffers for the sake of the other.

Of course, Levinas’s account contains a critical reminder for Judaism itself. Judaism, too, must remain on its guard: it must not overlook the essential. While its history, rituals and books are the only way to practice thought’s openness from within Judaic history, these are the means to and not the end of proper practice. Judaism is certainly not transmitted via the obscure path of atavism, nor is Salvation guaranteed by anything other than the terrestrial effort to produce salvation now. Thus, Levinas calls attention to an important warning in certain Rabbinic discussions that warn against the “sterility of Halakhah-style discussions” (1976/1990: 214) and against the futility of attempts to *determine* the relation between ethics and the Halakhah (1989: 236).⁵ Positive law must remain non-deductive, relevant to the modern situation and ultimately founded on the ethical relation. “The prophets or wise men of the Talmud know nothing about antibiotics or nuclear energy; but the categories needed to understand these novelties are already available to monotheism” (1976/1990: 213). Thus, Judaism too must ensure it keeps to its source: thought as being-taught and as the responsibility for granting the other a livable life.

However, while recognizing that any “humanism of the suffering servant” would need to affirm the validity of Jewish particularity and indeed its exemplarity, we need to ask whether the affirmation of Jewish exemplarity is itself the *condition for* or the *effect of* a genuinely generous humanism. Levinas appears to support the former: not only does he continually recall the dangers of starting with commonality he seems to suggest that the weight of historical injustices rendered against Jewish difference requires that, for humanity itself, inequality before the other is primarily inequality before the Jew. Judaism is thus exemplary not merely because it is thus far historically unique in founding itself on thought’s being-taught and actually living a life of self-sacrifice, but also because Judaism is the suffering other *par excellence*: its difference – the fact that it recognizes the true source – continually incites extreme hatred. Any just humanism would have as its condition the affirmation of the value of Jewish difference.

However, given Levinas’s own general account of the hospitable nature of thought, the affirmation of Jewish exemplarity should rather be the *effect of* the affirmation of the universally applicable, and not vice versa, as he appears to suggest. Strictly speaking, every cultural,

ethnic, or religious tradition *could* attempt, within its own tradition, to return to its source, namely, the capacity to be taught, and to live the implications which follow. In fact, the return to thought's essential movement is exactly what Levinas is calling for. Moreover, Judaism need not remain the *only* suffering other, if other traditions consciously suffer for the sufferings of others – which, again, is exactly what Levinas is calling for. Thus, the affirmation of Judaic particularity is rather a historical claim, one that is derived from the more fundamental account of a universal humanism grounded on thought's hospitable nature. A strange return to being-in-common in order to concretely live Levinasian ethics.

When the affirmation of Jewish exemplarity is ascribed the status of *condition for* and not *effect of* the universally applicable, Levinas risks hierarchizing differences in absolute terms, privileging “Jewish difference” over every other difference. The result: a loss of the capacity to recognize the “third” other, the Jew's other. Ethical politics – the comparison and evaluation of the claims of various others – is compromised by the unconditional privilege of Jewish difference, a privilege which leads Levinas to take some startling positions regarding the rights of citizens of the Jewish state with regard to other others such as Israel's neighbors in the Six-Day War or the Palestinian refugee among the massacred.

“Space is not one dimensional” (1976/1990: 259-264), comprises a round-about response, from Levinas's perspective as a French Jew, to the events of the 1967 Six-Day War. Written in 1968, it presents certain reasons why sympathy for Israel on the part of French Jews does not compromise their allegiance to the principles underwriting the 1789 Revolution and the Declaration of Rights. Jewish support for Israel rests, firstly, on the conviction that humanity's objective obligation resides in recognizing Jewish suffering and in providing Jews with basic living conditions in the wake of Auschwitz. Arabs, although not directly responsible for Europe's Holocaust, are nonetheless obliged by this objective humanitarian obligation. Support is based, secondly, in the opportunity Israel offers of finally carrying out the social law of Judaism and of embracing the teachings of the prophets in abnegation and self-sacrifice. Regarding the latter, Levinas reminds us that Israel's creation itself entailed laborious Jewish sacrifice: Jewish hopes could never be fulfilled by “a miserable arid land in the East, half-swamp, half-desert pretending to be honey and milk” (263). Levinas supports, consequently, the self-sacrificial spirit on which Israel is based, one that lends great power to Israel's supposedly “Messianic institutions”, over and above any concrete failures.

Admitting, finally, that being a fully conscious Jew leaves him in an awkward position “within Being” and in relation to his “un-hated Muslim enemy of the Six-Day War”, Levinas at last raises the hint of a critical voice, concluding that he can perhaps only say that “it is from adventures such as these [...] that a great modern state – [...] one that serves humanity – derives its greatness” (264): the key lies in the attention it pays to its presence in the World. Support for Israel on the part of the French Jew rests, thus, on the humanitarian principles underwriting the 1789 Revolution and the Declaration of Rights. While his unwillingness to criticize Israeli action is understandable given the events of Auschwitz, Israel’s fragility, and, as Levinas says elsewhere, his own fact of “not living its noble adventure and not running this great daily risk” (2001: 82), Levinas’s own account of ethics would nonetheless require the recognition, at least, that unilateral warring action does not comprise a warranted defense of Israel and its people. The Levinasian privilege of Jewish exemplarity in this case compromises his capacity to recognize the sufferings of other others.

A certain troubling “right to silence” also marks Levinas’s response to the 1982 massacres of Palestinian refugees in the camps of Sabra and Chatila in Israeli-occupied Lebanon. The implication of the Israeli army in allowing Lebanese Christian Phalangist militants into Palestinian refugee camps as an act of retribution for the Palestinian suicide bombing of Lebanese party headquarters lacks, again, the criticism it deserves. Levinas reminds us, first, that everyone is always responsible, that real innocence arises in recognizing responsibility, and that, although never absolved, Israeli Jews are more innocent than guilty in being more burdened by concretely lived responsibilities. Levinas reminds us, moreover, of the need for defense in order to protect one’s neighbor from the threat of violence. Here, the Palestinian does not, according to Levinas, qualify as “neighbor” but rather, insofar as he seeks to kill, reminds us that in alterity we can find an enemy. Concluding as he did in 1968, Levinas expresses a genuine hope that the adventure will assist in working out the ethical limit to an ethically necessary political existence geared towards protecting one’s neighbor. However, once again, while founded on the ethical relation, Levinas’s requirement that the affirmation of Jewish particularity be the condition for universal humanism prevents him from condemning a terrifying and excessive use of retributive violence, violence that simply cannot fall under the rubric of defense.

If positive law is to remain non-deductive, relevant to the modern situation and ultimately founded on the ethical relation, as Levinas indeed desires, then Judaism too must ensure it keeps to its

source, namely, thought's hospitable nature. The novelty of Levinas's account lies firstly, in its reminder that the task of living thought's nature requires a heightened responsibility for the other person's well-being, and secondly, that Judaism's exemplarity lies in its explicit attempt to do so by means of and within its own particular ethnic tradition. However, the affirmation of Jewish particularity should be seen as the effect of and not the condition for what nonetheless remains a universal account of humanism as hospitality, universal inasmuch as it requires that all traditions – ethnic, cultural, religious, political, technological etc. – attempt to live their own particularity responsibly, generously, and hospitably, with perspicacity and with effort.

Notes

1. Wherever possible, references refer to the English translations of the original publications. Citations will list the date of the original followed by the date of the translation followed by the page number e.g. (Levinas 1961/1969, 25).
2. Jacques Derrida's later and well-known preoccupation with "hospitality" and with the concept of subjectivity posited as a "welcome" is clearly indebted to Levinas's work. E.g. *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (1997/1999).
3. Jacques Derrida provides a critical reconstruction of Levinas's relationship with Heidegger in "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas" (1967/1980), underlining how Heidegger's account of the thought of Being does not necessarily prevent a relation with absolute exteriority.
4. For an analysis of the difference between Derrida, Levinas and Kant on sovereignty, rationality and freedom, please "Derrida brings Levinas to Kant: the welcome, ethics and cosmopolitical law" (Bankovsky 2005).
5. The Halakhah is a legal decision regarding a case for which there is no direct enactment in the Mosaic law, deduced by analogy from this law or from the Scriptures, and included as a binding precept in the Mishna, *OED*, 2004.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Contrary to what has been advertised by both sides, universalism and particularism reinforce and supplement each other and have to seek to form a symmetrical, mutually supporting relationship by every means in order to avoid a dialogic encounter that would necessarily jeopardize their reputedly secure and harmonized monologic worlds.

Naoki Sakai: *Translation and Subjectivity*

***21. Ethnophilosophy, Comparative Philosophy, Pragmatism: Towards a Philosophy of Ethnoscapes**

Thorsten Botz-Bornstein

Abstract: Through recent confrontations with the theme of “globalization”, the idea of “ethnophilosophy” appears again as interesting and attractive. Fidelis Okafor published an article in which he reevaluates qualities like “folkness”, the “existential outlook”, and “communal mind”. The recurring interest in ethnophilosophy is understandable at times where networks of global communication are also effective in philosophy. Arjun Appadurai has suggested to see the world in terms of “ethnoscapes”. “Scapes” are like perspectival landscapes in that they “do not look the same from every angle”. In order to avoid Neo-provincialism in philosophy, I suggest to accept the model of the “scape” as a model. Philosophies should be seen in a pragmatic way as dynamical mindscapes.
Key Words: Ethnophilosophy, ethnoscapes, mindscapes, Eurasianism, pragmatism.

Whenever we question the authority of ‘general’ truths and we look for ways of integrating ‘local discourses’ into the overall construction called ‘global philosophy’ we come across the old idea of ‘ethnophilosophy’. Far from suggesting ethnophilosophy as a model of the philosophy of the future, I intend to rethink certain themes of ethnophilosophy and contrast them with disciplines such as ‘comparative philosophy’ and pragmatism. I will sketch an approach that I believe to be appropriate for the development of philosophy at times of globalization.

One of the negative undertones clinging to the term ‘globalization’ is that it is seen as a uniformizing and flattening power that eliminates existent cultural differences. On the other hand, there is an important side effect of globalization represented by those movements acting against it, stressing the importance of ‘localization’ or ‘regionalization’. Ethnophilosophy, in spite of its outdated origin and its potential dangers, remains interesting as an intellectual model as long as it is not formulated in a radical fashion. *When* it is formulated in a radical fashion it has to face the reproach of relativism, and of enclosing itself in a cultural sphere that it declares to be inaccessible to others.

1. Ethnophilosophy: A Renaissance?

Ethnophilosophy was developed in Africa in the 1960s though its origin can be traced back to a book on Bantu philosophy by the Belgian missionary Placide Tempels (see Jürgen Hengelbrock’s article “Emotion is Black...” in the present volume). In this book, published in 1946, Tempels tried to conclude with the view that primitive peoples have neither ontology nor logic and are unable to recognize the nature of beings or even of reality as such. Tempels was looking for an ontology colored by ‘local’ cultural components but also by language (Tempels 1965) and he made a serious attempt to build a philosophical system of Bantu thought.

What followed were endless controversies about the nature of African philosophy that made of ‘ethnophilosophy’ a stream of thought much richer than its name might allow to suppose. A part of its stimulating power can perhaps be traced to the ambiguity of Tempels’ approach: on the one hand, it could be easily dismissed as paternalism or the attempt to force African philosophy into the straightjacket of European concepts, while on the other hand the expressed desire to give ‘ethnic’ philosophy a new role within the international hierarchy of the philosophies was immensely attractive. Be that as it may, Tempels’ book became the real manifest of ‘ethnophilosophy’.

Another point at issue that spurned internal ethnophilosophical discussions was the question whether African philosophy is advanced by an entire people (that is, by a collective) or by individual philosophers. This question (which does not occur in Tempels’ book) was first taken up by the Beninese philosopher Paulin Hountondji who claimed that ethnophilosophy is no philosophy at all because it remains indifferent toward individually critical, that is, typically *philosophical*,

approaches (Hountondji 1996 and Wiredu 1996).¹ Related debates touch upon fundamental questions concerning the meaning of ‘collective thinking’ or the nature of philosophy as such.²

However subtle the points may be that emerge from these discussions, for the outside observer ethnophilosophy appears to be a kind of anthropology (whose premises it continues to share) with an incorporated interest in metaphysical questions. Its opposite is ‘conventional’ Western philosophy, which persistently explores truth with the help of a single, individual *mind*, aiming at the crystallization of a truth relevant for everybody. What matters for ethnophilosophy is the truth brought forward by a certain way of life of a group of people that can be found on the ‘inside’ of a culture and that can exist independently of any considerations of those things that exist on the outside. Ethnophilosophy is radical in the sense that it not only aims to reestablish, through its opposition to the all-intruding ‘international’ philosophy, its own philosophy within the borders of a certain *nation*; going much further than many of today’s opponents of globalization would dare to go, ethnophilosophy thinks of philosophy as taking place within the borders of a certain ethnic group.

In spite of the intensive critical evaluation and transformation that ethnophilosophy has suffered in Africa since the 1960s, it has never attracted much attention from those people who have no academic link with the specific domain of ‘African philosophy’. It seems, however, that through recent confrontations with the theme of ‘globalization’, the idea of ‘ethnophilosophy’ has started expanding its field of influence. In 1997, Fidelis Okafor published an article in *Philosophy East & West* with the slightly curious title “In Defense of Afro-Japanese Ethnophilosophy” (Okafor 1997).³ Okafor reevaluates qualities like ‘folkness’, and ‘communal mind’ as characteristics of a philosophy that takes a people’s *Weltanschauung* as simultaneously a point of departure and an objective. He puts forward “the reasoning or thinking that underlie the existential outlook, the patterns of life, belief system, aesthetic and moral values, customary laws and practices of a particular people” as primary constituents of philosophy. While Hountondji, who dominated the discourse on this subject for such a long time, employed the term ‘ethnophilosophy’ negatively, Okafor insists on its positive connotations. ‘Folkness’ becomes, for Okafor, a subject of interest for ‘non-Western’ philosophies that are “devoid of universal ideas of Western philosophy” (Okafor 1997: 366). Okafor quotes Graham Parkes, who claimed that “a feature of [i.e. the Japa-

nese] tradition that makes it quite different from its Western counterparts is that philosophy did not develop as a separate discipline in isolation from life, but was rather embodied in particular forms of practice".⁴ Here Okafor sees parallels with African philosophy. A 'communal element' dependent on people's own experience, an admitted innocence toward the typically Western distinction between realism and idealism (368), and an emphasis on 'immediate experience' would all be 'non-Western' characteristics shared by both Africans and by Japanese.

There might be some truth in Okafor's provocative statement that Japanese philosophy has ethno-philosophical traits. Did not Masao Maruyama suggest that Japanese intellectuals still retain remnants of an "an animist vision of the world" that remains hidden most deeply in their consciousness (Maruyama 1989: Introduction)? At the same time, it is striking that Okafor does not allude in this context to the *ambiguity* of the whole Japanese philosophical enterprise. True, the works of Nishida Kitarô and Watsuji Tetsurô, developed from the 1920s on, are seen today as early formulations of anti-Eurocentrism in philosophy; but the irony is that these works could acquire their anti-Eurocentric status only because they managed to reformulate traditional Japanese thought in *Western terms*. Any anti-Eurocentrism must first compromise with Eurocentrism in order to become visible for 'Europeans'. In this sense, the Japanese project runs in parallel with Tempels' attempt of showing that 'Bantu thought' *does* contain abstract elements, that it *can* be formulated in a language interesting for Westerners, and therefore *is* philosophy.

While Okafor spells out his observations in terms of a clearly defined 'Renaissance of Ethnophilosophy', attempts by other non-Western philosophers (or even Western ones) to formulate similar ideas remain less outspoken as to their intellectual links with this African tradition. Still, ethno-philosophical moments can be recognized elsewhere, and I would like to sketch some examples that have struck me during the last few years. In Finland, Tere Vadén wrote an interesting article on the possibilities of "Finnish thinking" which engaged in the examination of those parts of Finnish thinking that are "not (wholly or totally) translatable" (Vadén 1996: 385), because their meaning exceeds "representations and subjects" (a new article by Vadén, written ten years afterwards, is included in the present volume). These difficult linguistic items cannot be approached with the help of metaphysics or abstract linguistic analysis because all theoretical and

conceptual tools remain “hostile to the possibility of local modes of thinking”. Instead, we should try to rediscover language as “a form of experience and not a system of representations”. Vadén refers to the Finnish linguist H.G. Porthan (1739-1804) who established language as being “inseparably tied to thinking and culture, so that every language has its on mode of thinking”, concluding the “impossibility of thinking clearly in foreign languages” (388). Thinking and philosophizing in a foreign language suppresses and confuses thoughts.⁵ In the end, Vadén does not decide to support Porthan’s scientific thesis about the correspondence of language and thinking, but opts for a Heideggerian vision of language as the “place of thinking”.

Among those areas which are most obviously marked by ethno-philosophical themes is Russia, in which we actually observe a virulent revival of the so-called Eurasianist tradition (see Mikhail Epstein’s article in the present volume). Historically, Russian philosophers preceded even the Japanese in challenging Eurocentric philosophical and historical models. Some of the Slavophile claims were relaunched in the 1920 by the Eurasianists; they have recently been relaunched once again by so-called neo-Eurasianist philosophical movements. The refusal of Nicolai S. Trubetzkoy (one of the founders of Eurasianism) to recognize “Romano-Germanic” intellectual criteria as valid for Russia (Trubetzkoy 1991: 12-13),⁶ seems to have the potential of encouraging contemporary culturology as post-colonial studies examining Russian culture.⁷ Trubetzkoy’s criticism of Western terms like ‘humanity’, ‘universally human’, ‘civilization’, or ‘world progress’ lets Eurasianism appear as the earliest form of ‘postmodernism’.⁸

However, ethno-philosophical motives can be observed also in territories where one would not really expect them. I would seriously consider the foundation of a society for the philosophy of ‘Anglo-Teutonic Peoples’ as one step into this direction.⁹

Then there are formulations which are in no way meant as ethno-philosophical statements but that can very well appear as such. Barry Smith recently linked the largest part of German philosophy (and an even larger part of contemporary French philosophy) to a “linguistic culture” that evolved during “a time when the true source of knowledge could be seen as lying not in science and reason but in feeling, passion, sensibility – sometimes even in instinct and blood [...]”. According to Smith, “consequences can reliably be drawn for

the subsequent development of philosophical writing in this language”, because we can find the same “linguistic echo” in Kant, in *Sein und Zeit*, and in Rosenberg (Smith 2001: 80). It is difficult *not* to read this statement like a re-edition of 1960s ethnophilosophy with an implicit caricature of the Whorf-Sapir thesis about the correspondence of thinking and language.

As can be expected, the contemporary project that could be called ‘Renaissance of ethnophilosophy’ is developing also along less promising paths leading straight to mysticism, totalitarianism, and populist politics. While specialists of Eurasianism are still arguing whether or not the original Eurasianism naturally tended towards totalitarian forms of the state, the nationalist philosopher and geopolitician Alexandr Dugin founded a new Eurasianist Movement whose explicit aim is to represent an intellectual basis for the Greater-Russia movement and a political stance against the Islamic world as much as against the United States of America (cf. Epstein in this volume and Kullberg 2001). Dugin’s Eurasianism is opposed not just to recent unfortunate effects of globalization but to enlightenment as a whole.¹⁰ While a generalized atmosphere of “post-atheist spirituality” (Mikhail Epstein) is even favorable towards such attempts, the Russian government has even chosen an ideology based on the ‘old sacred’ and ‘national Russian spirit’ (*narodnost*) in order to put the Russian people on a safer way towards ‘civilization’.¹¹

In India, intellectuals like Gayatri Spivak, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Anshis Nandy, and Partha Chatterjee have long talked about an authentic national liberation through the rediscovery of authentic traditions. However, the revival of philosophical traditions is not limited to national intellectual liberation preached by these people. A weird form of postmodernism attempts to establish ‘Indian philosophy’ by way of radical relativism. Meera Nanda reports from the Indian philosophical scene about a “Hindu nationalist promotion of assorted Vedic sciences” getting dangerously mixed up with postcolonial critiques of science as such (Nanda 2003). What sounds like a curious echo of 19th century Slavophile claim that the truth of science should be in accordance with (or even be searched for) in Orthodoxy (Müller 1966: 36)¹² is, in reality, much worse:

All of these militant demands for ‘equal rights’ to pursue their own version of theistic or sacred science take it for granted that it is no longer necessary to grant science the status of objective and universal knowledge. Science, it is assumed in the true postmodernist fashion, no longer poses a challenge to the

metaphysical assumptions of their own faiths, because scientific knowledge is itself a construct of a wide variety of contested terms, held together, ultimately, by cultural power and social interests which define a given paradigm or an episteme (Nanda, *ibid.*).

In the end, one is ready to “bring in the supernatural as an explanation of natural phenomena” (*ibid.*).

2. Comparative Philosophy

Having sketched the phenomenon of ethnophilosophy with its possible variations and aberrations, before analyzing phenomena discussed above I want to mention another possibility of considering ‘ethno-’ components in philosophy. This discipline is already well established and develops along safer paths: ‘comparative philosophy’. What comparative philosophy – like the more and more influential ‘intercultural philosophy’¹³ – has in common with ethnophilosophy is that it takes the ‘ethno-’ part of any philosophy seriously and is even ready to establish it as a starting point for fruitful comparisons. The approaches of Comparative Philosophy are meant to transcend the statements contained in a certain tradition and to lead them to a ‘higher’ truth. Retrospectively, even the initial suggestions made within the framework of a single tradition will be understood in a better and ‘fresher’ way. The model of Comparative Philosophy is efficient and justified as a method. Moreover, it represents a case in point for the illustration of the difficulties involved in ethnophilosophical projects in general.

Among the numerous comparative disciplines practiced in academic research (e.g., comparative literature, comparative religion, or comparative linguistics), comparative philosophy has an outstanding position. In the case of comparative literature, it is not really the *subject of the disciplines* (e.g., ‘literature’) that engages in comparative activities; rather, a certain ‘science of literature’ compares its subjects among each other. Also, in the case of comparative religion, we do not really mean that ‘religion’ itself would become comparative but rather that a ‘comparative science of religion’ compares different religions. The exceptional status of philosophy becomes clear here. Philosophy, by comparing different philosophies among each other, does not become a ‘comparative science of philosophy’ but *is* philosophy. Comparative philosophy is identified by an inner self-contradiction: on the one hand, philosophy, like literature and art, is part of a cultural experience that cannot be fully materialized because it is an intimate

process. In principle, these intimate processes cannot be ‘compared’ (there is, for example, no ‘comparative art’). On the other hand, philosophy *is itself* one of those materializing disciplines that attempt to transform culture, art, religion, etc. into something that can be ‘grasped’ through concepts, ideas and notions and – finally – be compared.

The self-contradictory character of Comparative Philosophy becomes particularly obvious with regard to ethnophilosophy. Ethnophilosophy contains a rich ‘inner’ cultural experience, but it would be mistaken if it thinks that it can grasp itself *from the inside*, that is, by developing its methods out of its own traditions. It will always remain impossible to grasp one’s own inner philosophico-cultural experience from the unique standpoint of that experience itself. In order to grasp itself *philosophically*, ethnophilosophy has to leave the ‘inside’-sphere of the ‘ethno’ and become, like any full-fledged philosophy, ‘universal’.

3. Pragmatism

I will now try to analyze the phenomenon of ethnophilosophy and confront it with certain theoretical stances, the first of which will be pragmatism. Specialists in international relations have coined the term ‘glocalization’ as a hybrid form of globalization and localization. Also, philosophy as an expression of contemporary culture can be seen as ethnic and global at the same time. The reason for this is that today, even more than in former times, for philosophy, as much as for any other discipline, ‘experience’ is global as much as ethnic.

In the domain of philosophy, Richard Rorty has repeated what Feyerabend and Kuhn undertook in the domain of science: he cut off philosophy from its traditional obligation to create unifying, that is, ‘global’ theories. For Rorty, philosophical truth, like that of science, is not a-historical and neutral, but determined by cultural forms of life.

John Dewey (1859-1952) and pragmatism in general, engaged in a paradoxical project. They reacted against 19th century idealist philosophy that was deeply involved in metaphysical problems, and *at the same time* they reacted against positivist ambitions to fundamentally contest the usefulness of metaphysics. Although the pragmatist alternative remains difficult to spell out, it seems that Rorty’s step to deny the existence of global truths is one of its necessary consequences.

In an article on the future of pragmatism (Rorty 1982: Chapter 9), Rorty suggests reconsidering central motives of William James (1842-1910) and John Dewey, to develop a philosophy that remains aware of its own and others' historical, cultural, and ethnic bases. Rorty develops a philosophical attitude that can look like a form of ethnophilosophy. The particular feature is that it bases its right to exist not on ideological, but purely 'pragmatic' motives.

First, Rorty does not talk about ethnophilosophy but of other philosophers who emphatically contested the Kantian claim that the task of philosophy is to establish 'truth' within an a-historical, culturally neutral context. Among these philosophers were Nietzsche and Heidegger. Their problem, however, was not to be guided by pragmatic motives. One of the consequences of their non-pragmatic criticism towards general truth is that they developed a generalized anti-scientific attitude.

Pragmatists, on the other hand, see no reason to abandon the heritage of enlightenment. Managing to take into consideration 'history' and 'culture' without ceasing to be 'secular intellectuals' (161), all James and Dewey did was to abandon the metaphysical, Kantian ambition of *grounding* culture, religious belief, etc. in *philosophical* bases. To ground culture in philosophy means to impute 'general truth' to truths that are only individual. We understand that Kant had believed that he had established a standard of reason naturally transcending communal conditioning or even any conditioning of single cultures. Still, Khlebnikov could reproach him with the claim that he never succeeded in determining "the boundaries of reason [but that] he determined the boundaries of *German* reason".¹⁴

Jürgen Habermas points to the danger immanent in Rorty's pragmatic step, because Rorty could end up "drowning philosophy in contexts determined [only] by contingency".¹⁵ Implicit in Habermas' criticism is the warning that, once we abandon general truths, philosophy will be drowned in *relativism*. On the other hand, as also Habermas recognizes, the incontestable advantage of Rorty's approach is that it makes philosophy more apt to consider cultural 'multitude' in the form of more graspable realities.

The pragmatist approach thus does not suggest that we should research and collect a maximum of individual truths and then subsequently declare that all these truths are incompatible with each other. The pragmatist only constantly points out that 'truths' are less general than idealistic philosophers want us make believe. For James, Rorty

says, ‘truth’ is “what is good in the way of belief”. It is “not the sort of thing which *has* essence” (ibid., 162).

Pragmatists follow Hegel’s conviction that “philosophy is its time grasped in thought” (174). They display thus an ethno-philosophical input with regard to themselves as well as to the philosophy of others which becomes particularly obvious when Rorty writes: “The pragmatist [...] must remain ethnocentric and offer examples. He can only say: ‘undistorted’ means employing *our* criteria of relevance, where *we* are the people who have read and pondered Plato, Newton, Kant...” (173). It is just because pragmatists are rational that they recognize that rational philosophy cannot exist, simply because there is no absolutely rational life (in a Platonic sense) to philosophize about. Philosophical vocabulary, just like everyday language, cannot be derived directly from *nature* but only from *culture*. A priori structures of language, social life, or politics might offer comfort to our thinking but correspond to no cultural reality. Any philosophy not recognizing this pragmatic reality will not find truth. Rorty is a pragmatist because he is a realist, and the statement of the Russian philosopher S.A. Frank (1877-1950) who reflected so much upon the character of ‘cultural reality’, can be read as an elucidation of Rorty-style pragmatism:

The true realist is not one who sees only what is in front of his nose. On the contrary, this sort of ‘realist’ is usually destined to be a doctrinaire, for he sees not God’s wide world as it really is but only an artificial little world limited by his interests and personal position. The true realist is one who, having ascended the heights, has the ability to survey the wide distances, to see reality in its fullness and objectivity (Frank 1987: 6).

In spite of this Nietzschean account of philosophical truth, Rorty successfully escapes the reproach of relativism as well as that of irrationalism. Pragmatists do not hold “that every belief on a certain topic [...] is as good as every other” (166), nor are they eager to invent new, ‘irrationalist’ pseudo-metaphysical notions like ‘intuition’, “thinking with the blood”, etc. (171). Since pragmatists follow no ideal at all, they simply do not have to face such ‘idealist’ charges. What counts is the philosophical process, or the ‘conversation’ (as Socrates would have said): “We are not conversing because we have a goal, but because Socratic conversation is an activity which is its own end” (172).

Finally, all we can gain is “a new sense of community” (166) but no abstract truth: “Our identification with our community – our society, our political tradition, our intellectual heritage – is heightened

when we see this community as *ours* rather than *nature's*, *shaped* rather than *found*, one among many which men have made. In the end, pragmatists tell us, what matters is our loyalty to other human beings clinging together against the dark, not our hope of getting things right" (ibid.).

I have produced this lengthy account of Rorty's reflections because they come remarkably close to what could be considered a positive form of contemporary ethnophilosophy. Rorty's pragmatism obviously adopts the traits of contextualism. However, to spell out a 'contexts' signifies already putting something abstract on those pedestals that are usually built with the help of metaphysics. A real pragmatist is unable to indicate a firm point of view from which 'contexts' can be established.

It is interesting to note that comparative philosophy has actually always implicitly agreed with this. No 'comparative science of philosophy' can ground a certain philosophical tradition in a way that makes it look as if it were firmly anchored in a certain context. It is misleading to view philosophical truth as contained in a context represented by different cultural *spheres* jealously concealing their content from each other, even if we subsequently set out to compare them.

Habermas recognizes the affinity that Rorty's context has with Wittgenstein's *Lebensform*.¹⁶ He also recognizes that Rorty's contextualism only makes sense as long as it remains moderate, that is, as long as it does not idealize the community and turn it into an abstract life-world (Habermas 1982, 176ff). This is very important, because within the provincial communities called 'life-worlds', communication has become unnecessary.

4. Essentialism and Relativism

I now want to suggest an approach that can be read as an answer to Habermas' criticism of Rorty's contextualism. It is remarkable that all above examples above of 'ethnophilosophy', reaching from Watsuji¹⁷ via Eurasianism to the 'Hindu Right', have been reproached with Spenglerian essentialism. This is one of the reasons why I sympathize with Rorty's claim that ethnophilosophy must be pragmatic; or with James' idea that "truth is not the sort of thing which has an essence" (Rorty 1982: 162).

Akira Iriye has explained that essentialism in culture leads more or less automatically to the belief that "every culture is an empire" (Iriye 1997: 8). This must be the same 'essentialist understanding of

culture' that, according to Nanda, the Hindu Right has "borrowed straight from Spengler's *Decline of the West*". Curiously, once it is established, this essentialism can find a very comfortable shortcut to communal relativism:

They argue, in essence, that what constitutes relevant evidence for a community of scientists will vary with their material/social and professional interests, their social values including gender ideologies, religious faith, and with their culturally grounded standards of rationality and success. Thus, scientists with different social backgrounds, from different cultures and from different historical periods, literally, live in different worlds: the sciences of modern Western societies are not any more 'true' or 'rational' than the sciences of other cultures (Nanda 2003).

Most remarkably, these populist Hindu philosophers established their views (according to Nanda) with the help of Feyerabend, Kuhn, Quine, Wittgenstein and Foucault. We are here confronted with what Habermas sees as the main problem inherent in Rorty's philosophy: that everything can all too easily be sucked into the "whirlpool of contingent experience" ("Strudel der Kontingenzerfahrung", 1982: 179).

Habermas' concerns continue to be as valid as Rorty's concerns are interesting. All that remains to say is that, almost ironically, today Habermas' nostalgia for fixed forms of transcendental reason on the one hand and 'singular reasons' of different ethnophilosophies on the other become combined *without* the help of philosophy. The prominent existence of a globalized reality that asks for – pragmatic – recognition, thwarts all attempts of finding a *general* reason as much as those at finding a 'singular truth'. The reason is that, on a globalized philosophical scene, the opposition of a spherical, universal, abstract 'globe' to a concrete, Heideggerian, flat 'earth' no longer makes sense. In a time of mass-immigration, the internet, and economic internationalization, it is equally difficult to produce a philosophy modeled after Kant's transcendental idealism as it is to introduce Temples-style ethnophilosophy. At the moment the *Lebenswelt* itself is globalized, philosophy remains unable to opt for either the one or the other: either model would shift somewhere between 'asking the impossible' and 'running in open doors'.

The reason is also that both Kant and Tempels cling to the idea of a *sphere* as the most convenient model for reason. Be it the *local* reason or the *universal* one: both consider their highest aim to embrace fully and first of all *themselves*, that is, the sphere they have chosen as a target (either their local culture or the whole – abstract – world).

Today, the aim of philosophy *can* only be to effectuate, in a pragmatic way, a synthesis of globe and earth – the squaring of the circle, so to speak. The result is the deduction of a more complex notion that I would like to call ‘scape’.

5. Towards a Philosophy of Ethnoscapes

The sociologist Arjun Appadurai has suggested that we should see the world in terms of “ethnoscapes, technoscapes, mediascapes, finanscapes [and] ideoscapes” (Appadurai 1990: 296).¹⁸ “Scapes”, Appadurai explains, “are like perspectival landscapes”. They have “fluid, irregular shapes” and “do not look the same from every angle”. While the appearance of ethnoscapes, technoscapes, mediascapes and finanscapes is relatively recent and linked to a later stage of modernity, the ideoscape (which is most closely linked to philosophy) is certainly the oldest of the five members. Contemporary scapes are, according to Appadurai, formed to a large extent by immigrants, refugees, and exiles; they are not limited to national boundaries but scattered across the globe, although still able to form more or less coherent ‘scapes’. We can add that in the realm of ideas ‘migrant notions’ and ‘refugee concepts’ have been moving around the globe since centuries, probably because *ideas* are easier to displace than anything else in the world.

Looking at Appadurai’s construct from a philosophical point of view, we are tempted to see all five scapes as being contained in the older notion of ‘mindscape’. In the past, the ‘mind’ has often been accepted as a model for the expression of cultural particularities and served, in postwar academic studies, as an important guideline for the analysis of national or regional cultures. After Franz Boas’ *The Mind of the Primitive Man* (1911), books like *The Japanese Mind*, *The Korean Mind*, *The Chinese Mind*, *The Mind of the South*, *The Austrian Mind*, and other became popular, especially in the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁹ Looking at these books, it is notable that most of them contain studies covering very precisely the five fields that Appadurai also put forward plus another one: philosophy. It is true, as previously mentioned, that Appadurai’s ‘ideoscape’ comes close to philosophy, but it is limited because it contains only enlightenment values like freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty, or democracy. What seems to be lacking in Appadurai’s combination of scapes is *philosophy* as another legitimate expression of culture but – is it really lacking? Is it not possible to see the ‘mindscape’ as more than sum of its five parts, but as representing just that quantity that is usually referred to as *philosophy*? Of course, if

one considers philosophy as an elitist discipline dealing with cultural facts only after having formalized them into abstract configurations, one might not see the ‘mindscape’ as an expression of a philosophical landscape.

However, if we accept the ‘squaring of the circle’ and admit ethno-cultural experiences as creative elements of a self-forming process of philosophical culture, the ‘mindscape’ appears as a viable reality for intercultural philosophy. After all, the more ‘formal’ and abstract part of philosophy is not abandoned. Philosophical mindscapes can have elitist parts (in which we can encounter the *categorical imperative* or the Buddhist *sunyata*), and other parts that can be more ‘ethnically’, ‘ideologically’, ‘media-’ or even ‘finance-’ orientated. What all parts have in common is that each is structured like an open scape and not like a closed sphere, and that they all together form a single ‘mindscape’.

Finally, the squaring of the circle, that is the transformation of the sphere into a scape, goes in parallel with the dissolution of philosophy’s internal ‘self-contradiction’. As we have seen, philosophy is, by its nature, torn between subjective experience and objectivizing ambition; in the worst case this tension gets polarized up to the point that a subjective sense of ethnicity finds itself opposed to objective global order. Within the philosophical mindscape this tension does not exist. The scape is neither an object nor can it be reduced to ‘subjective experience’. Neither is it an abstract quantity (as ‘globalized experience’ would be) nor is it concrete, ‘bound-to-the-earth’, folk-like experience.

Another important point is that Appadurai’s scapes are ‘imagined worlds’: they are “multiple worlds constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups around the world” (Appadurai 1990: 296). Also a philosophical mindscape is not ‘real’ (in the same way in which anthropological facts are real) but participates in the fluent movement of cultural experience.

The above-mentioned conundrum, elucidated in the section on comparative philosophy, that philosophy cannot grasp itself though (its own) method because a part of it is constituted in a non-methodological, cultural *reality*, gets naturally dissolved within the model of the scape.

Another problem that no longer appears within scapes is that of the discrepancy between the individual and the group. Ethnophilosophy established the idea of philosophy as being created not by an

individual (even if this individual manages to mold a purely 'individual' truth into general concepts), but by a group. The Kantian ambition to provide a philosophical grounding for truths that are, at their origin, cultural and thus dependent on groups is here inverted. The individual *cannot* produce anything, neither a personal nor a general truth. There are only 'group-truths' produced by groups. The problem is that, once such a status of truth is established, it is difficult to bring together (group-)ethnos and (individual) mind within discussions on intercultural philosophy, though, originally, they were not separated; after all, the individual is part of a group. The 'scape' helps to overcome this problem as much as it helps to overcome the opposite problem, that of Western philosophers who believe certain truths to be universal, although, in reality, their beliefs are perhaps only group-oriented ones.

6. Mind-Body-Scapes

Appadurai does not make an essential 'ethnophilosophical' difference between persons and groups: both of them can be encountered within scapes. The novelty of Appadurai's scape-scheme is that it sees economic, technological, and cultural structures not as fixed but as open, evolving, and merging, although still recognizable as scapes. The *Oxford Dictionary* explains the origin of the word 'scape' as stemming from 'escape' (cf. scape-pipe = escape pipe).²⁰ This is, in my opinion, the most important reason why it represents such a strong alternative to 'spherical' metaphors. Spheres contain something that needs to be protected by a shell. The German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk strongly emphasized the idea of the sphere as a metaphor for the 'internal' position of culture that can exist as long as it protects itself against an outside:

The sphere is the inner, discovered, shared round shape that men live in as they become humans. Because to reside somewhere always already means to form bubbles, in the particular as much as in general, humans are those beings who put up circular worlds and look into horizons. To live in spheres means to create those dimensions that can contain humans. Spheres are spatial creations effective from the point of view of immunology, made of ecstatic beings on whom the exterior is working (Sloterdijk 1998: 28).

The sphere not only protects but, according to Sloterdijk, also "give sense" to any form of social life (57), appearing thus as a psychosocial dimension of collectivism.

A scape must be defined as the opposite of such protective psychosocial bubble. It produces ‘sense’ without limiting this sense to a certain sphere but remains open and can even absorb and integrate other ‘senses’. A good way to imagine a ‘mindscape’ is to see it, in a Bergsonian way, as a ‘center of habits’. According to Bergson, what is decisive for man’s existential condition are not the intellectual motives located within a closed mind, but rather the ‘bodily prolongation’ of our mind that determines our behavior within a certain cultural space. These habits – which are a matter of the body as much as of the mind – are more stable than the mind.

It is indeed possible to perceive in Bergson’s distinction the difference between a sphere and a scape, or, more precisely, the difference between the conception of the mind as a (spherical) container ‘containing’ ideas, values, etc., and the mind as a mental phenomenon connected to social, cultural or ‘bodily’ behavior. Bergson’s center of habits, just because it represents a paradox fusion of the abstract and the concrete, is a center not only of thought but also of action. The idea of the mind as a closed entity is abstract and can easily become stagnant. A way to oppose this is to see the philosophical ‘mindscape’ as a dynamic center of habit-action. Within this scape or within this ‘center of action’ we act. Since, according to Appadurai, scapes look different from every angle, an important precondition for the existence of these de-centered scapes is thus that there must be bodies that move within these scapes. Effects of location and dislocation can take place only if the mindscape is not seen as an intellectual, spiritual, objectified sphere, but as constantly being-related-to bodies who, since they are moving, disrupt any fixed perspective. In this sense, every mindscape is at the same time a ‘bodyscape’. Jean-Luc Nancy’s concept of body-space characterizes very well this idea of bodyscape as an existential space:

Bodies are not ‘full’, or filled with space (space is always full): they are *open* space; that is to say in one sense, space that is properly *spacious* rather than spatial, or that which one could perhaps call *place*. Bodies are places of existence, and there is no existence without place, without *there*, without a ‘here’, a ‘here it is’ *voici* for the *this (ceci)*. The body-space is neither full, nor empty, there is no outside nor inside, any more than there are no parts, no totality, no functions, no finality (Nancy: 1992: 16)

What does all this mean more concretely for intercultural, comparative philosophy or for the philosophy of ethnoscapes proposed above? To try to understand, for example, ‘Japanese philosophy’ in

one's own, Western terms is wrong although not entirely avoidable. However, it would still be more wrong to reduce Japanese philosophy to 'Eastern Spirituality' or perhaps to one or the other expression of 'National Identity' in order to avoid any Western preconceptions. This would be the contrary of understanding Japanese philosophy as a philosophical mindscape. When we try to understand 'Japanese Philosophy', our intellect is not penetrating a sphere within which everything stands at certain fixed positions; rather we perceive things in the same way as a body perceives a landscape. The body, at the moment it perceives a 'scape', is unable to locate it independently of its own (moving) position within this scape, and is forced to link every impression to a larger universal (which is equally dependent on the body). In some way this comes down to saying that in order to understand 'Japanese Philosophy' in the right way, it is necessary to take care that those things that have been located get immediately dislocated.

In any case it is a mistake to believe that a larger universal sphere contains individual, fixed items, and that 'explanations' can be delivered by drawing links between the individual and the universal. If the 'individual' is seen *only* 'in terms of the universal', all that will be produced is a cliché because the individual will be only the *typical* representative of a universal. On the other hand, if the 'universal' is seen in terms of the 'individual', the result will most probably look like a typical product of rationalism or idealism who, as Ram Adhar Mall has said, always likes "to think the multiple as dependent on the One" (Mall 1998). The multiple will then not be established as a composition of different, autonomous, concrete entities, but will be installed through an intellectual and abstract shortcut as a total unity. To try to explain the existence of the multiple *only* by way of its identification with the One neglects the concrete reality of the multiple.

The problem is reminiscent of the hermeneutic circle, although it is, in fact, more complicated. The suggested alternative is to define philosophical mindscapes as mind-body scapes that are neither abstract nor concrete. Idealism and rationalism engendered Hegel's philosophy of the Absolute Spirit, which attempted to think a kind of spherical One (a community, a nation) as an organic whole. What is missing in Hegel's model is the moment of 'dislocation' which the Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitarô has called 'nothingness' in opposition to Hegel's Absolute Spirit. As a matter of fact, the idea of body-scape overlaps to a very large extent with Nishida's notions of 'place' or

‘horizon’ which are *non-organically unified entities* in which no element can be ‘located’ without constantly being ‘dislocated’. The horizon and the constellations within the ‘place’ are constantly changing according to the ‘body’ through which it is perceived.

Although a real ‘hermeneutics of scapes’ remains to be written, it is certain that in times of intensive intercultural communication, ‘mind-spheres’, as long as they appear like philosophical bio-topes, create an unacceptable situation: they leave no choice between neo-traditionalism and universalism. Frederic Jameson’s vision of a postmodern geopolitical system thus comes close to a vision of a world in which thoughts are defined in terms of mind-spheres instead of mind-body-scapes:

In the absence of general categories under which to subsume such particulars, the lapse back into features of the pre-World War I international system is inevitable and convenient (it includes all the national stereotypes which, inevitably racist whether positive or negative, organize our possibility of viewing and confronting the collective Other). It is also important to stress the fact that these archaic categories will not work for the new world system: it is enough, for example, to reflect on the disappearance of specifically national cultures and their replacement, either by a centralized commercial production for world export or by their own mass-produced neotraditional images, for the lack of fit between the categories of the nineteenth century and the realities of the twenty-first (Jameson 1992: 3)

What is true for Jameson’s ‘New World System’ is also true for philosophy. Neo-provincialism in philosophy can be avoided only when philosophies are seen in a pragmatic way as what they are: dynamical mindscapes.

7. ‘Culturéalité’

Finally, I would like to take the characterization of the mind-body-sphere one step further. In *Perspective as Symbolic Form*, Erwin Panofsky makes the interesting observation that “as soon as space is included in the representation, above all in landscape painting, that world becomes curiously unreal and inconsistent, like a dream or mirage”(Panofsky 1991: 24). Panofsky points to the interesting fact that, as soon as we perceive a painted reality through space (that is, the painting’s own, ‘real’ space), it becomes more than an accumulation of concrete facts. At the same time it is also much more than an accumulation of abstract concepts. We see the ‘reality’ in the landscape painting, but this reality is neither that of the ‘mind’ nor simply that of ‘the

other' (of facts). Curiously, the spatialized reality of the landscape appears like the extension of our own mind towards the other, and the extension of the other's mind towards us. This produces a feeling of vertigo, which comes close to the experience of dreams. If we transpose Panofsky's observation onto the model of 'cultural mindscapes' the question will be formulated like this: is 'cultural reality', at the moment it is approached as a scape, not a sort of 'half-real' quality reminiscent of dreams rather than of empirical facts, social structures, natural laws, etc.?

If we answer 'yes', we find ourselves opposed to the most common approaches of 'seeing' culture. Generally speaking, culture has been seen either in terms of abstract, unchanging 'metaphysical' qualities (especially when it has been equated with 'civilization'); or it has been seen in terms of concrete laws of social life (for example through approaches elaborated by Auguste Comte). The rough methods of positivism have been refined, leading to the perception of culture as an accumulation of anthropological facts, as structures between these facts, etc. The list could be made longer and more diversified searching the entire methodological potential of modernity, but still it is certain that most approaches will appear to have one thing in common: they all see culture *as* a reality. The problem is the 'as', culture itself does not exist *as* a reality; it *is* reality. At the moment that this reality is seen *as* a reality, culture is already objectified. We lack words here, but the problem is exactly the one that Panofsky encountered in the domain of the aesthetic perception of space.

The space between a culture and its others, which is also the space between me and the culture I observe, makes of the cultural sphere a dreamlike phenomenon as such. Culture explains itself through itself; it produces its own space, and this space cannot be made accessible by drawing geometrical lines from my point of view to that of the culture (or, as it has been for Panofsky, of the painting) I am trying to understand.

Wilhelm Dupré has insisted that culture "exhibits circular patterns that bring it forth as a constitutive horizon, i.e., a horizon yielding content and structure at once" (Dupré 1975: 29). In other words, culture yields its own space not as a 'container' of itself, but 'at once' as a spatial phenomenon that follows its own logic. I would hold that in this point it is comparable only to dreams. According to Freud, in dreams an internal and particular, logical structure is produced by

the dreamwork. This structure is never a matter of explanation but is accepted as a part of an existential, and also spatial experience.

In an article written in French, I have suggested calling the cultural reality described above, ‘*culturéalité*’, suppressing the second ‘r’ as well as the space between the words culture and reality. This is one – admittedly improvised – way of avoiding seeing culture *as* reality. Culture is a spatial and temporal reality but, since this reality is not perceived as something objective from the inside, it should not be objectified when looking at it from the outside. *Culturéalité* represents an alternative: it is a scape-like reality whose space is not objective, geographical or mathematical, but more like that of a *chôra* that exists without the help of limits between what is ‘real’ (here and for ‘us’) and unreal (real only for ‘the others’).

Contrary to what most people might believe, the vertigo that culture produces from the inside is powerful, just like the spatial component that Panofsky speaks of. I hold to Paulin Hountondji’s claim that “instead of trying to impose norms imported from other cultures, it [is] more effective to draw upon the inner dynamism of every culture, the inner potential for self-criticism and self-improvement” (Hountondji 2000: 8). Beyond that, the cultural vertigo of *culturéalité* does not weaken the cultural force of the scape but makes it solid enough to open itself up towards the outside. Here, the scape clearly appears as the opposite of the sphere. Spheres might be solid at the outside but they are potentially weak at the inside; scapes deploy their dreamlike cultural reality at the very inside but remain open to outside influences.

8. ‘Culturéalité’ vs. Hyperreality

It is impossible to reflect upon these problems without spontaneously thinking of the phenomenon called ‘cyberspace’ in contemporary culture. ‘Cyberspace’ represents an entirely spatialized reality, although here *space*, as much as *time*, is absolutely abstract. We know that the ‘space’ suggested by cyberspace does not exist ‘in reality’ (*should we ever see it, it could only cause us to experience vertigo*). The existence of cyberspace leads sooner or later to the creation of so-called hyperreality, that is, to a ‘reality by proxy’ (Baudrillard) which exists without existing ‘in reality’. The ‘real’ is here created through a purely conceptual model neglecting those more complex cultural components like ‘context’, ‘polyvalence’, ‘interference between reality

and illusion' (because this reality *is* a kind of illusion), or 'historical depth'.

With regard to the above-mentioned constellations between reality and dreams, we must conclude that what is lacking in hyperreality is the dreamlike space that can only be provided by a sort of reality that is not itself closed in. Reality – if it really is reality – must open itself like a scape in front of the spectator in order to be seen by the other. Hyperreality, on the other hand, is *closed* in the sense of being a reality that *is* objectified even before anybody attempted to see it (as an object). The model of *culturéalité* turns thus out to be the exact opposite of hyperreality because it remains subjective-objective even when confronted with the other.

Notes:

1. See a special issue of *Polylog* (2000:2) on Wiredu.
2. Against this, the Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye, insisted in his important *Essays on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Cambridge University Press, 1987) that even African collective philosophy is the expression of individual minds.
3. In the following paragraphs I am also paraphrasing Okafor's paper entitled "African Aesthetic Values: An Ethnophilosophical Perspective" given at a conference in Bologna in 2000.
4. Quoted from "Ways of Japanese Thinking" in R. Solomon & K. Higgins (eds.): *From Africa to Zen* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield, 1993), p. 27. Okafor's quote is from p. 367.
5. Porthan himself undertook the task of developing the Finnish language into a "true language of culture".
6. The Slavophiles were active around 1830-1870. In Slav countries outside Russia, 'Slavophilism' is a generic term for all pro-Slav movements, including Pan-Slavism. In Russia Slavophilism is restricted to those thinkers organized around Ivan Kireevsky and Aleksei Khomiakov.
7. See the introduction by the authors to the bibliography on Eurasianism established by Alexander Antoshchenko and others. It can be found on A. Antoshchenko's homepage. I quote L. V. Ponomareva from this introduction.
8. F. I. Girenok quoted from Alexander Antoshchenko.
9. See <http://angloweb.com>

10. Cf. *Studies in East European Thought* 2000:52, special issue on Eurasianism.
11. Cf. Alain Besançon: “Mutmassungen über Russland: Geschichte und Gegenwart” in *Europäische Rundschau* 30, 2002, p. 30. See also E.V. Barabanov’s statements about the mystical character of contemporary Russian philosophy and the curious mixture of Schelling, Orthodox dogmatic theology and romantic utopianism (to which one could add cosmology or cosmological fantasies) fabricated by contemporary Russian religious philosophy. “Russian Philosophy and the Crisis of Identity” in *Russian Studies in Philosophy* 31:2, 1992, p. 26-27.
12. It is equally similar to what the Japanese philosopher Tetsuo Watsuji suggested at some point during WW II: that the sciences must be delimited by ethnic nationality (*minzoku*).
13. Intercultural philosophy “departs from the thesis that in the fields of philosophy and arts intercultural communication can happen on the level of equality” (statement of the Foundation for Intercultural Philosophy). Important works: Heinz Kimmerle & Henk Oosterling (eds): *Sensus Communis in Multi- and Intercultural Perspective. On the Possibility of Common Judgments in Arts and Politics* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2000). Franz Martin Wimmer: “Is Intercultural Philosophy a New Branch or a New Orientation in Philosophy?” in: D’Souza, Gregory (ed.): *Interculturality of Philosophy and Religion* (Bangalore: National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre 1996), pp. 45-57.
14. Velemir Khlebnikov: *Sobranie proizvedenij* [Collected Works] 5, (Leningrad, 1933), p. 183. Khlebnikov (1885-1922) is the founder of Russian futurism.
15. Jürgen Habermas on Rorty’s *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*: “Damit wird auch noch die schwächste der Kantischen Vernunftideen eingezogen. Die objektivierende Wissenschaft versinkt ebenso wie die Alltagspraxis – ohne den Stachel eines idealisierenden Weltentwurfs und eines transzendierenden Weltanspruchs – in ihren zufälligen Kontexten” (p. 173). “Die Einheit der Vernunft in der Vielfalt ihrer Stimmen” in *Nachmetaphysisches Denken: Philosophische Aufsätze* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1984).
16. “Rorty führt die Objektivität der Erkenntnis auf die Intersubjektivität einer Übereinstimmung zurück, der gut wittgensteinianisch die Übereinstimmung in unserer Sprache, unserer faktische geteilten Lebensform zugrunde liegt” (Habermas, p. 176).
17. See Robert Bellah’s treatment of Watsuji as an essentialist because he relies on the Spenglerian distinction between ‘civilization and culture’. Bellah, Robert. 1965. “Japan’s Cultural Identity: Some Reflections on the Work of Watsuji Tetsurō” in *Journal of Asian Studies* 24, p. 580-81.
18. See also *Modernity at Large* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).
19. The books in question are: *The Chinese Mind: Essentials of Chinese Philosophy and Culture* ed. by. Charles Moore (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1967).

William B. Johnson: The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848-1938 (LA: University of California Press, 1972) The Japanese Mind: Essentials of Japanese Philosophy and Culture ed. by. Charles Moore (Honolulu: Hawaii University Press, 1968). Wal-dal Yang: Korean Ways, Korean Mind (Tamu Dang 1982) N.E. Abraham: The Mind of Africa (University of Chicago Press, 1962) W.J. Cash: The Mind of the South (New York: Doubleday, 1954)

20. Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p 1514.

***22. A Fundamental Misconception of ‘Culture’: Philosophical and Political Implications**

Nader N. Chokr

Abstract: Given the intensity and divisiveness of the controversies raging in contemporary cultural politics, we are well-advised to draw the consequences of “cultural complexity” in a globalizing world in an effort to articulate an adequate conception of cultural analysis. I contend that we would then better understand and assess the complex internal dynamics of cultures as well as the diverse relationships that obtain or not between them at this juncture of our history. Apart from addressing a whole range of issues, we should be able to move beyond the dead-end debate of cultural relativism vs. moral universalism, particularly as it bears on the problem of human rights, and ultimately articulate a “pluralistic, historically enlightened ethical universalism”, that remains respectful enough of cultural differences. **Key Words:** Cultural Essentialism; Monism; Determinism; Cultural Complexity; Globalization.

1. Introduction

‘Culture’ has emerged in recent decades as the subject of intense and divisive political controversies at both the national and international (or I should say, global) level. The intensity and divisiveness of these controversies can be felt in a number of areas. These include: identity politics or the politics of cultural differences and recognition, multiculturalism, cross-cultural communication or incommensurability, or more specifically, with the issue of cultural relativism vs. moral universalism, particularly as it is brought to bear on the struggles for *human rights*, *democracy*, and *social justice* – to mention only a few of the most hotly debated ones.

In the aftermath of the Cold War and the “end of ideologies”, some authors have argued that the single most important conflict confronting the world today and for the foreseeable future will be a “clash of civilizations” (Huntington, 1996) – also characterized as a “clash of cultures” (in the broadest sense of the term), which are irremediably incommensurable and condemned to misunderstand one another. Paradoxically enough, this view is further supported and given credence by so-called “postmodernists” who are typically situated on the other side of the political spectrum. These thinkers take a strong anti-metanarrative stance and recommend that we content ourselves and learn to live with diverging tales and narratives in irreconcilable idioms and languages. They urge that we forego once and for all any attempt to make comparative evaluations on the basis of a presumably neutral (external, trans-historical, trans-cultural, and universal) set of standards, or to enfold them into synoptic or synthetic visions of any kind.

Besides, the phenomenon of “globalization” – apprehended in at least one of its main dimensions – is commonly viewed as something fundamentally new¹ and interpreted as one threatening cultural uniformity or homogenization around the world; it is in one sense taken to represent the new face of “cultural imperialism”. In effect, it is viewed mainly as “a threat to cultural diversity”. Subsequently, alarms are sounded and concerns raised about the imminent disappearance of “distinctive cultures”, and calls made to preserve all existing cultures – *as if* they all deserve to be saved, in each and all their respective components and elements. Perhaps, we should keep in mind that: “Cultures are not museum pieces, to be preserved intact at all costs” (Nussbaum, 1999: 37).

In all these cases, a particular conception of ‘culture’ is at work implicitly or explicitly in the views of the various protagonists involved in these debates. I will contend that the conception of “culture” underlying or underwriting many of the controversies raging today constitutes in fact *a fundamental misconception*, with profound and at times disturbing *philosophical* as well as *political* implications.

Admittedly, the concept of “culture” is “essentially a contested concept – like democracy, religion, simplicity, or social justice”, which is multiply defined, multiply employed, ineradicably imprecise (Geertz, 2000: 11). And a history of its evolution over the past couple of hundred years or so – to take a relatively limited yet arguably sufficient historical perspective – would attest to the vicissitudes it has undergone, the battles over its meaning, its use, and its explanatory worth.

Short of undertaking a full-blown history here which would undoubtedly be a worthwhile enterprise (see Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1963),² I propose instead to draw together the insights and lessons we have learned from various such efforts in an attempt to articulate an appropriate conception of “culture”. Such a conception would enable us to better understand and account for the complex internal dynamics of cultures as well as the diverse relationships that obtain (or not) between them at this juncture of our history. I will also argue that it would enable us to better address the issue of *human rights* for example, beyond the dead-end debate of (radical) cultural relativism vs. (traditional Western-centric) moral universalism, and thereby clear the ground for the articulation of “a pluralistic, historically enlightened ethical universalism”, that is nevertheless respectful enough of cultural differences.

2. A Brief History of the Concept of “Culture”

Before undertaking such a task however it behooves us to take stock briefly of the contemporary concept of “culture”, i.e., how “culture” came to be conceived today on the basis of (1) the Modern View and (2) the Received View. My account here will be woven primarily on the basis of those provided by Clifford Geertz (2000) and Seyla Benhabib (2002), among others.

2.1. The Modern View of Culture

The modern view is perhaps best characterized by two sets of binary oppositions: (a) “culture” vs. “nature” and (b) “culture” vs. “civilization”. If by virtue of its Latin etymology ‘*colare*’, “culture” was originally associated with activities of preservation, tending to, and caring for, and if ‘agriculture’ was once considered to be the quintessential cultural activity, such a meaning was radically transformed by Western modernity, and the emergence of its key concomitant features: rationalized scientific worldview, capitalist commodity economy, and bureaucratic administrative control (Benhabib, 2002: 2).

Subsequently, “culture” was first contrasted, in a typically Modern manner, with “nature”, and similarly sorted out into ‘kinds’ on the basis of the distance any of its components moved away from nature. As we might guess or expect, the ethnocentric criteria used for this ‘measurement’ and ‘sorting out’ included, among others, the following considerations: monotheism, individualism, monogamy, and property protection. It came to be viewed in a generic sense as “a universal property of human social life, the techniques, customs, traditions, and technologies – religion and kinship, fire and language – that set it off from animal existence” (Geertz, 2000: 248). This “generic conception of culture” held sway during most of the 19th century and well into the early part of the 20th.

As for the contrast between “culture” and “civilization”, it was meant to bring out the fact that the latter did not encourage ‘tending to’, or ‘caring for’, while the former did by virtue of its original, etymological meaning. Furthermore, it reflected “the challenge posed by an (emerging) commodity capitalism poised to yoke science and industry for ever more rapid expansion” (Benhabib, 2002: 2). Such a contrast was most clearly and forcefully articulated by the German Romantic, Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), for whom “culture” (*Kultur*) consisted of “shared values, meanings, linguistic signs and symbols of a people – itself considered a unified and homogeneous entity”. It consisted of the diverse forms and modalities through which the “spirit” or “genius” of a people as distinct from another is expressed. Under this idealistic, Romantic view, an individual’s acquisition of “culture” involved a soul’s immersion and shaping through education and socialization in the ways and values of “a people”. It was viewed in other words as a process of intellectual and spiritual formation (or *Bildung*), i.e., a forming and shaping of the soul (see Ryle and Soper, 2002). In this sense, Herder’s definition of culture kept something of its original meaning. In contrast, “civilization” was said to refer to the material values and practices that are shared with other peoples and that don’t reflect particularity or individuality.

2.2. The Received View of Culture

As for the Received View, it has unquestionably been influenced and shaped by British social anthropology, French structuralism, and American anthropology as well. In the aftermath of WWI, because of the increased number of anthropological field research projects, espe-

cially among “social isolates” and “encapsulated peoples” (such as jungle people, island people, desert people, arctic people, etc), a growing skepticism about the usefulness of “the generic conception of culture” led to the adoption of what has been called the “configurational conception of culture” (see Fleischacker, 1994, chapter 5 for details on the history of such a conception). As a result, we now had “cultures” instead of just culture as such; there were bounded, coherent, cohesive, and self-standing cultures. However, after WWII, when even putative social isolates and encapsulated peoples grew fewer in number and anthropologists turned their attention to more mixed-up, culturally complex regions of the world, the configurational model became in turn hard to sustain in the face of accumulating evidence. Its anthropological reality was increasingly put in question.

Anthropologists became increasingly critical of Eurocentric presumptions and sought to democratize the concept of “culture” by deconstructing further the binary opposition which served to demarcate its meaning, and in which it was taken as a term of critique of that of “civilization”. As a result, the modern, value-laden distinction between ‘culture’ (or *Kultur*) and “civilization” could no longer be sustained and became increasingly irrelevant. Thus “an egalitarian understanding of culture” progressively emerged and lo and behold came to be dominant (Benhabib 2002: 3).

As Geertz points out quite pertinently, the vicissitudes of “culture” (the *mot*, not the *chose* – there is no *chose*), which began in the 50’s have continued ever since. And “[i]n its ups and downs, its drift toward and away from clarity and popularity [...] we can see anthropology’s lumbering, arrhythmic line of march...” (Geertz: 12). Thus, he writes:

By the 1950s, the eloquence, energy, breadth of interest, and sheer brilliance of such writers as Kroeber and Kluckhohn, Ruth Benedict, Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton, Geoffrey Gorer, Franz Boas, Bronislaw Malinowski, Edward Sapir, and most spectacularly, Margaret Mead [...] made the anthropological idea of culture at once available to, well, the culture, and so diffuse and all-embracing as to seem like an all-seasons explanation for anything human beings might contrive to do, imagine, say, be or believe (Geertz, 2000: 12).

In such a context, many young anthropologists felt condemned to work with an inflationary logic and a language in which concept, cause, form, and outcome had the same name. Dissatisfied with such a state of affairs, they took it upon themselves “to cut the idea of culture down to size, and to turn it into a less expansive affair”. For them, as Geertz puts it, “it seemed urgent, (and it still seems urgent) to make ‘culture’ into a delimited notion, one with a determinate application, a definite sense, and a specified use – the *at least* focused subject of an *at least* somewhat focused science” (Geertz, 2000: 13, my italics).

In the meantime, “culture” came to be viewed as the sum total of social systems and practices of meaning-making, signification, representation, and symbolism, each with its own autonomous logic, separate from, yet not reducible to the intentions of individuals or

groups through whose actions and practices it emerges and is reproduced (see Benhabib, 2002: 3). In an egalitarian vein, all such social and practices developed by different groups of human beings in their respective environments and in response to their particular conditions constitute as many different “cultures”, i.e., as many different, equally viable ways of setting themselves apart from “animal existence” and away from “nature”. And more often than not, the ubiquitous notion of an *autonomous* and *distinct culture* was associated with the notion of *identity*. Though the old culture/civilization distinction was discarded, Herder’s identification of the “spirit” or “genius” of a people with expressions of its cultural identity was still countenanced.

3. Contemporary Cultural Politics

It is not surprising therefore that cultural politics today is for the most part characterized by a strange mix of “the anthropological received view of the democratic equality of all cultures” and “the Romantic, Herderian emphasis on each culture’s irreducible uniqueness and distinctness” (see Joppke and Lukes, 1999: 5; see also Benhabib, 2002: 3). As a result, it is widely assumed that the *boundaries* separating *peoples* as well as *cultures* are easy to draw and delineate, and that each distinct people has a distinct “culture”.

3.1. Dubious Assumptions, Premises, and Theses

Thus, most contemporary discussions, including the most well-intentioned ones, came to be committed to some versions or others of the following assumptions or theses:

- (1) Cultural Egalitarianism.
- (2) Cultural Essentialism/Monism/Holism/Hermeticism.
- (3) Cultural Idealism/Determinism.

Some clarifications might be helpful here in order to avoid easy misunderstandings. By (1) “cultural egalitarianism”, I don’t mean to suggest that all cultures were viewed necessarily as *equally deserving of merit* in terms of their ‘material’ and ‘symbolic’ systems of production and reproduction – although this view may also have been taken by some of the protagonists. I only wish to capture the anthropological received view that all cultures came to be given *equal consideration* as distinct and unique cultures. By (2) “cultural essentialism/monism/holism/hermeticism”, I mean to capture in an adumbrated manner the most problematic and widespread view according to which each culture has presumably a distinct, essential nature – that is one, whole and somehow hermetically closed off to other cultural influences. Each such culture is furthermore considered to be congruent with a distinct group or people. It is typically apprehended along only one of its dimensions in terms of a powerfully and strictly determining homogeneous and uniform symbolic system of meanings, values and beliefs (often without much regard for the material constraints at work) acting or operating in similar ways on all of its members or carriers, (often without much regard for the powerfully individuating historical and

psychological forces or factors at play). This view is underwritten by what I have called (3) “cultural idealism/determinism”. It is worth noting that given (1)-(3), it is only a very short step to the thesis of either (4) Ethnocentrism, or (5) Cultural Relativism. Contrary to some authors (e.g., Rorty) who distinguish between these two notions for self-serving and dubious purposes, I assume that cultural relativism is merely the anthropological or sociological form of ethnocentrism or ethnocentricity, construed in psychological terms.

In such a context, it is perhaps perfectly understandable why the thesis of ‘cultural diversity’ meets with overwhelmingly broad and wide support – at times though, almost uncritically. We are told at both ends of the political spectrum – albeit for differently expressed reasons – that the preservation and continuation of all different cultures is a good and desirable goal.

On the Left, we are told by a diverse group of authors [e.g., Taylor (1992; 1994), Kymlicka (1997; 2000; 2001)] that cultures should be preserved as distinct entities, and if need be, they should be given their own enclaves in order to redress and remedy historical or institutional patterns of domination, oppression and/or symbolic injury involving the disrespect, un- or mis-recognition, or mis-treatment of some cultures by others. Examples of such cases abound not only with regards to one multi-cultural or multi-national country, but between “cultures” across the world. They were particularly acute during the times of colonialism and imperialism. These examples constitute today the fertile ground for the kind of moral problems and dilemmas stemming from “multiculturalism” and “cultural diversity”.

While we all can agree that they must be addressed, justly and fairly, we may however disagree over the liberal recommendations and policy initiatives put forth for doing so, and particular, over the underlying conception of “culture” that serves to underwrite them. Thus, I doubt that proposals which encourage and promote “cultural enclavism” and “cultural preservationism” are the way to go. (For a compelling critical analysis of both Taylor’s and Kymlicka’s views, see Benhabib 2002: 51-57; 59-67).

On the Right, we are told that cultures should be preserved so as to keep peoples and groups separate because *cultural confrontation* is a real threat, perhaps even the only threat we need to concern ourselves with in the aftermath of the Cold War and the so-called “end of ideologies” (Huntington, 1996). Furthermore, we are told that *cultural hybridity* can only produce tensions, instabilities, and eventually lead to serious conflicts. It is believed that the “clash of civilizations” (or “cultures” broadly construed) can be avoided somehow by the establishment and reinforcement of *political alliances* that closely follow *cultural-ethnic identity rifts*.

It does not take much political ingenuity or sophistication to recognize that such a goal is unrealistic, and cannot be borne out by the political realities of any given country, let alone the world. The political-cultural-ethnic map is to say the least often scrambled in surprising ways. And there may be some lessons to be learned here from attend-

ing to the particular ways in which such a map is often scrambled in different parts of the world – and to the reasons why it is thus scrambled. Only a naïve and unsophisticated political theory could surmise that political alliances would always necessarily follow cultural, ethnic or racial lines of demarcation or for that matter, gender or even class distinctions (see Nussbaum, 1999, 2000; Benhabib, 1995, 2002; Sen, 1999).

3.2. Suspect Ethnocentrism/Relativism: Levi-Strauss and Rorty

If “conflict avoidance” is one of the rationalized motivations behind Huntington’s kind of “descriptive and normative ethnocentrism”, “cultural renewal” and “moral creativity” is the other rationalized motivation for the kind of ethnocentrism defended by Levi-Strauss and Rorty respectively.

According to Levi-Strauss (1985), ethnocentrism is not only *not* in itself a bad thing, but, as long it does not get out of hand, a rather good one. For, to be loyal to a certain set of values inevitably makes people partially or totally insensitive to other values to which other people, equally parochial, are equally loyal. It is not at all invidious to place one way of life or thought above all others, or to feel little drawn to other values. Such “relative incommunicability” does not however authorize anyone to oppress or destroy the values rejected or those carrying them. Provided this is absent, and the ‘liberal virtue’ of respect for ‘compartmentalized’ differences is upheld, ethnocentrism is not at all repugnant, Levi-Strauss claims. In *The View from Afar*, he writes interestingly enough:

It may even be the price to be paid so that the systems of values of each spiritual family or each community are preserved and find within themselves the resources necessary for their *renewal*. If [...] human societies exhibit a certain optimal diversity beyond which they cannot go, but below which they can no longer descend without danger, we must recognize that, to a large extent, this diversity results from desire of each culture to resist the culture surrounding it, to distinguish itself from them – in short, to be itself. Cultures are not unaware of one another, they even borrow from one another on occasion, but *in order not to perish, they must in other connections remain somewhat impermeable toward one another* (1985: xiii; italics added).

Thus, it may even be an illusion that humanity can ever escape completely from ethnocentrism, or even that it will care to do so. For Levi-Strauss, it would not be a good thing if it did so. We are better off recognizing that ethnocentrism is “consubstantial with our species”, and as such it can never completely disappear, but it can grow dangerously weak, “leaving us prey to a sort of *moral entropy*”. Cultural renewal and moral creativity require, according to this view, ethnocentrism. “[...] All true creation, in Levi-Strauss’s view, implies a certain deafness to the appeal of other values, even going as far as to reject them if not denying them altogether” (1985: 23).

Characteristic of a view for which human communities are, or should be, “windowless (semantic) monads”, (Bernstein, 1991: 92), Levi-Strauss also states elsewhere something to the following effect,

namely, that we are passengers in the trains which are our cultures, each moving on its own track, at its own speed, and in its own direction. The trains rolling alongside, going in similar directions and at speeds not too different from our own are at least reasonably visible to us as we look out from our compartments. But trains on an oblique or parallel track which are going in an opposed direction are not. And he adds regarding the latter case: “[We] perceive only a vague, fleeting, barely identifiable image, usually just a momentary blur in our visual field, supplying no information about itself and merely irritating us because it interrupts our placid contemplation of the landscape which serves as the backdrop to our daydreaming” (1985: 10).

The appeal of such “a relax-and-enjoy-it approach” to one’s imprisonment in one’s “cultural train, or compartment” may explain (at least in part) its popularity in recent social and political thought.

Rorty’s defense of “ethnocentrism” (1989, 1991, 1998) offers us another opportunity to diagnose this appeal. Thus, in “Postmodern Bourgeois Liberalism”, he writes: “[We] have to work out from the networks we are, from the communities with which we presently identify (1991: 202). I hope to suggest how ‘we’ (postmodern bourgeois liberals) might convince our society that ‘loyalty to itself is loyalty enough’ – that it need be responsible only to its own traditions” (1991: 199). And he adds:

[T]here is no ‘ground’ for our loyalties and convictions save the fact that the beliefs and desires and emotions which buttress them overlap those of lots of other members of the group with which we identify for purposes of moral and political deliberation (1991: 200).

Adopting Putnam’s statement in *Reason, Truth, and History* (1981: 216) Rorty goes on to conclude: “We can only hope to produce a more rational conception of rationality and a better conception of morality if we operate from within our tradition” (1991: 202).

No doubt Levi-Strauss and Rorty have different starting points (Kantianism without a subject vs. Hegelianism without an Absolute Spirit) and different end-points or goals (a trim world of transposable forms vs. a disheveled one of coincidental discourses). Nevertheless there is a striking similarity between their respective ethnocentrism. Just as Levi-Strauss, Rorty too believes that invidious distinctions between groups are not only normal but essential to *moral creativity*. However, unlike Levi-Strauss, Rorty is not so much interested in other people’s trains as he is concerned with where his own train is heading.

Consistently with his general philosophical outlook as a reconstructed neo-pragmatist, he claims that “the moral justification of the institutions and practices of one’s group is mostly a matter of historical narratives rather than philosophical meta-narratives”. And the most we can hope to achieve is to construct “contrast-effects” narratives – “which serve to develop, consolidate, or modify a group’s self-image (in contrast to that of another), by, for example, apotheosizing its heroes, diabolizing its enemies, mounting dialogues among its members and refocusing its attention” (1991: 200). He speaks of more

or less accidental “overlap” of belief systems between “rich North American bourgeois” communities and others – that we “need to talk with” as somehow enabling “whatever conversation between nations may still be possible, as well as leaving American intellectuals in a better position to converse with their fellow citizens” (1991: 201).

What should we think of a philosophy which can think of nothing better to do with other ways of going at life than to make them look worse than our own through constructed “contrast-effects” narratives – of the kind that V.S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie have presumably become famous for? What kind of world is this bound to lead to, other than one in which condescension and patronizing arrogance will find a fertile ground? Given the interdependence of the world today, are we not under a moral and pragmatic imperative to forge as wide and broad, an unforced “overlapping consensus” (to use the expression of one of Rorty’s heroes, Rawls) between as many communities as possible through a genuine dialogical or conversational process which is not reduced to a one-way or uni-directional talk? Is the kind of conversation depicted by Rorty the only possible one we may still have today? Would American intellectuals be truly in a better position talking to their fellow citizens if they unabashedly adopted Rorty’s ethnocentrism even (or especially) in its most “postmodern bourgeois liberal” incarnation?

Couldn’t we articulate a more plausible and politically sound position, one which does not encourage a happy and easy surrender to the comfortable numbness of being ourselves and cultivating cultural deafness nor rests content with maximizing gratitude and gratification by way of condescending and patronizing “contrast-effects” with other cultures? In fact, I believe not only that we can, but we should urgently do so – in earnest.

3.3. A “Poor Man’s Anthropology/ Sociology of Culture”

To this end, the analysis sketched out above is intended to suggest that the characterizations and defenses of the desirability of “cultural diversity” on both the Right and the Left seem to be burdened by similarly faulty assumptions or premises. These are:

(1) Cultures are clearly delineable wholes, somehow congruent with peoples or population groups. [Cultural Essentialism/Monism/Holism/Hermeticism].

(2) A non-contested, uniform description of the culture of a given people or group can be given, which operates uniformly on its members or carriers in that it strictly determines their outlook and identity in a homogenous, cohesive and stable manner. [Cultural Idealism/ Determinism].

(3) The fact of “cultural complexity” does not constitute or pose any serious problems or moral dilemmas in terms of cultural politics in a multicultural and multinational society. [Naïve and Unjustified Political Optimism].

The line of reasoning leading up from (1) to (3) is in fact a direct one, and can therefore easily be undermined by putting in question the

empirical validity of the first step. Thus, regarding (1), it suffices to point out that because of a shuffling process which has been going on for quite some time, and which is, by now, approaching extreme and near universal proportions, social and cultural boundaries coincide less and less closely. As for (2), it is doubtful that a uniform, non-controversial and non-contested description can be given of any culture. A culture can never fully capture all the beliefs and values that are held to be internal to it at a given point; similarly, a culture can never fully capture the future commitments and attitudes of its members or carriers. Finally with regards to (3), it should be pointed out that the political optimism is unjustified in that it is underwritten by a naïve approach to cultural analysis which fails to properly countenance “*cultural complexity*”. By the latter, I mean to underscore the often neglected fact that cultures and peoples (or groups) may not and do not actually stand in a neat one-to-one correspondence; there is often more than one culture within a given people or group, and furthermore, more than one people or group may possess the same or similar cultural traits or features.

The assumptions or premises listed above serve arguably to underwrite what Benhabib has called a “reductionist sociology of culture” (2002: 5). Terence Turner is right when he states that a conception based on such assumptions or premises...

...risks essentializing the idea of culture as the property of an ethnic group or race; it risks reifying ‘cultures’ as separate entities by overemphasizing their boundedness and distinctness; it risks overemphasizing the homogeneity of cultures in terms that potentially legitimize repressive demands for communal conformity, and by treating cultures as badges of group identity, it tends to fetishize them in ways that put them beyond the reach of critical analysis (1993: 412).

It is thus a fair assessment to say that much of our thinking in moral and political philosophy and the contemporary debates in cultural politics is still often saddled by such a highly objectionable conception. Needless to say, this has serious normative political consequences for how we think culturally-based or motivated injustices among peoples or groups should be remedied and how we think about “cultural diversity”. In a minimal sense, it implies that a defensible approach to the latter must factor in “cultural complexity” and a morally evaluative stance – from the diverse contesting points of views both within and without. Besides, it cannot consist in measures and policies that merely seek to preserve “cultural enclaves” at any and all costs, regardless of the consequences that some cultural beliefs and values may have on the dignity and well-being of individuals and groups.

To revisit briefly the ethnocentric views discussed earlier, they are but different versions of a rather common “to-each-his-own-morality” view on “cultural diversity” whose significance (if any) lies perhaps in the fact that it provides us, to use Bernard Williams’ distinction, with “alternatives *to* us” as opposed to “alternatives *for* us” (1985). But doesn’t such a view “make both rather more and rather less

of the fact of cultural diversity than it should?” (Geertz, 2000: 75). On the first score, doesn't it seem to suggest that a person has somehow a real practical option, about which s/he must make a decision, as to whether s/he can have a different life than the one s/he has – by choosing to be born in a different culture? On the second score, doesn't it seem to obscure the power of cultural diversity to transform an individual's sense of what it is like for a human being to think, feel, value, believe, act and behave, etc?

The trouble with ethnocentrism is not that it commits us to our commitments. We are, by definition, so committed, as we are to having our headaches. The trouble with ethnocentrism is that it impedes us from discovering at what sort of angle [...] we stand to the world; what sort of *bat* [human being] we really are (Geertz, 2000: 75; addition in brackets).

The problems and challenges raised by the fact of cultural diversity have less to do with whether we can escape preferring our preferences or avoid being committed to our commitments, and more to do with our capacity to understand different forms of life, learn foreign or alien language-games, feel our way into other forms of sense and sensibility, appreciate unfamiliar sensitivities and modes of thought we do not possess, and are not likely to acquire very easily or readily.

The implications of the position articulated herein do not bode well for the “we-are-we” and “they-are-they” approach to things cultural. The most important of these is that the problems and challenges raised by cultural diversity do not merely arise at the boundaries of our societies and cultures, where one would expect them under such an approach, but at the boundaries of our own selves. As Geertz puts it quite aptly “foreignness does not start at the water's edge, but at the skin's” (2000: 66). Our socio-cultural world does not seem to be divided up “at its joints”, so to speak, into perspicuous ‘we's’ with whom we can converse and empathize, however much we differ with them, and enigmatic ‘they's’ with whom we cannot converse or empathize, however much we would like to defend their right to differ from us.

Only a misconceived form of cultural analysis, underwritten by a misconstrued social constructivism based on an excessively socialized and culturally deterministic view of self and group identity, can lead us to think that human communities or cultures are “windowless monads”. It is arguably more plausible to hold instead that the real boundaries of societies, cultures, groups and selves are to be found in the gaps and asymmetries that exist between what ‘we’ do, think, feel and believe and what ‘others’ do, and that make it possible to locate where we are now in the world and how we are thus situated, at what sort of angle, and according to what particular modality. Clearly, the presumed ‘we’ and ‘others’ should here be drawn out in dotted lines, provisionally, so to speak, in a way that is mindful of the facts and dynamics of cultural complexity.

What ethnocentrism does, and is arguably designed to do, according to Geertz, is “to obscure and relegate these gaps and asym-

metries to the realm of ignorable difference, or mere unlikeness” (2000: 78), and thereby locking us up within our respective cultures. In doing so, it does take away from us the possibility of changing not only our minds, but our ways and practices as well – in short, of more or less radically changing our way of life and being-in-the-world? In this regard, we are better off keeping in mind what Richard Falk reminds us of, namely, that “[a]ll cultures evolve in relation to experience, being influenced partly by intra-cultural and inter-cultural interaction, as well as through their participation and reflection upon wider normative frameworks...” (1995: 49).

A cursory survey of the history of each and all peoples around the world (as well as for that matter the personal history of each and all individuals) would attest to the fact such a history has been one involving such changes, usually slowly, sometimes more rapidly – as when a “crisis” occurs, or following a more or less radical questioning and revision of one’s web of beliefs and values. This has arguably always been the case, but it is even truer today in the era of globalization.

4. Globalization and Cultures: Lessons Learned, Not Yet Fully Acknowledged

What exactly has the phenomenon of ‘globalization’ revealed about “cultures” which must be taken into account by any empirically and normatively adequate analysis? Most writers on the subject, as I pointed out at the outset, typically focus on the cultural uniformity and homogenization, and the so-called “threat to cultural diversity” that it has presumably brought on. Just as there are good reasons (that need not be rehearsed here) for maintaining and protecting ‘bio-diversity’, there are equally good (or perhaps even better) reasons for being concerned about cultural diversity, and for taking appropriately conceived and implemented measures, as suggested earlier, to counteract any serious or real threat to it – assuming of course that it already constitutes a “clear and present danger”, or will soon become one.

In the meantime, and “political correctness” aside, we should perhaps also ask ourselves how much cultural diversity is still realistically possible or even desirable at this point of world history. Furthermore, one should not underestimate the resiliency and adaptability of cultures around the world, and their ability to endure and continue to thrive *as viable and dynamically creative and evolving cultures have always done*, and that is, by adopting and incorporating new forms and ways, new values and ideals while preserving what must (can or should) be preserved. This is not a covert or implicit argument for some sort of “cultural survival of the fittest”. We should be wary about any approach straightforwardly seeking to “biologize” cultural phenomena. However, I believe that we must properly countenance what we have learned from the history of cultures, i.e., from a properly conceived materialistic and historicist perspective on the “evolution” of cultures, namely, that there are good reasons why some cultures endure over time and others don’t.

4.1. Cultural Complexity in a Globalizing World

There is another fact about ‘globalization’ that is less readily acknowledged, and that is, it has also brought home the fact of “cultural complexity”, i.e., it has revealed the diversity, multiplicity and plurality inherent in “each” culture, as well as the similarities/ dissimilarities/ differences, points or areas of more or less convergence or divergence between cultures. Taking this fact into account in our analyses is bound, I contend, to have some important theoretical (philosophical) as well as practical (political) consequences. How can it be otherwise? – This is arguably the most significant point of this essay.

It should be noted in passing that during the writing process, I have become increasingly aware of a *double-bind* situation. On the one hand, I am endeavoring to deconstruct the received view of culture, and, on the other, I am struggling to find the most appropriate expressions to put across an alternative conception that in my view better reflects the reality of the world today and the facts of cultural complexity. However, as it appears above, I find myself unable to completely jettison the essentialist, monistic, holistic language characteristic of the fundamental misconception of culture here under attack. Is it because, as Derrida repeatedly warned us, the language we use is perhaps inextricably caught up in the logocentric metaphysics of presence of the Western philosophical tradition, and therefore always already underwritten by a series of fundamental binary oppositions and essentialist assumptions?

In any case, Clifford Geertz puts it well when he writes (2000: 246) that there is a paradox, little reflected upon about the current world scene. The world is both more global and more divided, more thoroughly interconnected and more intricately partitioned at the same time. Affirmations of greater unity and integration of the world are immediately met by vehement proclamations of renewed and reinforced nationalisms, sectarianisms, religious and cultural fundamentalisms of various kinds. In such a world, we must acknowledge that *cosmopolitanism* and *parochialism* are in fact no longer opposed, but rather linked and mutually reinforcing. In fact, paradoxical as this may sound, as one increases so does the other.

In view of this, the expression “global village” is perhaps best viewed as an over-blown and inflated metaphor, not yet borne out by the reality of the world today, since the so-called “village” has neither solidarity nor tradition, at least not yet, and even lacks wholeness and the desired cohesiveness. “Globalization” is in fact accompanied less by a reduction of cultural differences and loosening of cultural demarcations than by their reworking, multiplication, and intensification. Richard Falk’s comment in this regard is right on the mark, and worth quoting in full:

One important consequence of the globalization of social, political and economic life, he states, which often goes unnoticed is *cultural penetration and overlapping*, the *coexistence* in a given social space of several cultural traditions, as well as the more vivid *interpenetration of cultural experience and*

practice as a consequence of media and transportation technologies, travel and tourism, cross-cultural education and a logarithmic increase in human interaction of all varieties (1995: 46; italics added).

The demands that such a reality makes of us are distinctive and pulling us in opposite directions: on the one hand, we must strive to respect cultural differences (and thereby seek to sustain diversity properly conceived under appropriate provisions); on the other hand, we must strive to acknowledge various degrees of similarity or sameness (and thereby seek to re-establish perhaps some universalist normative order – albeit different from the traditional Western-centric kind (more on this later on). In effect, we must contend “with this always-shifting interplay between the valuing of difference and the quest for sameness” (Falk, 1995: 46). In such a context, we are better off heeding Geertz’s warning:

The discrimination of cultural breaks and cultural continuities, the drawing of lines around sets of individuals as following a more or less identifiable form of life as against different sets of individuals following more or less different forms of life – other voices in other rooms – is a good deal easier in *theory* than it is in *practice* (2000: 247; italics added).

Against the currently predominant view, Geertz goes on to add quite pertinently, I believe:

Whatever we might wish, or regard as enlightenment, *the severalty of culture* abides and proliferates, even amidst, indeed in response to, the powerfully connecting forces of modern manufacture, finance, travel and trade. The more things come together, the more they remain apart: *the uniform world is not much closer than the classless society* (2000: 248; italics added).

It quickly becomes evident to anyone who cares to really look that “the lived universe of cultures always appears in the plural” (Benhabib, 2002: 41). Everything is motley, porous, mixed, conflicted, interpenetrated and dispersed; the search for totality or uniformity is an unreliable and uncertain guide, and the sense of closure unattainable.

[W]e have come to such a point in the moral history of the world (*a history that is anything but moral*) that we are obliged to think about diversity rather differently than we had been used to thinking about. If it is in fact getting to be the case that rather being sorted out into framed units, social spaces with definite edges to them, seriously disparate approaches to life are becoming scrambled together in ill-defined expanses, social spaces whose edges are unfixed, irregular, and difficult to locate, the question of how to deal with the puzzles of judgment to which such disparities give rise takes on a rather different aspect – *confronting landscapes and still lives is one thing, panoramas and collages quite another* (Geertz, 2000: 85; italics added).

To consider a couple of commonly cited visual metaphors in cultural studies, suppose, as it has been suggested, that we look at “cultures” as *dots* or *tiles*. This would not be helpful either in dealing with the puzzles now confronting us. One would arguably still be held captive by misleading pictures which fail to capture the cultural complexity

and diversity in the world today. Again, Geertz is right on the mark, when he states:

A picture of the world as *dotted* by discriminate cultures, discontinuous blocks of thought and emotion – a sort of pointillist view of its spiritual composition – is no less misleading than the picture of it as *tiled* by repeating, reiterative nation-states, and for the same reason: the elements concerned, the *dots* or the *tiles*, are neither compact, nor homogeneous, simple nor uniform. When you look into them, their solidity dissolves, and you are left *not* with a catalogue of well-defined entities to be arranged and classified, a Mendelian table of natural kinds, but with a tangle of differences and similarities only half sorted out [if at all, one might add] (Geertz: 249; italics added).

4.2. Cultural Identity, Originality and Distinctiveness

In the face of the kind and degree of fragmentation and dispersion characteristic of the world today, the view of culture, *a culture*, *this culture*, as a consensus on fundamentals – shared conceptions, shared feelings, shared values – is hardly tenable. Instead, it seems that it is the fault lines, discontinuities, fissions and fissures that mark out and best serve to characterize the configuration of “collective selfhood”. The “cookie-cutter conception of culture” with its focus on *consensus*, *type* and *commonality* must give way to the “compositeness and heterogeneity conception of culture” for which culture is always already ineradicably plural, compound, inconstant and multiply contested – both from within and without.

Again, what is worth noting here is not merely the fact of cultural heterogeneity as such and how much more visible it is than at any other time in our history, but, as Geertz points out, “the enormous variety of levels at which such heterogeneity exists and has an effect” (2000: 252). Thus, one can hardly find an allegedly common outlook, form of life, behavioral style, material or symbolic expression that is not either itself further partitioned into smaller, enfolding and inclusive ones, or incorporated and patched into larger and more complicated encompassing ones. There is hardly a case in which one can say without qualification or trepidation this is the point where consensus ends or begins.

If one considers the cases of countries like Indonesia, India, Brazil, Nigeria, or even China, for example, we don’t find separated ‘cultures’ or ‘peoples’ or ‘ethnic groups’ as so many lumps of sameness and uniformity marked out by the limits of consensus and homogeneity; instead, we find various modes and modalities of involvement in a collective life that takes place on many different levels, scales, domains, and realms at once. Under such an analysis – which, by the way, applies to countries and societies North-South, East-West, the crucial point has to do with the way in which, and the degree to which, the contrasting effects of a given overall “cultural complex” are represented in the formulation of a group’s identity. Perhaps, as it has often been suggested, it is less a matter of consensus that is at issue than finding a viable way of doing without.

In almost all parts of the world, we see great cultural traditions which are rich, complex, distinctive, and historically deep coexisting

with one another, in an almost endless progression of differences within differences, as well as multiple forms and degrees of similarities, overlappings, criss-crossings and cross-cuttings. This realization compels us, Geertz argues pertinently, to confront the following questions which can no longer be dismissed as inconsequential:

How is it, in so multifold a world, that political, social and cultural selfhood comes to be? If identity without unison is in fact the rule – in India or the United States, in Brazil or Nigeria, in Belgium or Guyana, or even in Japan, that supposed model of immanent like-mindedness and essentialized uniqueness – on what does it rest? (Geertz, 2000: 225).

More than likely, there are as many ways in which identities are put together as there are materials and elements with which to put them together, and reasons and motivations for doing so. Just like “cultures”, the identities of peoples can no longer be grasped as coherent, seamless unities, or unbroken wholes. We should be suspicious and even outright critical of all conceptions which try to reduce *matters of identity* to uniformity, conformity, homogeneity, to like-mindedness and consensus. More often than not, the answers given to identity-queries about ‘who (what) we are’ do not form an orderly, cohesive or coherent structure, nor even a stable one over time. Whatever unity, sameness, coherence, or identity there is, it is probably going to be negotiated and produced out of differences, and vice-versa.

In a world increasingly interconnected in so many ways and so thoroughly, the range and catalogue of available identities or identifications for members of a given community is constantly expanding, contracting, changing shape, ramifying, multiplying, intensifying, and developing in unexpected directions. This overall picture of “cultural identity” that emerges is one best viewed as “*a force field*” in which differences and similarities confront one another at every level – from the family, the village, the neighborhood, the region, to the country, nation-state, and beyond. Though clearly derived from physics, the above mentioned metaphor is here used for political reasons and meant to convey the struggles involved in the politics of identity and recognition, as well as the possibility of reconfiguring one’s identity by privileging and counter-posing one component over another within a given cultural complex, e.g., ethnicity, race, religion, gender, class, etc. In any case, whatever solidarities or divisions, convergences or divergences we may find at every level, they are more than likely to be mutually or contrastively sustaining and defining of one another. This is arguably what is going on everywhere around the world as we know it today.

4.3. Consequences of Cultural Complexity

If we countenance the kind of understanding and appreciation of ‘cultural complexity’ sketched out thus far, then we could say that whatever ‘*originality*’ and ‘*distinctiveness*’ a given culture and form of life may have (relatively speaking), it arises out of the ways in which the variety of conceptions, values, and practices which make them up

are positioned, configured and composed. The italicized terms are here used *under erasure* (in a proper deconstructive manner) so as to avoid lapsing back into the essentialism that language seems to imply and dredge back up. We should also keep in mind that cultures have always borrowed (more or less) from one another, and will continue to do so. In many instances, it is often hard to ascertain clearly what belongs distinctively and originally to what culture. This is even more the case today than ever before (see Amartya Sen, 2000 for various striking examples).

However, by adopting and extending Wittgenstein's image of a "rope" in the *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), we could say that whatever originality and distinctiveness a given culture and form of life has does not arise from a single thread running all the way through it uniformly, and thereby defining it and making it into some kind of homogenous whole. It arises instead from various threads, differing in kinds, in some respects or others, overlapping, intersecting, entwining, and intertwining, crisscrossing, and cross-cutting, some taking up where others break off, some stretching through and through, while others are running short, with all of them contra-posed in effective tensions and contrasts with one another to form a heterogeneous and composite complex. To pursue this image further, an adequate analysis of any culture today must at least consist in teasing out its various threads, characterizing their contrastive differences in kind and respects, bringing out their overlappings, ascertaining their points of intersections, intertwinements and entwinements, their connections, tensions and contrasts, probing the very compositeness and heterogeneity of the cultural body, its deep internal diversity and degree of complexity.

It should be clear by now that the articulation of an epistemologically and methodologically sound conception of "culture" must be supported as much as possible by the best anthropological and sociological evidence and underwritten by reasonably pragmatic and defensible political assumptions. Such a conception would enable us to more effectively address the kinds of problems, challenges and dilemmas we are confronting within our respective societies, and between them, across a world deep in the throes of globalization.

Unfortunately, there is still a widespread tendency to write as if "culture" were a homogenous, uniform, coherent, cohesive, bounded, tightly woven, seamless whole, a unified or unitary entity with a distinct nature and a clearly delineated set of identifying and distinguishing features whose identity-determining and constitutive role on individuals and groups is uniform, un-contested, continuous and stable. This is an encapsulated-summary formulation of what I would like to call a *fundamental misconception of "culture"* which, I contend, must be jettisoned and done away with.

In contrast, I would like to submit an *alternative conception of "culture"* which is arguably more compelling, both empirically and normatively: "Culture" is always already a network of sometimes overlapping (consensual) and sometimes diverging (dissensual)

tendencies making it through and through a multi-fold nexus of contestations, protests, and debates both from within and without. It is thus an open-ended and ‘rhizomatic’³ network involving both convergent and divergent processes, cross-cut and criss-crossed by various local, regional, national, and global influences, and affected by the ‘memes’,⁴ values, institutions, practices and behaviors of differently situated actors or agents (and diversely constituted groups thereof) in specific and concrete, materially constrained contexts, who are furthermore enmeshed in complex “webs of meanings, narratives, and interlocutions”⁵ and power relations and struggles.

5. Philosophical and Political Implications

What follows from this entire discussion with regards to cultural analysis generally speaking as well as more specifically with regards to the problems and issues announced at the outset?

In accord with the alternative conception of culture articulated above, an appropriately conceived version of ‘social constructivism’ must be adopted as a comprehensive explanation of cultural differences/similarities, and against attempts in normative moral and political theory that reify cultures and cultural groups and their struggles for recognition. And subsequently, a critique of ‘cultural essentialism’ and “cultural determinism” must be articulated, which will prove to have significant implications as suggested from the start for how we deal with issues of stemming from the politics of (self or group) identity, cultural differences and recognition, multiculturalism, cross-cultural (in)commensurability, as well as with the problem of cultural relativism vs. moral universalism.

5.1. Cultural Analysis: Empirical and Normative Considerations

An adequate approach to cultural analysis must be based on a social constructivism which focuses on and seeks to shed some light on the processes by which cultural purity is transformed into impurities, mixtures and hybridizations, and what is said to be fundamental and immutable into historically contingent achievements, always subject to further changes. It would view the dynamic and evolving interplay between structural and cultural imperatives as not only possible but desirable. It would keep in view the functional as well as structural imperatives of “material systems of actions and practices” such as economic systems of production, administrative and bureaucratic apparatuses of control, management instruments and procedures, and various other disciplinary technologies in their dynamic and intricate relationships with the symbolic imperatives of “frames of meaning” or “systems of cultural signification and representation”. Finally, it would pay close attention to the power relations and struggles that members of a given community are often enmeshed or embroiled in.

Hence, an adequate approach to cultural analysis – whether carried out from an empirical or normative standpoint – must, I believe, countenance in a somewhat flexible way at least the following two distinctions drawn by Seyla Benhabib (1995, 2002): (1) “material”

vs. “symbolic” level of production and reproduction; and (2) “participants” vs. “observers”.

5.1.1. Material vs. Symbolic Production and Reproduction

The material level of production/reproduction has to do with those activities, practices and processes which sustain the life of members of a culture or society. These include of course the economic provision of means of subsistence and the maintenance of the goods and various products that such a community deems necessary or useful, i.e., tools, technologies, infrastructures, modes and systems of communication, cultural and artistic artifacts, etc.

As for the symbolic level of production/reproduction, it has to do with the following complex processes: (a) The socialization to which a given community subjects its individual members so as to enable them to function within a certain language-game which is itself part of a form of life, under a certain set of reciprocal expectations and moral obligations. (b) The production, maintenance and reproduction of the “memes”, i.e., clusters of ideas, meanings, values and beliefs through which members of a given community interpret and view the world as well as their own situatedness in the world. (c) The coordination by members of a given community of their cooperative activities, practices, interactions and exchanges in accordance with certain rules, sanctions, and norms as a result of both (a) and (b). It should be noted that, though cultural and artistic artifacts are listed at the material level, they clearly have something to do with the symbolic level as well. Conversely, the processes involved at the symbolic level require institutional and material realizations.

The point worth stressing here is that there may well be occasionally tensions and conflicts between these two levels in that the processes adopted at the symbolic level may or may not prove to be the most appropriate or helpful for members of a given community in terms of material production or reproduction, and vice-versa. This, as can be expected, may require that changes or adjustments be made (at one or both levels) in order to insure continuity over time of the ‘culture’ in question.

5.1.2. Participants vs. Observers

Participants in a culture (or more accurately, in a given “cultural complex”) experience from within, as it were, their ways, practices, beliefs, traditions, stories, rituals and symbols, tools and material living conditions through more or less shared narrative accounts – albeit always already contested and contestable. From within, a culture need not and usually does not appear as a unified, coherent and clearly bounded whole because the required distance is absent. Rather, it seems to form a multiply partitioned and divided, crisscrossed and cross-cut “horizon of understanding and practice” that somehow escapes our grasp or recedes each time one approaches it or seeks to apprehend it in a totalizing way.

In contrast, observers take a view from the outside, and may include ethnographers, anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, travelers, narrators, chroniclers, military generals, linguists, educational reformers, business persons, secret agents, development workers or volunteers, etc. They are the ones who (together with ‘local elites’ and the so-called ‘guardians of cultural integrity’) seem to be interested in imposing unity and coherence on cultures as ‘observed and observable entities’ for the purposes of understanding and perhaps even control, depending on their particular interests and purposes. From such a perspective, “cultures” are then conveniently viewed or taken as clearly delineable and bounded wholes.

The point that needs to be stressed here is that, apart from being a participant, an individual can also become an observer of her own culture and way of life if she acquires a *critical distance* from it and begins to question or challenge its normative, moral order. She can acquire, in other words, a kind of “social reflexivity” which allows members of a given culture and society to engage in “internal criticism”, and to question and challenge their beliefs and practices in the name of some newly acquired, or differently interpreted, normative standards – from within or from without, or from both perspectives. Such a possibility represents presumably a permanent feature of the so-called transition from *tradition* to *modernity* – or more accurately, to *post-modernity*. The significance of the participant-becoming-critical observer lies in the fact that it can serve to undermine the thesis of “cultural determinism”: individuals are not strictly or blindly determined by their respective culture, and their lives are not therefore shaped by their culture “as a cake-mold shapes a cake, or gravity our movements” (Geertz, 2000: 13). Besides, it enables us to easily explain why cultures present themselves through narratively contested accounts, and are thereby always created, recreated and negotiated from both the individual’s and the group’s point of view.

5.1.3. Double Hermeneutic: Narratives and Evaluations

In the approach to cultural analysis advocated herein, it is assumed on the one hand that “human actions and relations are formed by a double hermeneutic: we identify *what* we do through an *account* of what we do; words and deeds are equi-primordial, in the sense that almost all socially (or culturally) significant human action is identified as a certain type of doing through the accounts the agents and others give of that doing” (Benhabib, 2002: 6). This is obviously even more so when there is a disagreement between doer and observer, because the latter requires the former to explain and justify his actions. On the other hand, it is further assumed that, in addition to being constituted through narratives that together form “*webs of narratives, interlocutions, meanings*”, human actions and interactions are also constituted through the actors’ evaluative stances toward their doings, whereby second-order narratives are taken to entail a certain normative attitude toward accounts of first-order deeds.

In view of these assumptions, we may then conclude with Benhabib that “[w]hat we call ‘culture’ is the horizon formed by these evaluative stances, through which the infinite chain of space-time sequences is demarcated into ‘good’ and ‘bad’, ‘holy’ and ‘profane’, pure and “impure”. Cultures are formed through binaries because *human beings live in an evaluative universe*” (2002:7; italics added). In effect, they “live, are suspended or thrown” into the webs which they themselves have spun and woven at least in part. In this sense, they always (implicitly or explicitly) make evaluations (in a weak or strong sense) of what they say and do, what they do by their words, statements, and stories, what they say by their doings, actions and behaviors – and, of course, what they hear others say or see them do, etc. Naturally, the evaluations human beings engage in will vary and include the simple and more common expressions of preference, approval and disapproval (weak sense) to the articulation of well-reasoned and principled normative, moral judgments (strong sense).

Consistently with such a perspective, we might then say that “acculturation” consists in “growing up in the midst of, or among narratives”, one’s own, those of our parents, teachers, schoolmates, friends, religious and political leaders, authority figures, and various other sorts of what Saul Bellow once called the “reality instructors”. As Jerome Bruner once put it, “we live, in other words, in a sea of stories” (1996: 147). Telling stories, about ourselves and about others, to ourselves and to others is “the most natural and the earliest way in which we organize our experience and knowledge...” “We represent our lives (to ourselves as well as to others) in the form of narratives”. “[We] make sense of the world by telling stories about it – by using the narrative mode for construing reality”. Stories are tools, i.e., “instruments of the mind on behalf of meaning-making” (Bruner, 1996: 121; 130; 40-1).

Acculturation (and one might as well add, education and socialization) involves therefore a complex *intra*-cultural dialogue putting into play various stories and narratives, from a diverse range of sources – some homegrown and endogenous, some exogenous and foreign, and others, a mixture thereof. As a result, the boundaries separating cultures and the peoples that are their members or carriers are extremely contested, fragile, not easily delineable or always clearly demarcated. Nevertheless, it may be still meaningful to maintain that “acculturation” in a particular ‘cultural complex’ marked by a predominance of certain stories and concomitant narrative modes and styles makes one an insider (as opposed to an outsider), i.e., a participant member – who retains however the ability of becoming a critical observer of his or her culture. What this implies is that it is also possible for an observer to become a participant in some sense, provided she is subjected to the appropriate ‘acculturation’. These possibilities may be helpful in explaining why the so-called “guardians of cultural integrity” (intellectual elites, leaders, nationalists, cultural ideologues, or fundamentalists) are vigilant in keeping the boundaries of culture always securely guarded, their stories and narratives

purified, their rites and rituals carefully monitored, and their practices protected and vehemently defended in order to maintain some presumed ‘distinctiveness’ and ‘originality’. Lest we adopt a naïve, and thereby impeachable, approach to cultural analysis, we should not forget, as Benhabib reminds us, that “cultural boundaries circumscribe power in that they legitimize its use within the group or community” (2002: 7).

The kind of analysis advocated herein does not imply in any way that cultural differences are shallow, superficial, or somehow unreal. Quite to the contrary, cultural differences are considered to be substantial, deep and real. For even if the boundaries between cultures are imagined, as they often are, they nonetheless have the force of reality that even imagined things have in the mind of those who imagine them (see Anderson, 1983). Even though what is believed to be true is not necessarily so, this epistemological truism is here irrelevant in that political and cultural realities do not always succumb in a simple or straightforward way to the strictures of philosophical epistemology and logic.

Assuming then that it is so, should we always (or ever) take at face value or for granted the cultural stories or narratives of individuals or groups? Arguably, we should not always. Our analysis stands to gain in explanatory power, empirical and normative perspicuity if we endeavored to understand the broadest socio-political-economic, historically contingent context, of which culture is only an aspect – albeit an important one, which admittedly matters (see Huntington and Harrison, 2000) without however being deterministic about it.

Putting the two distinctions drawn earlier to work, we might then say that cultures and societies must reproduce themselves materially and symbolically first and foremost from the standpoint of their participants or members if they are to survive and endure. The continuing identity of a culture and society must therefore be based on its capacity to deal with internal challenges (e.g., from participants turned “critical observers”) as well as external challenges and other contingencies (such as encounters with other forms of life, and possible ensuing confrontations and cross-cultural evaluations), while at the same time retaining somehow the *unforced* belief of those who claim to be its members or carriers in its normative order.

Suppose, in a somewhat pedestrian manner, we characterize “culture” as the sum total of all the solutions – at both the material and symbolic levels – to the problems in terms of production and reproduction encountered by a given group of people in its environment. Then we can expect that as their problems change both in nature and kind, and as they confront new problems in a changing and changed environment, the solutions to these problems will also change. Naturally, we should also expect that there will be different interpretations of the problems encountered as well as different, conflicting or even opposing, proposed solutions.

More often than not, transformations come about as a result of social and cultural systems confronting various kinds and degrees of

internal and external threats, and adapting to more or less severe “crises”, that is, commensurately with their ability to change and thereby avoiding being swept away into the dustbin of history. This is usually what happens following a ‘*real confrontation*’ between cultures (as opposed to *notional* one) – to use another of Bernard Williams’ useful distinctions (1985: 160ff). Strong normative evaluations are bound to happen and are even to be expected in the former, while they may be absent or minimal in the latter. And there are today many more such confrontations than in any previous period of world history.

5.2. Human Rights in a Globalizing World

In order to illustrate the merits of the approach advocated herein, I will next consider briefly the issue of *human rights* in a globalizing world – beyond the dead-end debate of radical cultural relativism vs. traditional Western-centric moral universalism – in an effort to make a case for “a pluralistic, historically enlightened ethical universalism”, that is nevertheless respectful enough of cultural differences.

Admittedly, the notion of ‘pluralistic universalism’ is apparently paradoxical. But the paradox dissolves as soon as one understands that the universalism here in question is, unlike the traditional form which sought to ground its justification in a monolithically construed, a-historical foundation, interested in a non-metaphysical, non-foundational, contextual and historically contingent and enlightened ‘justification’ on the basis of a diverse range of sources from different cultural and philosophical traditions.⁶

5.2.1. Beyond Radical Ethnocentrism and Relativism

It should by now be obvious that I object to the radical versions of cultural relativism and ethnocentrism which seek to somehow “lock us up” in our respective cultures and traditions. I am prepared however to countenance some weak or moderate versions of these theses, which, I would argue, are not only defensible but perhaps even desirable. Let me explain briefly why.

A moderate form of ethnocentrism can be seen as the basis for acceptance of the norms, practices and institutions of a given culture, an acceptance that is arguably a matter of material survival and psychological well-being for members who claim allegiance to that culture. An awareness and appreciation of one’s ethnocentrism in this sense can lead one to grant others “the right to their own ethnocentrism”, to be ‘different’ from us in some crucial respects, to a greater or lesser extent.

In contrast, extreme or radical ethnocentrism can easily breed intolerance and hostility toward members of another culture who do not conform to our norms and values, expectations and models. It may even lead to the ‘dehumanization’ of those individuals or groups deemed different, whether it is operating as an initial justification or as a subsequent rationalization. This tendency underlies, as we know,

many of the cases of oppression of one culture or society by another, of one group by another within the same culture or society.

A weak or moderate version of cultural relativism would acknowledge a more or less substantial degree of differences between cultural forms, respect the validity of normative claims made within them with regards to their respective values, beliefs, and practices, dismiss the idea that morality can somehow be placed beyond culture, and knowledge beyond both. In this regard, Geertz argues quite rightly that the relativism/anti-relativism (or universalism, as traditionally construed) discourse is better seen as an *exchange of warnings* rather than as an *analytical debate*. I also agree with his conclusion that the “objection to anti-relativism is not that it rejects an it’s-all-how-you-look-at-it approach to knowledge or a when-in-Rome approach to morality, but that it imagines that they (these approaches) can only be defeated by placing morality beyond culture and knowledge beyond both. This...is no longer possible. If we wanted home truths, we should have stayed at home” (2000: 65). We must therefore reject the traditional Western-centric defense for moral universalism, and seek to countenance a weak or moderate form of cultural relativism. Though it would reject as meaningless or pointless any search for (moral and epistemological) absolutes, it would still seek to articulate some universalist norms and standards through a process which is characterized by respect and tolerance, and pluralism.

In contrast, radical cultural relativism, by locking us up in our respective “cultural compartments or trains running on different tracks”, underwrites cross-cultural incommensurability and undermines moral evaluation and judgment. And as such it may thereby breed tolerance of injustices, or in any case, impair action against injustices. By rejecting critical evaluation of human actions and practices, it leaves us unable to enter into communicative interaction, to criticize cross-culturally, or cross-sub-culturally. It takes away the opportunity or the right to make cross-cultural comparisons, and to insist on universal normative standards that apply to all human beings regardless of their cultural, ethnic or racial affiliations, allegiances or memberships.

Generally speaking, the radical versions here in question seem to be saddled with one form or another of the fundamental misconception of culture. Thus, (1) cultures are assumed to be “windowless semantic monads” and hermetically sealed wholes’. (2) Conflicted and dissident interpretations, internal tensions, contradictions, contestations, and debates within cultures are barely acknowledged or their significance is often underestimated. (3) The range of different conceptual and normative options available to participants in a given cultural complex is hardly if ever taken into account and even ignored. And last, but not least, (4) they are unable to reconcile the symbolic dimensions of ‘cultures’ as clusters of values, meanings and interpretations with the imperatives of material production and reproduction of a form of life, its practices and institutions. As a result, they always seem to be proceeding from theoretical abstractions, making them unable to deal

effectively with the real and practical challenges and dilemmas experienced by most, if not all cultures and societies in the world today.

Perhaps then, one way of nudging the traditional cultural relativism/universalism debate beyond its current impasse is to acknowledge the socio-political-economic-historical situation in which we find ourselves today, and seek thereby to dissolve the problem rather than solving it analytically, as many philosophers still seek to do (see for example, Teson, 2001). One can hardly deny that our present situation is one of worldwide interactions, interchanges, and real confrontations between the imperatives of modernity/post-modernity and the often pleading or nostalgic demands of tradition and so-called “cultural integrity”. As such, it undermines *de facto* the “detached spectator posture” surveying the presumed clearly demarcated “cultural landscape” that relativists are prone to take. Recall for example that in *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard argues that an epistemologically enlightened postmodernist should not seek legitimation or justification, for this has typically been the imperialistic cloak of Western cultures. Instead, one should assume the attitude of a curator of a conceptual museum who “gazes in wonderment at the variety of discursive species, just as we do at the diversity of plant or animal species” (1984: 26). The analogy drawn here is to say the least problematic from an empirical point of view, and morally bankrupt from a normative standpoint.

As participants-members of various cultures and societies question their social and cultural order and assume the observers’ point of view *vis-à-vis* their own frames of meaning, values, and normative systems, they engage in “a moral conversation” with each other and draw each other into “an ever-widening hermeneutical circle of meaning, interpretation, and understanding”. This is arguably bound to considerably increase the chances for an “overlapping consensus” between their differing and diverging cultural perspectives – on particularly controversial issues such as *human rights*, *democracy*, *human development* and *social justice*. In this sense, Seyla Benhabib is right in saying that, in a globalizing world, “there are only participants exerting moral claims upon each other” (1995: 241).

5.2.2. Beyond Traditional, Western-Centric Moral Universalism

Traditionally and up until recently, the defense of moral universalism in human rights has been carried out from a Western-centric point of view, on the basis of metaphysically suspect notions of “human nature”, “rationality”, or “persons as individuals”⁷ and dubious epistemological foundations (Rorty, 1998: 167-185). One need not again rehearse the arguments made against such an approach by authors of diverse persuasions. It shall suffice to take note of the fact that these arguments have sufficiently established in my view the lack of normative and pragmatic power of such a defense. In fact, they have revealed that such a defense is suspiciously and disturbingly ethnocentric, and

irremediably incapable of providing the necessary *cultural legitimacy* most urgently needed for human rights in the present situation.

If, as An-Na'im quite rightly points out, "the lack or insufficiency of cultural legitimacy of human rights standards is one of the main underlying causes of violations of those standards" – apart from the multitude of other factors (1995: 19), then we should seriously consider an alternative approach. Such an approach would seek to find a compelling way to make a case for a "pluralistic universalism" on the basis of a properly conceived and carried out *internal dialogue* within each cultural complex as well as *cross-cultural dialogue* between various cultural complexes. Only in such a way can we hope to insure the future expansion and increased legitimacy of the 'human rights culture' that is already gaining ground globally in so many respects – according to the Argentinean philosopher Eduardo Rabossi – as quoted approvingly by Rorty (1998: 170).

5.2.3. Toward a Pluralistic, Historically Enlightened Ethical Universalism

The call for an increased and genuine *intra-* and *inter-*cultural dialogue need not remain an empty, though well-intentioned, gesture. It would start from one of the main tenets defended in this essay: each culture is in fact always already internally contested in that "all individuals and groups within a society do not hold identical views on the meaning and implications of cultural values and norms" (An-Na'im, 1995: 20). It would further make the reasonable and defensible assumption that "any cultural heritage is morally rich enough that it can, if appropriately construed, under some circumstances make inspirational contributions to the struggle of human rights, democracy, and social justice" (Falk, 1995: 54).

The many and diverse forms that moral concepts, precepts, and/or principles take are but a product of the particular historical circumstances of the cultures and societies that adopt and use them. In each case however, criteria are subject to continuous questioning and change, and fundamental conceptions are sustained in a dynamic and dialectic manner so as to provide guidance to the thoughts and actions of their respective members or carriers, and possibly give meaning and purpose to their lives. One may claim that such criteria, though differing in forms, do comprise some universals in the sense of "least common denominators" that can be extracted from the range of variations across human cultures (Herskovits, 1964: 62). Such a conception is however inadequate to make a case for a "pluralistic moral universalism". It is true that all cultures have something like morality, and in this sense, one may say that morality is universal. But this does not help in ascertaining the content of that morality, or in providing substantive criteria for judgment or action by members of this or that culture or other cultures.

What is needed is an approach that seeks (i) to include more substantively some basic concepts, precepts and/or principles, (ii) to validate and legitimate the shared moral values and norms from the

inside, i.e., from the standpoint of each culture, and not by external imposition, and (iii) to broaden and deepen the set of common values and norms so as to support certain vital and fundamental human rights.

The “pluralistic universalism” that I have in mind can be ‘justified’ (in a non-foundationalist sense) using the Rawlsian constructivist methodology of “reflective equilibrium” in that a genuine, unforced “overlapping consensus” can arguably be arrived at if we are prepared to engage in creative, imaginative and bold (if at times, radically reformist) hermeneutics of each and all the major cultural and philosophical traditions of the world (see Rawls, 1993; 1999a; 1999b; 2001). Even if it is still appropriate to distinguish between internal criticism or re-interpretation and external criticism or re-interpretation, cultural relativism (of the weak or moderate variety) would not impair either – whereas the strong and radical kind clearly would. It would merely make us more sensitive to the necessity of striving for greater cultural legitimacy of human rights – as much as possible in accord with the norms and standards (albeit re-interpreted) internal to each culture. This, of course, does not preclude cross-cultural judgment and action; it merely recommends the most effective ways for engaging in them. If however, as Geertz pointed out (2000: 65), morality and knowledge cannot be placed beyond culture, then we cannot act, in intercultural relations, as if they are the exclusive achievements of some cultures and not of others. The cross-cultural validity of our evaluations, judgments and actions would increase commensurately with the degree of universality that can be attached to the values and norms on which they are based. And our actions would gain in effectiveness commensurately with the degree of sensitivity and understanding we are able to exhibit with regards to other cultures’ internal logics as well as their conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

Let us assume, with Jacques Maritain (1951: 77) followed later on by Charles Taylor (2001: 410), that (i) people of divergent ideological allegiances, philosophical and religious traditions, cultural backgrounds and historical experiences could agree on a common formulation of practical conclusions, a set of moral (and/or legal) norms, norms of conduct, and even a catalogue of rights – as they have in fact done in 1948 for the formulation of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), but (ii) could not agree on the theoretical conceptions or philosophical justifications for their practical conclusions. Such an assumption is by the way supported by the recent groundbreaking study of the drafting, origins and intent of UDHR carried out by Morsink (2000). In it, he takes an approach based on *consensus* among the drafters, rather than providing a traditional philosophical justification for the universality of human rights. He argues essentially that the process by which UDHR was drafted included a variety of social, cultural, religious, and ideological traditions, and the final document reflects this diversity, while at the same time transcending the divisions that could have undermined it. And he concludes that, rather than being an ethnocentric document that present Western values as universal rights, the drafting process compel us, he

claims, to view it as an inclusive set of rights for all human beings. Interestingly enough, Glendon (2001) reaches similar conclusions in her highly acclaimed study.

It is arguably useful to distinguish the above mentioned two levels in our discussions and struggles for human rights. Building on the substantial agreement achieved on practical conclusions, we could then endeavor to seek a *rapprochement* between the divergent “why’s” of their philosophical justifications by way of a creative and radically bold hermeneutics. This would involve, as Taylor puts it, “mutual learning, and moving toward a ‘fusion of horizons’ in Gadamer’s term, where the moral universe of the other becomes less strange. And out of this will come further borrowings and the creation of new hybrid forms” (2001: 420).

The formulation of a pluralistic and historically enlightened ethical universalism on a global scale now appears not only as a possibility, but most importantly as a necessity. As we have become moral contemporaries caught in a tighter and tighter “web of interdependence” (which is part of the objectively emerging historical reality), one of the *moral* imperatives of the present is, to put it succinctly, the following: to translate this *objective* interdependence into a *normative*, cosmopolitan one – aiming at achieving a “community of conversation” across cultures.

6. Conclusion: Respect, Reciprocity, and Responsibility

In the face of the current globalizing trends, which seem to intensify and multiply the confrontations taking place between cultures and societies, “we are, to paraphrase Sartre, condemned to understand each other”, or else, to simply endure the consequences that these confrontations are having on our lives and those of others. As the latter option is not a real one, how, one might ask, should an interdependent world, seeking to resolve those issues of common concern to all, best proceed to become a moral community, i.e., a community of conversation? Arguably, a genuine cross-cultural dialogue based on the minimal norms of *respect* and *reciprocity* is the way to go.

One need not invoke, as some philosophers have claimed, some essentialist theory of human nature, or a transcendently grounded notion of ‘super-humanity’ in order to justify the pragmatic merit of such a dialogue. It should be obvious that such a dialogue is required by the global situation of interdependence which has intensified interactions and exchanges at various levels and in various forms between different cultures and societies.

Given the imperative confronting us, the relevant moral questions then are these: How can we best help others preserve their way of life without forcing them to destroy themselves or forego their dignity? In other words, how can we promote the material and symbolic continuity of those forms of life and cultural expressions which can be made more compatible with the normative, moral requirements of respect, reciprocity and dignity of all human beings?

The purpose of a pluralistic, historically enlightened ethical universalism is to make a case for the necessity of moral conversation and action in the face of the needs and suffering of others. We cannot abdicate our *responsibility* toward others by giving in to objectionable and defective arguments about radical cultural relativism or ethnocentrism, or with an easy surrender to the comforts of a culturally walled-in existence. As long as we can more or less understand each other's languages, the meanings and values of each other's cultures, we need no further proof of our shared humanity: we are interlocutors in a moral conversation; we are partners in the struggles concerning the problems and issues common to us all. In the process of such a conversation and struggle, we stand to discover what unites us as well as what separates us. Our differences should not however constitute grounds for exclusion from the conversation, or the struggle. Interestingly, or rather ironically, we must first respect the others as human beings in some real and substantial sense like us in order to understand how different they are from us. In other words, the recognition of cultural differences must be predicated upon the recognition of our dialogically, conversationally, and politically grounded common humanity – beyond all forms of essentialism.

Notes:

1. However, some authors question such a characterization by bringing up historical precedents dating back to the 6th- 8th centuries B.C., or alternatively to the 15th- 16th centuries. Whatever historical antecedents or parallels one could bring up to mitigate its absolute novelty, and that we are presumably well-advised to take into account in our analyses, we must nevertheless recognize that the accelerated pace of change, as well as the quantitative and qualitative differences in this era of 'globalization' (characteristic of the decades on either side of the year 1990) are distinctive features which cannot be dismissed.
2. In their compilation of the various definitions of "culture" that have appeared in the literature since the 19th century, Kroeber and Kluckhohn had found 171 distinct definitions, which could then be sorted out into 13 categories.
3. With this term, derived from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), I only wish to convey some of the connotations commonly associated with it, namely, connectivity, heterogeneity, multiplicity, constant creation and recreation of networks as they expand, contract, emerge, and recede. I do not endorse all the specifics of their work, nor the diverse uses to which it has been put.
4. This neologism was originally defined as "a unit of cultural transmission or imitation" to convey analogically to the 'gene' of biological evolution the self-propagating, self-replicating, and circulating unit of cultural evolution. It is believed that it might prove useful in explaining various recalcitrant aspects of human behavior and cultural evolution. "Memes" have as their fundamental property 'evolution via selection' in that replication, mutation, survival and competition influence them. In more casual *parlance*, a 'meme' refers to any piece of information or meaning regardless of its mode or medium of expression that circulates, is reproduced and passed from one mind to another. Examples might include thoughts, ideas, theories, practices, habits, songs, dances, and even moods, etc.

5. These expressions [respectively from Arendt (1958/1973), Benhabib (2002), Weber (1917/1949) and Geertz (2000)] are here used interchangeably to convey a “narrative view of the self and identity” in contrast to the traditional conception which characterizes the latter in terms of a substantive, constitutive and essentially defining core.
6. In the post-metaphysical and anti-foundationalist context of contemporary philosophy, I believe that Nussbaum (2000) and Benhabib (2002) are also striving toward such a goal from their respective theoretical perspectives: For the former, Rawlsian political liberalism based on “overlapping consensus” informed by a distinctive version of the capability approach (slightly different from Amartya Sen’s) with universalist aspirations, which yet wishes to remain contextually sensitive; for the latter, a deliberative democracy approach informed by a distinctive post-Habermasian version of communicative action theory and discourse ethics.
7. A widespread strand of philosophical liberalism has equated the concept of “person” with the “individual as an atomistic unit”, very narrowly and problematically construed. I believe however that this conception may be rehabilitated by attending to other strands which in contrast emphasize the intrinsic and fundamental links between *persons* and *community*.

***23. Cosmopolitanism and Globalization Seen From a Hellenistic Point of View**

Jean-Michel Muglioni

Abstract: According to the ancient cosmopolitan idea, the human being is open for other areas than for those of survival needs. Men: like Gods, know the law of the universe and are citizens of the world. The unity of mankind is not only biological cultural or political but also establishes the universality of human rights. Globalization as it imposes everywhere a particular economic system, is the negation of universality. It is a profit-seeking market not a cosmopolitical universe. Trying to compensate the spread of this particularism by creating new particularisms plays into the hands of globalization. The economic unity of Europe is accompanied by an ethnic parceling out that damages law and order because any particularism becomes merchandise. Uniformity replaces here universality. **Key Words:** citizenship, cosmopolitanism, globalization, particularism, universality.

1. Citizens of the World

Universal history is a phenomenon of globalization. Athens's hegemony prepared Alexander's conquests, Rome prolonged the Hellenic world. Until the 19th century, the Roman Empire was a model for Europe, and Western colonialism follows along the same lines. Today, globalization is spreading over the whole planet and liberalism (or capitalism as it used to be called) is the ultimate form of colonization. Roman domination was military while modern globalization is primarily economic. I do not pretend that Roman conquests were better, but I think that economical globalization makes men forget an important idea that has been transmitted to us by ancient philosophy: the unity of the world and of mankind. I want to show this by referring to the cosmopolitical idea brought forward by philosophers from the fourth century B.C. to the first century A.D. This idea will be used as criterion to judge the unique "global market" that has by now been established by the new world.

It's the Cynics and the Stoics who formulated the idea that man is a citizen of the world at the moment when Greek cities lost their independence for the benefit of empires: first the empire of Alexander, then that of the Hellenistic kingdoms. In the first century B.C., Cicero claimed the equality of men in so far as they are the citizens of the world; they should be just like Gods. Adopted by Cicero from the Stoics and by Plutarch from Plato, this philosophical principle suggests the contrary of universal despotism. And in spite of Rome's victory, Roman philosophers did not transform this principle into a Roman ideology. We remember that Tacito made a Briton chief say with regard to what the Romans proudly called Pax Romana: *solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant* – they destroyed everything and said it was peace. This is the direct consequence of globalization when it means

nothing other than the hegemony of one people and its way of life imposed upon all the others.

However, originally cosmopolitanism means citizenship in a cosmological and not in a political sense: the concept of the citizen is used in order to think the relationship between man and the world. The citizen will not be confined in his particularity but is supposed to live in accordance with the law of the city as a whole. In the same way, each man, as reasonable being, is not only a part of the world, nor is he only a being among others, but he has access to the idea of the whole and can live according to the law of the whole cosmos – just like the Gods. This is the reason why all men are citizens of the world: they are all reasonable and equal to the extent that they resemble Gods. Seneca conceives the idea of the Republic of Mankind, which expresses the unity – both moral and cosmological – of human gender. This unity is not limited to biological criteria. It is a unity which distinguishes mankind from all other living creatures because the other creatures are living according to “the whole” without knowing its law. This unity, which constitutes the essence of mankind, cannot be reduced to geopolitics or history either, since the rational knowledge of the whole is not derived from social conditions or any particular citizenship.

2. Universe and Environment

Plato’s idea of the “ascent” that we find at the end of the *Timaios* has a similar meaning: men are to animals what animals are to plants. Man is not bound to his environment like other living creatures. For animals, the world is identical with their environment as it is perceived within the limits of the necessity of survival. Two creatures might be living in the same space but they do not necessarily live in the same environment. A tree, for example, will not necessarily have the same meaning for each of them. An animal is only a part of the ecological system, it is a part of the whole but not necessarily conscious of its being only a part of it. It does not necessarily understand the meaning of its own place within the whole. Man, on the other hand, is not reduced to a part; his intellectual outlook on the whole makes of him the only being on earth that is not confined to a limited world but his world *is the world*. According to the fable of the *Timaios*, the fact to live in a vertical position liberates man’s view, it allows him to *contemplate* the world and lends to his view a cosmological meaning. Man can admire a starlit sky.

Instead of living enclosed in a circle or in a particular, ecological or cultural environment, man is living in face of the universe as a whole. The animal, on the other hand, is the prisoner of its needs because it has no other interests. Meeting its needs it is always restless – a restlessness that the Greeks called *ascholia* and the Latins *negotium*. Man, on the other hand, is not confined to his biological or utilitarian existence: he will bend down only when working in order to feed himself and to earn his living.

Thought creates a new relationship with the world that is different from the link between the animal and its environment. This relationship is neither ecological nor biological but *cosmological*. One problem is that, when man abdicates reason, there will be no instinct to

guide him. Consequently, he will destroy the balance of the cosmic whole and ruin the ecological balance because he is no longer able to regulate his relationship with nature.

3. Leisure and the World

The cosmopolitan idea as it was conceived by ancient philosophy, concerns the relationship between man and the world; and leisure represents an essential link with the world as a whole. The first philosophers wrote cosmogonic poems and Aristotle considered leisure – *scholē* – as the origin of philosophy. For man, and for man only, the world is not an object of fear or desire. Leisure, in a positive sense, means that we take interest in things which are useless and without immediate relationship with the necessities of life. What the ancients called *scholē* or *otium* – leisure – is nowadays understood negatively, while the negative notion of *ascholia* or *negotium*, non-leisure, has become positive. Today, non-leisure is called activity while leisure is called idleness or diversion. The idea of humanity as conceived by the ancient cosmopolitanism following Plato, is the contrary of modern pragmatism: the life of leisure is completely different from a practical life or from the life of animals. Leisure represents man's relationship with the world as a whole as well as with the universality of being. This is why this idea of leisure is so far removed from that of globalization which does not signify the spread of philosophical leisure over the whole earth.

4. Civil Rights and Universality

The political consequence of all this is the relative nature of political citizenship. Aristophanes, in his comedy *The Clouds*, laughs at Socrates who, thanks to geometry, measures Attica, in order to deal ironically with its narrowness compared to the rest of the world – and thus plays into Spartans' hands. Socrates is a bad citizen because he is more interested in the universe than in his own city, the city of Athens. In this way, *The Clouds* reveal the meaning of the universal: belonging to this city or that family is of secondary importance compared to the cosmic citizenship; our relationship to the world which makes us equal is more important than what makes us different concerning our cultural particularities. Thus each man is part of the same society only because he is a man; and at the gate of a philosophical Platonic, Aristotelian, Epicurean, or Stoic school, nobody asks you from which city you are coming. This tradition of reason lasted until Christianity started persecuting philosophical schools and ordered the Academy to be closed in 529.

Since man's nature derives from his special relationship with the universe, human rights are not related to a particular culture. They relate to man just as a human being. Man is not a creature living within a cultural or political environment. Even though we must admit that his particular state of humanness can only be materialized in a particular state, his citizenship is not his essence. This means that the universality as it was understood by ancient cosmopolitanism, relates to the distinction between man and citizen, which means, for example, that a man can win against a legal or political system. One single mind is able to

judge a whole country in the name of a universal demand. This is the reason why the universal is never a fact. *Right* refers to universality and thus legitimates us to contest any legal decision as well as any custom. The constitutional state and the rights of man are irreducible to a specific culture; they have been conquered by struggling against numerous beliefs and customs. The universality of right implies that men living in a specific culture are not its subjects but its sovereigns.

In ethics, law and politics, there is something – like in mathematics – that is not related to culture. Man is able to think universally and, as a consequence, his social link can not be conceived of as a contingent consensus based on the fact that men happen to have the same education, the same interests or the same level of poverty. The most terrifying movements of crowds in the history of the 20th century are examples of consensus. A same interest can, for a time, unite men or peoples without really achieving their unification because any new interest or any change in the calculation of their interests can break the link at any moment. A *republic of spirits*, on the other hand, is not a coalition, but a true agreement; it is a free knowledge of a truth that is irreducible to man's external or cultural conditions of life. It is a knowledge that is shared by everyone.

5. All Peoples Are Parts of the Universal

Such an agreement is not utopian but real. Any people, even if it did not yet have the opportunity to wonder about its own particularities (because it was isolated by geographical circumstances, for example) is a part of the universal humanity. This ideal link between all men exists everywhere and is always actual, even when there is no awareness of it.

At the same time it is this link which makes possible human communication beyond cultural differences. Every cultural community has its particular language which is composed of sounds which are contingent, and it has different ways of conceptual classification leading to specific metaphors. Yet it is always possible for one people to communicate with others, that is, to converse with people who do not have the same language. Speaking one language means, in principle, to be able to speak them all. Speaking is therefore the realization of the universal in a particular linguistic context. A particular language that is understandable by any man is universal. In this sense, the universal is the principle of the particular.

On the one hand, the dialogue between peoples is based on the unity of mankind. A multitude of languages is necessary to prevent us from being confined to the particularities of a unique language: if Latin were the only spoken language on the planet, it would be a particular language; above that, since we would be unable to compare it to other languages, we would ignore its particular character. Without differences there is no universality. The diversity of peoples is essential for the unity of mankind. Uniformization is the end of the universal because it will lead us to identify universalism with a particularism that is spread all over the planet. Such a kind of generalized particularism is actually what we call today globalization.

6. Globalization is not Universality

Globalization is the domination of one economical system over the whole planet. Though there is one market and one type of economy, its universality is rather the victory of one particularism over the rest of the world. This particularism is economic liberalism. If we ask a question about the future of the constitutional state and of the rights of man, we wonder what kind of relationship exists between the global economical system and the claim to universality which engendered the rights of man. If it is true that the meaning of the universal is conform with the ancient cosmopolitan idea, and if leisure is the basis of the relationship between man and the world (and if, above that, real citizens of the world never dream of becoming the masters of the world but are simply happy to live in it), then Marxism and liberalism are both wrong. The reason is that both Marxism and liberalism interpret the relationship between man and the world in a wrong way. If we consider that there is a link between the idea of leisure and the cosmopolitical idea, we must conclude that globalization is the contrary of the universal. Europe was able to re-conquer its liberty after Roman colonization only because that colonization did not exclude leisure. Economy was not its unique basis.

The success of one economic system transforms the earth into a kingdom of business and restlessness. Leisure disappears, and with it disappears universality. The word leisure comes to mean only *activities* (TV, cinema, video games, football, etc.). However, those activities are the contrary of leisure, they are first of all *goods*. The unity of the common market engendered by capitalism is not cosmopolitical but chrematistic. Chrematistic means, according to Aristotle, that the new world accepts as its only principle the unlimited quest for wealth. Its laws are not the divine laws of the cosmos enabling human beings to accomplish their humanity. Man's ideal is no longer to be a citizen of the world but a businessman who calculates globally but not universally: his relationship to the stars is practical and not theoretical; it is economic and not contemplative.

In Europe, the necessity to organize a common market in order to fight against the international competition has stabilized the peace between countries which had been at war for centuries. This is positive. However, this outcome is hardly due to the spirit of universality. The fact that Europe wants to be a Europe of regions more than one of Nations is rather essential than accidental. Globalization makes men dependent upon each other but does not unite them. Globalization goes hand in hand with the creation of ethnic patches all over the world. Those people who are against it have good reasons to rebel.

However, to simply oppose particularism to universality means to remain a prisoner of globalization: global markets convert traditions into folklore and spread them all over the world. Supermarkets offer deep frozen exotic cuisines and record stores boast with shelves full of "world music".

Hannah Arendt wrote that capitalism and communism are both systems of expropriation. If economic liberalism did not turn into totalitarianism, it is not because of the liberty of action, which is a means of expropriation, but because it appeared and developed within

the frontiers of a constitutional state where real judicial power existed. Due to their institutions and their political and judicial traditions, liberal states preserved a certain amount of liberty; but this is not due to their economic systems. Nowadays this system is often said to be the principle of liberty. Today, as financial powers prevail over political and judicial power, the main problem is to know how to preserve the constitutional state. I believe that the only power able offer resistance to universal despotism is the thinking which has no power. However, if the peoples are not conscious of what is at stake, if they do not strive for the universal, there is no hope for freedom.

***24. Categorical Universalism and Cultural Pluralism Based on Man's Unconditional Duty (Kant)**

Jürgen Hengelbrock

Abstract: Culture is neither good nor worthy by its mere existence. It can be extremely blameworthy. But in order to eulogize or to blame elements of culture we need criteria. How can we establish them? Is there a moral or rational level to be located beyond culture that makes it possible to judge culture? It may be the categorical imperative. In the *Metaphysics of Morals* Kant deals with property rights, marriage, parental rights, contract law, constitutional law, criminal law. Maybe this *Metaphysics* is rooted in the author's Pietistic background. This is not the case with the categorical imperative. It is the touchstone enabling us to verify the moral character of human deeds. This verification procedure constitutes a *categorical* or *transcendental universalism* because it defines the conditions of ethics without being a particular element of a particular moral system. **Key Words:** Categorical Imperative, culture, language, Metaphysics of Morals, Universalism.

1. The Human Being Between Culture and Nature

Basically, man is a product of nature. With all animals we share the drive for food, sexual fulfillment and procreation, growth, decline and death. But as opposed to those of other beings, human drives do not work in accordance with fixed programs. For example, human sexual desire is not tied to a rutting season; it is floating and can adopt various forms and aims. This lack of natural determinants is both the weakness and the strength of man. On the one hand, there is a destabilization of human behavior, action and reaction. There is no certainty concerning our own behavior and that of others. There is no fixed instinctive response to the challenges of life. From this perspective, man is inferior to animals.

Therefore man is forced to work and create rules and customs in order to ensure survival, thus compensating for the lack of instinctive determinants. The lack of determination provokes human beings to invent various and specific responses to a vast variety of challenges that animals could never cope with. Everything that man invents in compensating for what is naturally lacking, and far more than that, is summed up in the concept of culture. Culture embraces emotional behavior, clothing, technology, social relationships, music, and so on.

The question now is: what is due to nature and what is due to culture in human behavior, in man's intellectual and moral assessments? From Greek antiquity to the period of the Enlightenment, philosophers referred to a universal nature, common to all human beings. In this respect, common human nature is the origin and the guide of all our needs, desires and acts of will. Culture is conceived as a continuation of nature. Nature is also the source and norm of human rights. Morally good behavior (towards ourselves and towards others) is in agreement with this nature, bad behavior is in contradiction to it.

Reason enables man to define natural needs and rights, and opens a way for him to improve individual and social life, i.e. life in better agreement with nature, not deformed by ignorance, superstition and misuse of power.

In 20th century Europe, doubts arose and grew continuously about the existence of a universal human nature and a universal human reason. Advanced ethnological studies showed that there were civilizations on a high intellectual, cultural and moral level, but often contrary to what Europeans believed to belong to human nature. Relativistic epistemology, nourished by scientific experiences and experiments, reinforced these doubts. We saw a proliferation of cultural studies in the humanities, going so far as to claim that there is no natural human behavior, but that all human phenomena are products of culture and determined by it.

Today, the debate is still going on. There are scholars who say that gender is a construction of mind or culture, that there is only a marginal, secondary natural difference between the sexes.

On the other hand, intercultural experience shows that there are a number of basic appeals and repulsions we understand everywhere and immediately: sex appeal, fascination of power, pride, desire for beauty, hatred, joy, fear, faith, unfaithfulness, jealousy. Prior to culture, there are many biological and psychological factors common to all human beings. Recent genetic research has proved that mankind descended from one group of (African) ancestors and that genetic differences amount only to a small per cent. It seems reasonable to suppose that this common genetic heritage is the basis of identical shapes of human life.

In a very interesting article about the moral development of children, the American psychologist William Damon reported on empirical comparative studies concerning the emotional behavior of infants in different parts of the world and in different cultural contexts. The authors of the studies noted that infants of all regions and cultures display identical behavior: empathy, shame, guilty feelings, outrage at wrongdoings. Damon concludes: "Disposition to such feelings is inherent practically in every human being and is found in every culture. [...] Differences of social emotions develop later. What activates a specific social reaction, and how it will be, becomes evident only under specific value systems of cultures" (Damon 1999: 62-70). If these studies are conclusive, then there is a natural moral feeling before culture and preceding culture. This feeling is developed or deformed by culture.

This report confirms a hypothesis that may be the basis of the following considerations: Every human being is born with numerous genetic predispositions, most of them common to mankind. The rest, however, are rooted in the variety of hereditary factors common to individuals of the same descent or ethnic origin but differing among groups. But only a certain sub-set of genetic predispositions will be developed. This process depends on culture and education. Culture forms the human being by activating or challenging certain predispositions, and discouraging or repressing others.

2. Culture and Cultures.

We have said that everything that man invents to compensate for any natural lack is a phenomenon of culture. If this is so, culture is not a non-contradictory, homogenous, harmonious entity, provoking aesthetic enjoyment. Culture is a mixture of extremely diverse, often incoherent items, related to very different sectors of life. There is for example no logical or necessary link between forms of agriculture, monogamous or polygamous family structures, popular music and so on. It may be that the material conditions of life (geography, climate, basic commodities) stimulate specific cultural forms or options, but there is no determinate relationship of cause and effect, with the same cause always producing the same effect. Therefore, in every culture you can find numerous internal contradictions, numerous tensions owing to the incompatibility of elements, to different and arbitrary practices, to the capriciousness of individuals.

Consequently, for example, speaking about Indian culture, it is difficult to assume another meaning than a geographical one. Indian culture is what has been created in India. You will find many identical aspects in Africa or Europe, and also many different ones. Finally, we may have difficulties in speaking about Indian culture *as such*; it would be more correct to speak about the totality of Indian *cultures*, using the adjective “Indian” as a collective term, uniting a number of similar cultures, whose similarity is due to neighborhood and intercourse. We must do the same concerning European or even German culture. Speaking about European culture, we think of the totality of cultures emerging from this part of the world.

On this level of description and geographical attribution, we can shift from the continental point of view to the national or regional one, emphasizing, for example, the differences between the northern Protestant and the southern Catholic cultures in Germany. The dividing lines are fuzzy; we find southern Catholics with a northern, Protestant mentality and vice versa. But as soon as we pass from description or geographical attribution to normative consideration, we run into problems: What belongs to German – Catholic or Protestant – culture, what is strange or incompatible with it? Can Muslim religion harmonize with German culture? Who is authorized and competent to define what is German, what is Muslim or not? The normative view of culture is a very dangerous one.

For these reasons it is very difficult to detect a determinate cultural identity and to give cultures a denomination different from a geographical one. Today, we are charmed by the idea of cultural identity, and we are inclined to attribute great value to it. But we cannot say what exactly constitutes the identity of German or Indian culture in contrast to others. And we must not forget that in the name of cultural superiority or integrity millions of people have been oppressed, killed or driven from their native countries.

3. The Tower of Babel

Biblical myth reports that in ancient times, peoples became arrogant and wanted to build a tower touching heaven. God did not appreciate this arrogance and punished mankind by confusing their speech. Until

that time, men had a common language which enabled them to understand each other. From that moment on, they were dispersed all over the world and could no longer communicate.

Today we are inclined to consider the variety of languages as a treasure of mankind. In fact, language is more than a system of signs assuring the coordination of ideas and actions. Language, forged into tales, proverbs, myths, literature, philosophy, religious speech absorbs and transmits to peoples the wisdom and the experience of their ancestors. Language reflects a collective view of life, giving peoples an orientation in space and time. Consequently, the decline of a language cuts people of a speech community off from their intellectual and moral roots. Therefore, the ruling class often tries to repress the language of minorities, intending to break down their intellectual and moral autonomy. This attempt is not only inhuman, but also erroneous: by depriving people of their moral and intellectual orientation, states do not promote good citizenship, but self-neglect and impoverishment. The life of languages is like the life of plants: some species develop and grow, others disappear, lacking fertile ground, i.e. vital cultural life. In this domain, administrative revitalization or oppression is ineffective.

On the other hand we should not forget that the biblical myth interprets the variety of languages as a divine punishment, creating strangeness, misunderstanding, mistrust and hostilities. On the one hand, we welcome linguistic and cultural diversity as human treasures and expressions of man's ingenuity, on the other hand they are hindrances to human understanding and universal solidarity.

4. Culture and Individual Consciousness

Culture is a creation of man. Responding to natural and social challenges, man *developed and refined, changed and reformed* skills, tools, customs, adapting them to the needs of survival and maturation. He is the master of culture and not its creation. Consciousness, emerging from nature, enables him not only to produce culture, but to go ahead and transcend it. This is also proved by the fact that man questions the meaning of life, revolts against culture and cultural authorities, insisting on his own point of view concerning what is worthwhile for life. Man has an interior, spiritual life, developing individual ideas of life pushing him to create his own values. It happens that ideas and values of great wise men and of great lunatics become collective values.

As a reasonable being he questions what is really right and wrong. He strives to know the origins of things. From this perspective man is a metaphysical being, not satisfied simply to find out what is, but endeavoring also to define what ought to be. Consequently he wants to discover or to conceive world views transcending his cultural environment, valid by internal evidence, views that offer a norm for the criticism of cultures and cultural values. In this respect the relationship between individual consciousness and culture is one of creative and critical intercourse.

5. Culture and Alienation

Unfortunately, there is another side of the coin. By culture, individual consciousness can be alienated from itself. Using Marx's words concerning capitalist economy we can say about culture: *The product of our activity constitutes itself as a foreign power over us*. Also created by man, he can fall victim to his own creation. For example, demons, evil spirits and threatening statues, representing divinities and so on, are invented or produced by men who are afterwards afraid of them or at least frighten their fellows with them. Anyhow, the ignorance or dissimulation of their authorship gives these creatures, created by man, at the same time alien power over him. Fear and respect paralyze his metaphysical questioning and his inquisitiveness. More or less consciously, by individual usurpation or collective alteration, natural authority over minors and feeble-minded fellows is transformed into absolute magic or divine power, excluding criticism and oppressing opposition. Thus man's interior life, his metaphysical existence, has been damaged or even extinguished. We note that cultures justify the oppression of one part of mankind (generally of women) by another, and cover a lot of other evils.

6. "Ethnicity" as Value?

Culture is neither good nor worthy by its mere existence. It can be extremely blameworthy. But in order to eulogize or to blame elements of culture we need criteria. How can we establish them? What can we found them on? The idea of a common human nature is no longer accepted universally; it is rather blamed as a phenomenon of a new moral colonialism or tutelary arrogance, coming from Europeans.

Is there a moral or rational level above culture making it possible to judge it? Who is authorized to define it? Or shall we give up, thus leaving mankind to their cultural biotopes and their established or changing structures of power and alienation? Is "ethnicity" the only universal value?

7. Youngster's Vote: Respect, Kindness and Help

Let me resort to my pedagogic experience. In most cases, youngsters are morally less deformed than adults. Lately I was asked to inspect a philosophy lesson. The young teacher had great difficulties with her thirty pupils. Only six of them were German, the other children were immigrants: some Turkish boys and girls born in Germany, some Iranian refugees, some Pakistani Muslims and some Russian boys. The Iranian girls wore headscarves and were very corpulent. The topic was about living in Germany as foreigners. The Turkish boys and girls kept persistently silent. The Pakistani boys said that life was wonderful in Germany, that they were free, that you could do what you want, that nobody shot in the street, and so on. The Iranian girls replied that they did not feel at ease walking about in town. Many people regarded them with mistrust or disdain. "Why don't you go home to Iran", replied the Pakistani boys, "the revolutionary guards will keep watch over your virginity!" The Russians said that Muslims were not Europeans and would never become integrated, and so on. The atmosphere was very aggressive. Indeed, in Germany hostility frontiers do not only exist between Germans and "the others", the foreigners, but even more, and

more relentlessly, among different ethnic and religious groups whose mutual relationships are not guided by empathy but by rivalry.

What should be done? I told the pupils that we could not live and learn together in this way. I asked them to take a piece of paper and to write down what each thought was due to him from everybody when living together. The boys' and girls' notes were very alike: *respect, help, kindness, and empathy*. All of them were surprised that they were in complete agreement, beyond all differences.

I told them to act. "Which of the girls will sew the lose button onto the jacket of our Russian class-mate, and which of the boys will help the girls carry their heavy satchels?" Several boys and girls raised their hands, and the following week the teacher told me that they all kept their word and that the atmosphere had become better.

This experience suggests that beneath culture and religion, beneath social and political differences, there is a more basic, elementary moral level of human relationships. Spontaneously the boys and girls, coming from very different parts of the world, agreed, when asked above what they wanted and expected from each other. Their answer opens the way to a basic moral agreement about what should be done in order to live together in a peaceful and fruitful manner.

Respect, kindness, and help – these duties need no cultural or religious authority; they are universal, become evident and always impose themselves when human beings try to live together. They are not located *above* men as moral entities like values or customs, but *among* human persons; they are the outcome of an elementary social contract, making human living together possible.

These duties become evident in human intercourse as a compelling minimal contract for living together. They do not need authority or cultural sanction. But they authorize us to state that there are some fundamental rights. Indeed, it is what is due to everybody that constitutes rights. Both, duties and rights, are front and reverse of the same coin. So *respect, kindness, help* are absurd if they don't involve the acceptance of the right to invulnerability of body and soul. Cultures that do not acknowledge such rights derived from the basic social contract are not worthy of our acknowledgement and should be combated. Consequently, on the basic duty contract we can found a few rights we presume to be universal and unchanging, which we call human rights.

These duties in the sense defined are a minimal "iron ration" that makes it possible for people to live together peacefully and is almost sufficient for living together. For if everybody practiced *respect, kindness and help* towards everybody else, personal, cultural, religious differences, even foreignness and linguistic barriers, would be harmless or at least bearable. Such barriers would not disappear and would still cause problems, but the duty practice would create a common link that safeguards solidarity, even in disagreement or discord. Duties unite men, cultures divide them.

8. We Don't Need a Cultural Shelter!

In the global village the time of cultural identity is over. With economic development the western life style is spreading everywhere.

The search for job and income and the fear of war and violence push people to leave their homes and go to foreign countries, taking with them their customs, habits and values. Men are confronted with changing reflections of human beings and things. Cultures melt and fade. These changes disorientate people all over the world. In the absence of *respect, kindness and help*, disoriented people are susceptible to fundamentalism, attempting to restore culture or religion as a fortress offering shelter against change.

Fortunately, the human being does not need culture as a shelter. For this function, cultures are too self-contradictory and ambiguous. Cultures have no consistent identity. The claim for it is rather forced because identity has to be forged artificially and even by compulsion. It is not given naturally.

Man's intellect and consciousness take him beyond culture. Man is not a product of culture, but its producer. In all ages, men worked on cultures, developed and transformed them. These facts make evident that the centre and the source of human activity is not culture, but the minds and hearts of individuals. Intellect and consciousness enable man to be aware of himself, of his life, of his past and of the uncertainty of the future. Having emerged from instincts, man has a free will. Consciousness, intellect and free will dispose man for self-determination. He is able to create his own values. Summarizing all these features, philosophers say that the human being is a *person*.

Culture has to help human beings to become free, self-confident, self-determined *persons*, capable of deciding themselves what is worthwhile for life and to mould their culture as they like.

We must not mistake this aim for selfishness. Man is not a lone wolf, but a social being. In order to become a free person, man needs help, kindness, encouragement from others, first from father and mother, later on from the enlarged social sphere. Alone, man will waste away. Selfish, man will be bored with himself. Only human intercourse (friendship and love) gives him the impetus for a full life.

The development of the sense of respect, kindness and help opens to people the way to a civilized community and gives them the impetus to become self-confident and responsible persons. Such persons are at the same time the best husbands, wives and citizens.

9. Kant's Categorical Imperative and Metaphysics of Morals

Duties collected by the youngsters reflect nothing else but *Kant's categorical imperative*. Can we state that the youngsters found intuitively a universal ground of morals, valid for all human beings without regard to their cultural affiliation, whose status is "before culture", as the French philosopher E. Levinas said (Levinas 1952: 54)?

The answer needs an examination of the nature of Kant's categorical imperative. Thinking that, in Kant's opinion, the categorical imperative gives answers to all moral questions is a monstrous misunderstanding. If that were the case, Kant would not have felt the need to write his *Metaphysics of Morals*, which is divided into two main parts. In the first one you will find the *Metaphysical Grounds of Jurisprudence*. In this part Kant deals with all subjects concerning private and public fields: property rights, marriage, parental rights, contract law,

constitutional law, criminal law. The second part, the *Metaphysical Grounds of the Theory of Virtue*, deals with duties towards oneself and towards others. It is about questions like suicide, moral perfection, duties commanded by love, and so on. In both parts you will find legal discussions and moral advice based on a particular idea of man and a conception of rights that Kant held to be universally valid. Maybe the thesis that these metaphysical grounds are linked with or inspired by Kant's pietistic background is not absurd. Nonetheless it would not be suitable to pretend that Kant's philosophy is ethnic thinking, belonging and confined to the Protestant cultural biotope of Northern Germany.

However, that is not our question here. First of all it is important to notice that in the *Metaphysics of Morals* there is no recourse to the categorical imperative in order to found concrete rights and virtues. In no way are rights and moral advice deduced from it. Consequently, the function of the categorical imperative must be a different one.

10. The Function of the Categorical Imperative

Let us look for an approach by reflecting an exemplary question: What are the reasons to help my neighbor? Maybe: sympathy, love and the expectation of help in a similar case, striving for good neighborliness and so on. All these reasons concern less my neighbor than, first of all, *me*. Likewise love and sympathy: they give me pleasure and satisfaction. These are very volatile feelings. If my neighbor is brusque towards me or if I am morose, the alleged reasons weaken. Thus motives cannot create the absolute trustworthiness in human affairs we need for a peaceful and beneficial living together. Only the moral law, imposed on me by my good will, the law to do what is due without regard to feelings, consequences, advantages, disadvantages and so on, is a stable ground for human intercourse. The moral law urges me to help my neighbor because he is a human being. I shall help him even if he is brusque or I am morose. The moral law never looks for motives. From its perspective the other is the aim of all regards, not the means for someone's own objectives. "The practical imperative will be as follows: *so act as to treat humanity whether in thine own person or in that of any other, in every case as an end withal, never as means only*" (Kant 2005: 46).

How can I be sure that my behavior corresponds with the moral law? Kant defines a touchstone. "Act as if the maxim of thy action were to become by thy will a Universal law of Nature" (Kant 2005: 38) The categorical imperative is a formal one. It demands absolute respect of the human being who has to be treated as an end of our deeds, not as a means. By this maxim I can ensure my accordance with this law. Never would I like to be treated as a means; consequently I cannot want such a comportment to become universal law.

However, what is, in concrete terms, due to my neighbor in different situations and fields of life, regarding him as an aim and not as a means? The moral law is not at all a general premise from which we deduce particular moral decisions. As formal law it transcends any metaphysics of morals and cannot be reduced to them.

In order to find out what is right and wrong in concrete terms we need *metaphysics of morals*, i.e. jurisprudence and ethics based on

concrete conditions of human beings and human affairs. If conditions differ, the metaphysics of morals may differ, too. Consequently we agree that there is no universal *metaphysics of morals* for mankind, but at the same time we think that the categorical imperative is the *essential and sufficient* common moral basis of all human intercourse, valid for and protecting the integrity of every being conscious of his existence, reasonable, and therefore able to decide his own way of life.

“*Do act so that you always take mankind both in your own person and in any other person as an aim, never only as a means*”: This commandment is not an aphorism of a particular culture, but the moral “iron ration” necessary for man’s peace, blossoming and fulfillment. Its binding character is self-evident for every reasonable being. The youngsters listed *respect, kindness and help* as basic duties making human intercourse possible. It’s the same postulate.

This postulate constitutes a *categorical* or *transcendental universalism* because it defines the condition of the possibility of human morals without being a particular element of any moral system. Consequently it goes together with a plurality of metaphysics of morals, i.e. with cultural pluralism. What is more, it makes cultural pluralism possible, provided that we understand by pluralism more than the mere existence of a great number of cultures but the co-existence of cultures with mutual contacts and intercourse. In this sense, effective pluralism is founded on categorical universalism.

Today, the separate existence of cultures is no longer possible. (In the history of mankind it seems to have been exceptional). There is no alternative to pluralism based on categorical universalism.

11. Categorical Universalism

It is neither desirable nor possible to eradicate all human differences. Even if the Western life style were to gain the upper hand all over world, it would not at all create a uniform global culture. The human being is not an animal confined to his (geographical or cultural) biotope. He is not a product, but a creator of culture. If he is treated with *respect* and *kindness* (in accordance with the categorical imperative) he will conceive his personal life style by choosing elements of both ancient traditions and new modes of life. Once spread all over the world, Western life style will develop into an endless number of new forms of life.

Cultures are not values as such. Once again, internally they are extremely contradictory, with elements of human fulfillment and human oppression, of truth and lie, of wisdom and craziness. *The value of a culture depends on the degree of promoting human fulfillment and self-determination. The categorical imperative is the touchstone of the legitimacy of cultural elements.* Cultures that do not pass this check don’t earn our respect but our disapproval.

By no means is this criterion an interference in the interior affairs of a people or a culture nor a new way of colonization. The categorical imperative does not impose any metaphysics of morals; it only reprimands the fact, if it happens, that the human being is taken as a means. This fact withdraws moral legitimacy from the culture concerned.

12. Re-ethnicize the Minds?

What are the motives for preserving cultures or cultural identities? There are estimable and suspicious ones:

We have to respect the claim for cultural identity as the demand of the right of loyalty towards one's origins, one's religion, values and aims in life. Kant defended this right – limited, however, by respect for the freedom of one's neighbor.

The concept of cultural identity may also serve as a heuristic scheme in order to seize the common features of a human community sharing the same traditions and historic experiences.

Furthermore, the search for cultural identity may be a program against oblivion, vandalism and subjugation of all sectors of life to economical interests dictated by the globalization of the greed for profits.

On the other hand, the claim to cultural identity may be a result of the fear of change, of the lack of courage to face the future. This happens when a human community is weakened by extreme poverty, or by a long period of prosperity and facilities, or if human creativity and courage are reduced by a long period of alienation and oppression. In this case the claim to cultural identity serves as a pretext in order to prevent inevitable changes, or, in the worst case, to maintain existing structures of domination and exploitation.

Re-ethnicize the minds – is this a way out of social, cultural or political disintegration? In fear of social and political segregation, public authorities and intellectuals try to create a national identity by the invention or reconstruction of a “leading culture”. These attempts are vain. Like plants or animals, cultures develop, mutate and decline by themselves, in organic human intercourse. Violence and social chaos can destroy them, but as they are like living beings, once dissolved, we cannot reconstruct them like houses or palaces. The attempt at cultural reconstruction produces only folklore.

Let's trust human ingenuity. Encouraged by *respect*, *kindness* and *help*, treated as an end and not abused as a means, man will shape his future and “overcome”. Unfortunately, there is a widespread lack of these very modest and most simple moral qualities. Mankind risks perishing because of this lack.

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