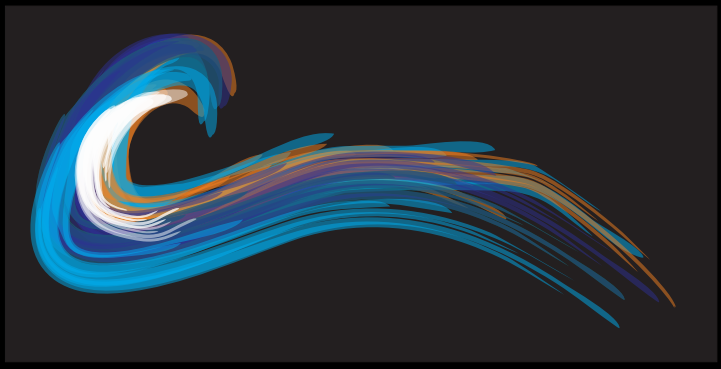
Confluence



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Confluence: Online Journal of World Philosophies

Confluence: Online Journal of World Philosophies is a bi-annual, peer-reviewed, international journal dedicated to comparative thought. It seeks to explore common spaces and differences between philosophical traditions in a global context. Without postulating cultures as monolithic, homogenous, or segregated wholes, it aspires to address key philosophical issues which bear on specific methodological, epistemological, hermeneutic, ethical, social, and political questions in comparative thought. *Confluence* aims to develop the contours of a philosophical understanding not subservient to dominant paradigms and provide a platform for diverse philosophical voices, including those long silenced by dominant academic discourses and institutions. *Confluence* also endeavors to serve as a juncture where specific philosophical issues of global interest may be explored in an imaginative, thought-provoking, and pioneering way.

We welcome innovative and persuasive ways of conceptualizing, articulating, and representing intercultural encounters. Contributions should be able to facilitate the development of new perspectives on current global thought-processes and sketch the outlines of salient future developments.

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Introducing *Confluence:* A Thematic Essay[1]

Abstract
In the following thematic introduction, we seek to situate *Confluence* within the field of comparative philosophy and substantiate why we deem a new publication necessary. For this purpose, we reconstruct the salient stages in the development of comparative philosophy in Section I, and then proceed to expound the rationale underlying *Confluence* in Section II. Our reconstruction of these stages pursues an exploratory rather than a documentary approach.

Keywords
comparative philosophy, comparison, cross-cultural philosophy, cross-cultural dialogue, cross-cultural understanding, interculturality, intercultural dialogue, intercultural philosophy, intercultural understanding, global values, philosophy in a global context.

> »Behold, O fair one of flawless limbs, how the Ganges with its stream cleft by the Yamuna gleams here like a necklet of pearls interwoven with sapphires that cover it with their splendour, there like a garland of white lilies, set in the intervals with blue lotuses; here like a row of birds that love the Mānasa lake, interspersed with dark-winged swans; now like sandal-paintings on the earth with ornamental leaves in dark aloes; now like moonlight chequered with darkness underneath the shades; now like a patch of white autumn clouds, where through the interstices the (blue of the) sky peeps out in places like Śiva's body smeared with the ung[u]ent of ashes, and girt with black-snakes for ornaments.«
> –Raghuvamsa, xiii, 54–57 (Devadhar 1997: 253)

[1] Claudia Bickmann, Ram Adhar Mall, Thomas Steinbach, and Georg Stenger have supported and guided us in conceptualizing, developing and realizing this project. We are grateful to Lukas Trabert for providing us with the space to establish this journal and acknowledge his role as a spirited partner in this cross-cultural exploration.

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Confluence seeks to chart and explore common spaces and differences between philosophical traditions in a global context. Without postulating cultures as monolithic, homogenous, or segregated wholes, the journal aspires to address key philosophical issues which bear on specific methodological, epistemic, hermeneutic, ethical, social, and political questions in comparative thought. Given that the dichotomy once commonly postulated between East and West does not prove feasible in today's world, *Confluence* attempts to develop the contours of a philosophical understanding which – especially in the study of non-Anglo European philosophical traditions – is not subservient to dominant paradigms. To this end, it will focus especially on significant methodological, social, and political aspects of comparative thought and it will also include those philosophical voices that have been historically silenced by dominant academic discourses and institutions. The challenges posed by current world events motivate us to focus even more urgently on the philosophies that govern the intermingling of ideas, beliefs, and practices.

Comparative philosophy is a vibrant field today, with a steady stream of new books, anthologies, journals, and blogs. In the following, we would like to situate *Confluence* within this field and substantiate why we deem a new publication necessary. For this purpose, we first reconstruct the salient stages in the development of comparative philosophy (I), and then proceed to expound the rationale underlying *Confluence* (II). Our reconstruction of these stages pursues an exploratory rather than a documentary approach, given that comparative philosophy is still in the »awkward throes of its preadolescent years« (Smid 2009: 137). Attempts at reconstructing the main ideas in the development of comparative philosophy are still few in number. In the following, we attempt to fill this lacuna. Our survey of the intellectual discourse will enable us to set the course for *Confluence's* journey in the years to come.

I Wither Comparative Philosophy? Salient Methodological Developments

Comparative philosophy constitutes that field in which philosophical positions separated in space and time are compared by relating ideas,

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texts, etc. with one another.[2] For a comparison to be viable, it needs to be, one would say, undergirded by a standard of comparison such that the latter can explain why certain ideas, views, etc. were selected from the whole panoply of philosophical positions. Furthermore, one should hold that the standard itself results from a perspicuous, coherent, and cogent methodology. A felicitous comparison of philosophies, in other words, depends on a viable philosophy of comparison.

How does comparative philosophy fare in this respect? A cogent answer cannot merely delimit itself to analyzing specific techniques and procedures which are said to facilitate comparison. It would have to go beyond such methodic proposals and explore the methodological dimensions of inquiry. In other words, such an answer must also throw light on the general standards, precepts, and principles which come to bear on these techniques and procedures.

Adopting this focus in the following, let us use the launching of the journal *Philosophy East and West* in 1951 as our point of entry.[3] As is well-known, this journal was the first systematic effort in establishing a forum for comparative philosophy in which members of non-Anglo European traditions could participate on an equal footing. Comparisons, of course, pre-date similar academic ventures as, for example, the history of Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Hinduism demonstrate. For our purposes, however, it suffices to concentrate on more recent developments.

Three stages can be delineated since the inception of *Philosophy East and West*. Although they are continuous, each stage is marked by a specific focus. In the *first* stage, sincere attempts were made to make the »East« understandable to the »West.« In general, the standards, precepts, and principles nascent in this phase take on a crucial role in the *second* stage where one strives to work out a common space for comparisons. The bounds of this space are clearly framed by moral commitments which underline the equal positionality of the participants involved; in some contexts a heightened hermeneutical aware-

[2] Our journal underscores an »intercultural orientation« in comparative philosophizing. Since we aim for a global outreach, we choose to use »comparative philosophy,« »intercultural philosophy,« and »cross-cultural philosophy« synonymously. Similar approaches to doing philosophy, which are to be found under these different labels, are the focus of our interest.

[3] For developments in America prior to the second East-West conference held in 1949, see Smid (2009: 27–32).

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ness leads thinkers to mark out an area in which cross-cultural philosophizing can meaningfully take place. These considerations are complemented in the *third* stage by authors beginning to work out the socio-political ramifications of the insights developed in the preceding stages.

First Stage: Philosophical Impartiality as a Boat across the East-West Divide

The inaugural issue of *Philosophy East and West* showcased many of the concerns crucial to the *first* stage. In different ways, its articles reverberated with the insight that a method of comparison is crucial to this fledging field. Given the complexity of the problem, there was the hope to deliver a multifaceted and integrative method which could shed light on how comparisons should be carried out. As J. Kwee Swan Liat (1951: 12) wrote: A »methodic evaluation – and in a certain sense a re-evaluation – of the complete philosophical heritage of both East and West is the way of comparative philosophy.« In this first issue, the motivation shared across the board was underscored. Accordingly, one sought to understand philosophical traditions of the »East,« initiate a dialogue, and bring their insights to bear upon one's own tradition. As the mission statements of this journal optimistically suggested, comparative thought could help develop a »world perspective in philosophy, if not a world philosophy« (Radhakrishnan 1951: 4). By its means, »enlightenment and betterment of the human estate« were envisaged (Dewey 1951: 3).

It is noteworthy that, on the one hand, the homogenizing tendency involved in an East-West comparison was itself problematized. John Dewey (*ibid.*: 3), for example, explicitly warned about »cultural block universes« and hoped that the notions of »East« and »West« themselves could be broken down. On the other hand, however, distinctive, bounded traditions were placed precisely on this philosophical East-West axis, as Dewey's dividing line testifies. Meanwhile, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1951: 4) characterized the »East« as emphasizing the »unrest of the soul;« »metaphysical curiosity,« instead, typified the »Western mind.« For George Santayana (1951: 5), the »*variety* and *incomparability* of systems, as of kinds of beauty« made them interesting from a literary or humanistic perspective. These philosophers set

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their sights on developing a method with which one could understand the »East« from the viewpoint of the »West.«

From today's perspective, two separate limits of this purported East-West divide prove striking: 1) the attempt to capture the »essence« of a philosophical tradition rooted in a particular culture tended to result in simplified, homogenized and reified constructions of these traditions (By the third East-West conference, the distinction between the East and the West was replaced by a tripartite distinction between India, China, and the West). The idea of plurality within a given philosophical tradition, of it having depth, and of the tradition's evolving nature came up short.[4] 2) In addition, making the »East« comprehensible to the »West« seems to implicitly presume an asymmetrical relation between the two. Why does the »East« need to make itself comprehensible to the »West« at all? Why not vice versa too? Who is holding court here? Who is sitting in judgment? Who holds the keys to philosophical legitimacy?

In summing up the results of the second East-West conference held at the University of Hawaii in 1949, Charles A. Moore (1951: 68) carefully pointed out the differences »*in tendency*« between »Eastern« and »Western« philosophers. The »Eastern philosopher,« for example, tended to consider intuition as a valid method of knowing; tended to accept reported experiences of ancestors, seers, etc. as trustworthy; attempted to realize an identity with reality; did not accept analysis as an end in itself; did not regard »higher« knowledge as amenable to communication and verbal expression; and concentrated upon the spiritual aspect of the self as the most important entity to be known. This philosopher, thus, accepted the possibility that what he regarded non-intellectual disciplines (intuition, experiencing, and realizing an identity with reality) might also lead to philosophical insight and knowledge.

In this narrative, the »Western« philosopher approached philosophical inquiry from the opposite direction, highlighting the role of rational inquiry and verbal communication, subjecting all cognitive

[4] In recent studies, Radhakrishnan has been pinpointed as a key player in the »more mystical than thou« (Sen and Nussbaum 1989: 302) representation of Indian philosophy. But as Jonardon Ganeri drawing on Bimal Matilal points out, Radhakrishnan's downplaying of the rationalist stream in Indian traditions may be attributed to his search for an autonomous Indian national identity (Ganeri 2012: 211). Philosophers like Bimal Matilal, Daya Krishna and Jitendranath Mohanty have in their own ways contested Radhakrishnan's representation of Indian philosophical traditions.

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claims to a rational and/or empirical test, and being wary of all claims resting on antiquity. Moore took pains to note that these differences can »be regarded as complementary rather than contradictory in character« (*ibid*.: 67). Given that no unanimity in charting the field of philosophy itself could be discerned by the conference participants, it can be surmised that, except for individual efforts, a broader discussion of the techniques to be used in comparison did not take place. Similarly, participants seem to have shied away from the systematic development of a methodology of comparison.

Nevertheless, certain principles were indeed invoked. These can be discerned by examining the qualities attributed to the comparative philosopher. As a science, contemporary philosophy in the »Western« tradition was thought to constitute a »hypertrophy of the intellect« (Kwee Swan Liat 1951: 10), completely divorced from daily life. Philosophers, but not comparative philosophers, steeped in this tradition were said, not surprisingly, to possess a narrow academic focus; their thinking hardly ever bearing on everyday life matters. Regardless of allegiance to the »Eastern intuitionalist« or »Western rationalist« tradition, a true comparative philosopher, in contrast, would integrate the various scattered and confused realms of life into an ever-rich totality of being. Like other members of her trade, this philosopher was influenced by »social conditions« and »cultural patterns« (*ibid*.: 15). However, she would recognize the factors »which produce and transform reason, as well as those, also, which subvert it« (Masson-Oursel 1951: 7). She thus would have the ability to engage in unbiased cross-cultural explorations.

Philosophizing in the cross-cultural mode made one, as it were, aware that non-Anglo European traditions were fundamentally different from their Anglo-European counterparts. To understand them, one had, in this view, to reconstruct the essential features of the »Indian,« »Chinese,« »Japanese,« etc. mind. Moore (1968: 2) approvingly quotes the Chinese scholar Hu Shih: »every people has a unique character in terms of which that people must be understood – and […] this essential character or mind of a given people consists essentially of its deepest philosophical convictions.« Furthermore, cross-cultural comparisons were said to force one to relativize the claims made by one's own tradition, thus opening up the possibility that other traditions could possess answers to questions which one's own tradition failed to raise, apprehend, or deliver. »In the more impartial and inclusive perspective thus

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secured,« wrote E. A. Burtt (1948: 592), the philosopher »discovers that the ways of thinking characteristic of [her] culture are not at all absolute but have become what they are under the play of accidental forces which can be located and whose historical influence can be traced.« Ideas, Burtt concluded, express »culturally limited slant[s] on the universe,« which have to be transcended if a »significant meeting of East and West« is to be feasible (*ibid.:* 603). More importantly, a comparative philosopher should be able to surmount this task by correcting misconceptions and also by meaningfully laying out both the conceptual as well as the cultural boundaries of an issue.

In general, a strong philosophical ethos was said to motivate the comparative philosopher. This ethos was neither the cultural product of any specific tradition nor was it negatively influenced by cross-cultural philosophizing. The cross-cultural context, in fact, provided her with an opportunity to hone it. As Burtt *(ibid.)* noted, it is »imperative that we move towards the realization of a better logical and factual conscience – one which through critical awareness of the limitations of our present criteria of relevant facts, puts itself in a position to replace it by a more inclusive and discriminating standard.« This ethos, however difficult it was to achieve, allowed a philosopher to overcome her personal bias and regard all philosophies neutrally and impartially.[5] Needless to say, given the socio-political asymmetry of the times this ethos placed higher demands on the »Western philosopher« than on her »Eastern« counterpart.

Impartiality, however, was but one feature of this philosophical ethos. »[E]mpirical honesty,« generosity, and »impartial sharing« also belonged to it as much as a love of wisdom (*ibid.*: 604). In these portrayals, the cross-cultural philosopher is depicted as a true lover of wisdom. She is open to the possibility that wisdom can, indeed, assume different cultural garbs. Her love of wisdom, it seems, has the power to prevail over parochial loyalties and relationships. The frequent recourse to philosophical impartiality and the philosophical ethos does indicate that the relevance of standards, precepts, and principles were not categorically denied by the attendees of the second East-West conference. But why, then, were they not justified? One possible explanation could be that a general consensus on such standards was simply presumed by these participants. Cross-cultural inquiry, it seems, was

[5] *Cf.* Masson-Oursel (1951: 8); K. N. Devaraja (1967: 59).

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carried out within the space afforded by a common and uncontested methodological framework; a comprehensive debate on the latter, thus, became superfluous.

Second Stage: Hermeneutical Awareness as a Chisel

In the *second* stage, cross-cultural philosophers began (and continue) to worry about »philosophical neocolonialism« (Wiredu 1998: 153). They strove to develop a new hermeneutic for the postcolonial context, which could enable a more nuanced understanding of traditions. In a genuine philosophical comparison, participants take turns »in this game of observing the other« (Krishna 1986: 65). But ever since colonialism, this game takes place under skewed conditions, unfortunately. For one, the privileges granted to the Anglo-European tradition still continue to dominate the field. For another, »due to political and economic factors, […] the intellectuals of the observed cultures have themselves internalised the Western categories and standards of intelligibility so that they observe, understand and compare their own cultures in terms given to them by the West« (*ibid.*: 64). A fundamental change-of-gear, it is thought, can be achieved by overturning the standards of comparison set by the privileged Anglo-European tradition. Importantly, this pernicious asymmetry can be corrected by using the resources internal to comparative philosophy itself. This philosophical field can take on the role of a »mutual liberator« (*ibid.*: 83), liberating each philosophical tradition from the errors of the past only if certain methodological concerns are sufficiently attended to and certain methodic steps followed. Both these aspects are underscored by proponents of »intercultural philosophy.« Using this term to highlight the salience of methodic and methodological issues in cross-cultural inquiry, intercultural philosophers (many of whom are located in German-speaking countries) seek to initiate a new orientation in comparative philosophy.

An Intercultural Orientation as a Precondition for Comparison

»Intercultural thinking implies some sort of a moral commitment« (Mall 1998: 16). This statement may function as a sign-post for the German-speaking debate, in which standards, precepts, and principles

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play a central role. With the help of these requirements of moral conduct, intercultural philosophers aim to establish equal dialogic conditions so that a fair comparison can take place. With his polylogue-model, for example, Franz-Martin Wimmer focuses on the sheer plurality of conceptual frameworks and theoretical perspectives available to, and in, comparative philosophizing. Wimmer prefers the term »polylogue« to »dialogue« given the latter's tendency to negatively prejudge non-Anglo European philosophical traditions.[6] Further, it unnecessarily restricts its own scope by presuming that a maximum of two participants, with their respective frameworks, are involved.

Indeed, in practice a meaningful conversation can only take place between two persons at a given point in time. It would be more accurate to perceive Wimmer's polylogue as a general principle guiding cross-cultural comparisons (*cf.* Wimmer 2009: 136). It is an open-ended, historically informed, philosophical attitude (and in this sense a methodology) rather than a technique, or method, to be adopted. Depending on their concrete circumstances and needs, participants are expected to work out their own methodic approach. In Wimmer's view, robust theories recur in different cultural contexts. Seen in this light, philosophical positions should be adopted only after polylogues on pertinent topics have been conducted. In philosophical practice, the following rule-of-thumb substantiates the general principle: »Wherever possible, look for transcultural overlapping of philosophical concepts and theories, since it is probable that well-founded theories have developed in more than one cultural tradition« (Wimmer 2007a: 8).[7]

Wimmer is optimistic that polylogues will not merely abet mutual understanding. Given that polylogues establish conditions under which well-grounded theories can be developed in a global setting, a philosopher can by engaging in them, in addition, possibly come closer to a goal crucial to her profession: the universality of her theories (Wimmer 2007b: 334). Polylogues are said to lead to a mutual enlightenment of the participants involved since the former entail a detailed examination of a philosophical problem from a host of different cultural viewpoints (*ibid.*: 330). It is precisely this aspect that leads to a further advantage: polylogues are a viable means to develop a truly global history of philosophy (Wimmer 2009: 137). Polylogues, thus, are said to enable

[6] *Cf.* Kimmerle (2002: 83–84).
[7] *Cf.* Wiredu (1980: 31).

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a comprehensive and fundamental change in comparative philosophizing. These goals are shared by other intercultural philosophers too (see below).

Ram Adhar Mall stresses the role of an »intercultural philosophical orientation« which will lead us »to consider the philosophies of other cultures with a view to their contributions to the general concept of philosophy« (Mall 1998: 15). Taking philosophy as a »common, rational human enterprise,« Mall attempts to »decenter« an understanding of philosophy that does not sufficiently attend to its own historical contingency. »Since no philosophical reflection can fully overtake the reflected-upon, there is always an open possibility of multiple expressions« (Mall 1999: 2). He locates his own intercultural orientation in the »cross-cultural overlappings« found across the cultural spectrum (Mall 1998: 16) and hopes that the »rationale of interculturality« can effectively serve as a »normative bond« in intra- and intercultural discourses (*ibid.*: 18).

Mall's four-fold »analogous intercultural hermeneutic« delves into the different dialectical perspectives which are at work in cross-cultural comparison: a) Europe's self-understanding, b) its understanding of other traditions, c) the self-understandings of other traditions, and d) the way they understand Europe. This four-fold perspective is said to aid in developing a more nuanced understanding of the global situation and also of the participants involved, since it does more justice to the *de facto* hermeneutic situation. Namely, in the postcolonial world participants from non-Anglo European traditions equally attempt to understand Anglo-European traditions from their own standpoint. Interpretations, thus, criss-cross, match, and fall apart; in the process, the Anglo-European tradition itself is dislodged from the lofty peak it claims for itself.

Mall's hermeneutic technique is embedded in a more general methodological precept according to which a moral attitude is the precondition of cross-cultural philosophizing. This rule of moral behavior allows a comparative philosopher to be open to the possibility that varied traditions have developed their own philosophical positions. This attitude is to be considered moral insofar as it aims for conditions under which a fairer comparison can take place than in the past. In the global context, a plurality of genuine philosophical traditions is to be found. A comparative philosopher should focus on this unity of philosophical patterns. Mall's views on the need for a moral commitment seem to be

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supplemented by the epistemological claim that philosophical truth cannot be possessed by a single cultural tradition alone. Different traditions pursue the search for philosophical truths in their own cultural contexts. Mall's »intercultural orientation« sets its sights on changing the moral attitude of a comparative philosopher before she begins comparing.[8] This moral attitude will enable her to relativize the universality of claims propounded by her own philosophical tradition.

Elmar Holenstein zeroes in on another aspect close to this intercultural orientation: the multi-faceted nature of culture. As »non-classical and non-romantic wholes,« cultures, he opines, are highly complex and multi-layered entities (Holenstein 1995: 73). They are not homogenous, harmonic, seamless entities whose center is defined by coherent and non-conflicting values. Moreover, due to their function, the conditions under which they are found, and the interests of their members, they cannot be said to possess rigid boundaries (Holenstein 1998: 267). Like their members, cultures result from a *bricolage*, from a tinkering with tools, whose use is necessitated by human needs in a particular situation. Holenstein's analysis is based on certain »species-specific« commonalities which arise due to biological and environmental factors.[9] He holds that certain cultural universals can be empirically ascertained in the way in which the world itself is experienced and cognized. Despite specific features, common areas, which can be meaningfully compared, can be located across the cultural divide. »It is then possible that, because [cultures] have the same form, corresponding fields of objects in different cultures will be subject to the same laws – despite the difference in the overall cultural framework« (Holenstein 1995: 73).

Holenstein thus works out a structural understanding of the concept of culture, which allows him to connect to conclusions drawn by other intercultural philosophers. Like them, he holds that there is no reason to be bogged down by one's own culture. Culture and language are, like nature and brain, the outcome of co-evolution in the early stages of human history (*ibid.*: 75). These structural similarities can serve as »bridgeheads« in understanding members of a foreign or unfamiliar culture (*cf.* Holenstein 1998: 272). Insights from the latter could complement, and perhaps even modify, our own understanding

[8] *Cf.* Mall (1992: 28).
[9] *Cf.* Outlaw (1997: 278); Rosemont (1988: 52).

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of human problems. To some extent, another cultural tradition can showcase a different, contingent way of developing cultural behavioral patterns, which did not (till date) develop in one's own culture.

Heinz Kimmerle focuses mainly on emancipating philosophy from the conceptual strait-jacket imposed upon it by academic philosophy. Representations of philosophy in Africa are a particular area of his concern. According to his reading, the philosophical plurality found on the African continent mutates into a unidimensional, monolithic entity in the hands of highly professionalized philosophers, who have no use for variant understandings of philosophy, in this case »folk« or »sage wisdom« (Kimmerle 1991). Philosophy articulates itself in the medium of thought: thought that cannot be transverbal and transcultural but can only be captured and expressed in a language specific to a specific time. Consequently, he pleads for a wider, more inclusive understanding of philosophy that can integrate those traditions, which tend not to rigidly codify thought but to emphasize contextual interpretations. Like other proponents of intercultural philosophy, Kimmerle (1992: 70) is convinced that philosophy is both universal and particular. It is universal because »it results from a more or less pure thinking, and from the actual growth of relatively universal conditions of human life in all cultures.« Philosophy is also particular because »it is relative to the culture where it belongs to.« In this case, it does not make sense either to rank philosophies (for instance, by using their level of codification as a criterion) or to bring them into a hierarchical order (Kimmerle 2002: 80).[10]

In general, proponents of intercultural philosophy develop a methodological framework in order to reform a trite self-understanding of the »Western« philosophical tradition and to emancipate other traditions from its power. These philosophers unambiguously endeavor to stall philosophy's role as a »court rationalist for false universalisms« (Outlaw 1987: 48). Many intercultural philosophers seek to break off from all hackneyed, uncritical ways of doing philosophy. Absolutist and foundationalist accounts of first principles and postulates, with which mainstream philosophy tries to demarcate an area of »True Phi-

[10] *Cf.* Wiredu (1980: 33, 43). As Outlaw (1996: 58–59) remarks, a »selective amnesia« seems to be at work in those standard interpretations of Anglo-European philosophy which bypass the fact that Socrates did not pen his own philosophy and Plato was suspicious of all writing.

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losophy,« are univocally rejected. The term »intercultural philosophy« is used to emphasize the philosophical underpinnings of inquiry in general. In this view, philosophy is a human phenomenon, which cannot, without further argument, be plausibly restricted to specific cultural traditions.

»Intercultural« qualifies philosophical activity by attending to the cultural embeddedness of every such activity. The traditional mode, in which comparative philosophy was carried out during the colonial era, is flatly rejected.[11] As a unidirectional enterprise which solely constructs positions from the supposedly »objective« viewpoint of the »Western« tradition, the traditional mode transposes its own conceptual framework on the »other« without taking into account the cultural presuppositions of its own framework.[12] Its accounts are, unsurprisingly, lopsided and deeply problematic. In this sense, »intercultural,« firstly, signals a break from the kind of comparison commonly carried out in the (colonial) past. For the above reasons, the traditional mode of cross-cultural philosophizing predominant in the colonial era culminates in the capricious postulation of fundamental (perhaps even incommensurable) differences between one's own tradition and the one being viewed. Such comparisons, like their precursors, are probably driven by the urge to confirm the singularity – with the superiority closely following – of one's own tradition. To counteract such tendentious work, intercultural philosophers assert that comparativists explicitly spell out their intentions. Faulty comparisons, it is believed, can thus be nipped in the bud. With regard to present and future comparative philosophizing, the adjective »intercultural,« secondly, stands for several things simultaneously. It denotes the moral (and epistemological) attitude to be adopted in comparison, which truly seeks mutual understanding without ulterior motives. In addition, it indicates the common space which arises when this attitude is adopted by several

[11] The main targets of this critique are those historians, ethnologists, and philologists, whose cross-cultural comparisons augmented colonial practice by, for instance, underscoring the superiority of the colonizer's traditions. *Cf.* Mall (1992: 25, 2012: 39); Kimmerle (2002: 72–77); Wimmer (2009: 142). For Hountondji's critique of »ethnophilosophy,« see (Hountondji 2004: 530–535). As Ganeri (2009: 253) rightly points out, the »rhetoric of colonialism« is still »kept in circulation by the politics of a ›clash of civilizations.‹«

[12] Mall (1999: 7); Wimmer (2009: 142). *Cf.* Rosemont and Ames (2010: 40).

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philosophers cooperating together.[13] Moreover, philosophical studies which result from such individual and collective efforts are also thought of as being intercultural.

The unfaltering and persistent use of the term »intercultural philosophy« for more than a generation does seem to be characteristic of thinkers deeply influenced by the hermeneutical debate in German-speaking countries.[14] And yet, the emphasis placed on moral standards, precepts, and principles is not unique. Philosophers outside of these countries, who we as the editors of this journal deem relevant to our project, would indeed, in general, not contest, and in fact actively endorse, this »intercultural orientation« and the moral commitment involved in comparative work. They would share the main intention driving intercultural philosophy, namely that conditions of a fair comparison must be established in a global context so that meaningful comparisons can be conducted. They would also agree that comparative philosophy does not create »a new theory but a different sort of philosopher. [She] does not so much inhabit both of the standpoints represented by the traditions from which [s]he draws as [s]he comes to inhabit an emerging standpoint different from them all and which is thereby creatively a new way of seeing the human condition« (Littlejohn 2005: n.p.).

Clearly, for philosophers in this second stage, philosophy is a cross-cultural phenomenon which is simultaneously »situated and unsituated;«[15] »praxes of reflection« are universally found among all peoples (Outlaw 1997: 278). These philosophers repeatedly dwell on how philosophical abilities like intellectual curiosity, reflection on ontological, metaphysical, and ethical problems, etc. can be found in diverse contexts. Appeals to philosophical impartiality continue. Wimmer's rule that philosophical doctrines should be tested cross-culturally is a

[13] As Kimmerle (2002: 80) says, these philosophers meet around the open-ended center of an »in-between,« which binds them and also allows them to be free in holding their respective standpoints. »Sie versammeln sich gewissermaßen um die offene Mitte eines ›Zwischen,‹ das sie verbindet und in ihren Standpunkten auch frei lässt.« *Cf.* Mall (1992: 55–62, 2012: 37).

[14] In their conferences and publications, the *Society of Intercultural Philosophy* in Germany and the *Vienna Society of Intercultural Philosophy*, for instance, use the term »intercultural philosophy« (»interkulturelle Philosophie« or »Philosophie der Interkulturalität«) and distance themselves from »comparative philosophy« (»komparative Philosophie«).

[15] Mall has coined the term *»orthaft, ortlos«* in this context (see, e. g., Mall 2012: 29).

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case in point (see above). An intercultural philosopher's philosophical impartiality, he seems to hold, would lead her to be convinced by the better argument. As stated above, an argument is, amongst other reasons, better than its rival because it is grounded in more than one cultural tradition. Equally, Kwasi Wiredu's (1998: 162) principle of »independent considerations« also appeals to philosophical impartiality. Accordingly, intellectual choice of a philosophical position is not to be determined by »home-grown linguistic, or, more generally, cultural peculiarities« but rather by testing whether the considerations arising from a proposition located in one's indigenous conceptual framework are intelligible in the framework of another. Wiredu implements intelligibility as a criterion to dislodge favorable interpretations of one's own philosophical tradition.

Nevertheless, appeals to impartiality occur less frequently than in the former stage. More attention is now paid to the normative import of the dialogic situation itself. A cross-cultural dialogue is said to presuppose a certain normatively informed, intellectual attitude on part of the participants, who cannot perceive themselves as being superior, both cognitively and morally. They must be open to their own fallibility and be able to show »charity« and »epistemic respect« towards the other participants (*ibid*.: 160–161). These participants are posited as being culturally sedimented, historically situated subjects, who carry out comparisons in a »reflexive-meditative« attitude (Mall 1999: 5).

Henry Rosemont's »concept-cluster« is a good example of the modesty expected of a comparative philosopher in doing intercultural philosophy (Rosemont 1988: 60–66). Rosemont believes that a philosophical world-view is backed up by a whole cluster of characteristic concepts. The word »moral« in the Western philosophical tradition, for example, is closely associated with other similar concepts like »objective,« »freedom,« »dilemma,« »choice,« »private,« »rational,« »autonomy,« etc. (Rosemont 2008: 360).[16] Although at first glance only a single concept from this cluster is being compared, a whole battery of concepts hovers in the background and deeply impinges upon the process. The standard rendition, Rosemont warns, is satisfied with a facile comparison of singular concepts. It fails to attend to the complex ways in which a concept-cluster influences interpretation. As a result, external views of a culture are generated which are »epistemologically hal-

[16] *Cf*. Rosemont (2004: 54).

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lucinogenic, causing one to see things in other cultures that are not really there or to see them in grossly distorted ways« (Smid 2009: 86).

Typically, for example, academic philosophers socialized in the Anglo-American tradition would, as a result of the superficial approach alluded to above, conclude that Confucian thought does not possess the concept »moral.« This conclusion is problematic on two counts: Firstly, its content cannot withstand further critical scrutiny. Secondly, the procedure is itself deeply dubious: A text from the Confucian tradition is subjected to questions and answers, both of which stem from one's own particular context. In this case, the Confucian text merely serves as a foil on which one's own concerns are projected; interpretation deeply affects translation right from the beginning. The possibility that a careful reading of the text could indicate a wholly different line of inquiry is simply deemed irrelevant.[17] Rosemont concludes that the standard practice of comparison is unconvincing and untenable: »When an alternative philosophical tradition is made familiar, and, at the same time, is adjudicated on the basis of Western standards of evidence that are foreign to it, it can only be an inferior variation on a Western theme« (Lin, Rosemont, and Ames 1995: 751). Like the aforementioned intercultural philosophers, Rosemont vehemently rejects such »mischievous« academic navel-gazing. Admittedly, the effects of cultural bias on the act of translation cannot be denied. He seems to set his sights on a more modest claim: By attending to such crucial issues, comparativists can begin to pre-empt, at least to a certain extent, the negative effects of interpretation.

For Rosemont, a »conceptual framework that embodies the insights from a multiplicity of cultures« is the need of the hour (Rosemont 1988: 66). To this end, comparative philosophers should search for a common ground on which different concept-clusters can meet. They should begin to develop alternative global concept-clusters with which a common conceptual framework can be drawn up (see below). This framework would function in two different ways. It would, on one hand, serve as a viable foundation for cross-cultural dialogue. On the

[17] »[T]he methodological question needs to be reformulated, both to reduce the investigator's temptation to read into the texts those issues by which he or she is already seized, and also, thereby, perhaps to generate some answers to the methodological questions that are not altogether dependent for their plausibility on the investigator's cultural determinants. Reformulated, then: to what extent do these texts suggest that we should be asking very different philosophical questions?« (Rosemont 1988: 66)

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other hand, working from this baseline, one would be able to sift through extant concept-clusters of one's own tradition and screen out those that are ill-suited for such a dialogue. The latter are inappropriate because they operate with problematic assumptions: these assumptions either cannot be meaningfully modified for the cross-cultural context or they are so well entrenched that a genuine cross-cultural dialogue threatens to be a non-starter. In both cases, such clusters must be abandoned.[18] In an attempt at leveling the playing field in the global philosophical context, this view calls upon comparative philosophers to surrender only those clusters which could prove to be problematic, without stating that all of the most cherished philosophical concept-clusters must be abandoned.

Rosemont anticipates that his concept-cluster approach will enable a comparative philosopher to sufficiently attend to the uniqueness of the philosophical position under consideration, without making it totally different from or without deeming it to be a more »simple-minded« version of one's own (Rosemont, and Ames 2010: 29). Clearly, this approach resembles aspects of intercultural philosophy sketched above. Rosemont seems to work with an »intercultural orientation« which allows comparative philosophers to search for, and further develop, those conceptual clusters that re-occur in cross-cultural contexts. His insight that cross-cultural analysis not only demonstrates the need to broaden the standard categories of Anglo-European philosophy but also enables one to rediscover the plurality of traditions found in one's own context is also reiterated by some of the intercultural philosophers mentioned above.

In conclusion, therefore, methodological concerns nascent in the first phase are brought from the shadows and placed front and center in the second phase. An attitude of openness, modesty, and impartiality that enables all participants to be treated as equals is stressed. This attitude is, however, more than a mere strategy for rectifying past errors. It seeks to initiate a deeper change in comparative thought. In the change envisaged, a philosopher from the Anglo-European tradition

[18] Rosemont (2008: 358) abandons the »›half-empty‹ nature of Western liberal moral and political philosophy,« and endeavors to develop the notion of a role-bearing person. The latter concept-cluster, he observes, is more common globally. A further advantage of this move is that it is not open to the charge of cultural imperialism because this concept-cluster is not so deeply embedded in the Anglo-European tradition (*ibid*.: 354). See below.

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would be spurred by her genuine interest in engaging in an intellectually creative, and perhaps even humbling, exploration. This motivation could possibly be backed up by her intention that theoretical and practical alternatives to philosophical problems, which confront her in her own tradition, need to be found. In a cross-cultural dialogue, her humility, her empathetic respect, etc. reflect this motivation. Ideally, her attitude affects other participants of the dialogue too.

Philosophers located in non-Anglo European traditions, as a result, do not perceive themselves as being put on the defensive, since the double-pronged approach of »neglect by appropriation and swift rejection when found to be incompatible with the agenda-in-hand« (which for long stretches of time characterized comparisons) is conspicuously absent (Bilimoria 2008: 375). As a consequence, non-Anglo European philosophers do not feel compelled to view things in terms of the dominant paradigms of the Anglo-European tradition as though this were the sole philosophical lens available. In the past, as is well-known, this lens either only managed to capture »aberrant« non-Anglo European »derivations« of the Anglo-European original or, because of its focus, failed to capture anything of philosophical relevance at all. Due to a change in attitude of philosophers from the dominant tradition, however, their counterparts from non-Anglo European traditions can now begin to explore their own traditions as genuine philosophical treasures.[19] In the process, they can therefore slowly begin to emancipate themselves from the ubiquitous power of the Anglo-European tradition. Thus, the second stage works towards a new mode of comparative philosophizing in which »intellectual posturing« is misplaced.[20] It ushers in comparative philosophizing which is guided by an »ethical-epistemological formal principle« which can guarantee that equal participation conditions prevail for all members of a dialogue (Dussel 2009: 510).

[19] For Wiredu, African philosophers need to undertake a »cultural reconstruction« too, such that it can support a »spirit of forward-looking self-criticism.« They must overcome »a certain undiscriminating racial self-deprecation« induced by colonialism, which went hand-in-hand with »an uncritical over-valuation of things and ideas originating with our erstwhile colonisers« (Wiredu 1980: 59).

[20] For Bimal Matilal's similar notion of comparative philosophy, *cf*. Ganeri (2012: 201–212).

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Techniques Applicable in Comparison

The question which then gains salience is: How can alternative conceptual structures and ways of grasping different facets of human existence be laid bare in this situation, given the internalization of dominant paradigms? Different techniques are suggested, all of which, in different ways, aim for emancipation from dominant paradigms.[21] In a certain sense, the *first* technique focuses on the content of a philosophical theory. According to this method, a comparative (non-Anglo European) philosopher should widen her philosophical perspective and not blindly toe the line set by the dominant Anglo-European tradition. She should not use the latter as her sole guide in identifying pertinent philosophical problems. Rather, she should seek to establish a »living continuity« with the philosophical past to make it »relevant to the intellectual concerns of the present« (Krishna quoted in Raveh 2008: 432). For example: The theory-practice divide is commonly taken to be a crucial aspect of the Anglo-European philosophical tradition. Without replicating the belief that true philosophizing must reflect this divide, a comparative philosopher should search for, and resurrect, those buried resources which make more sense of the »wholeness of lived experience« (Rosemont, and Ames 2010: 36). This technique proposes that, especially in non-European contexts, philosophical theories need to be developed which do not merely ape dominant understandings of mainstream philosophy, but which are instead more congruent with local philosophical resources.[22]

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[21] As Alcoff provocatively remarks: »Could it be that conquerors are in an epistemically poor cultural, intellectual, and political context for judgment, and are more likely to develop what [Charles] Mills calls ›epistemologies of ignorance‹ that include substantive cognitive practices that obscure social realities? If so, this would indicate that in developing an account of best practices, we need to consider more than individual epistemic agency and include a much broader array of structural background conditions that directly enhance or inhibit the pursuit and identification of truth« (Alcoff 2007a: 82). *Cf.* Outlaw (1987: 47).

[22] Certain parallels between Krishna's thoughts and Mignolo's »border thinking« are hard to oversee. Mignolo writes: »We delink from the humanitas, we become epistemically disobedient, and think and do decolonially, dwelling and thinking in the borders of local histories confronting global designs« (Mignolo 2011: 277). Like Mignolo, Krishna seems to emphasize a »delinking« from dominant paradigms; he, we surmise, would not follow the disobedience strategy.

The palpable tension between these delinking and disobedience strategies has to be mentioned in this context. Once I delink from a dominant understanding, by whose

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A *second* technique used in this second phase attends to linguistic concerns which can aid the emancipation mentioned above. Writing about the African context, Wiredu, for example, warns about hasty translations from one conceptual framework into another, where marginal attention is paid to the intricacies of the latter. Our »own understandings of the philosophies of our own,« he writes, »may already be conditioned by our externally induced conceptual pre-dispositions.« »[C]onditioned reflexes of this kind« prove detrimental in understanding and making understood one's own tradition (Wiredu 1998: 152). Wiredu believes that this problem can be alleviated by acquiring a linguistic ability in the relevant languages and »eschewing precipitous applications« of conceptual thought on the basis of superficial affinities. Emancipation from dominant paradigms can be achieved according to this technique also by learning to philosophize in local languages.

According to a *third*, related technique, this emancipation can be achieved by radically severing ties with the dominant language and by philosophizing in local idioms. As a first step, the »tools of domination,« meaning the predominant languages themselves, need to be discarded (Masolo 2003: 33). Only then can one avoid ascribing equivalents in Western languages the »magisterial status« in deciding what terms in the local language mean or ought to mean (Krishna 1986: 64–65). This technique seems to assume that translations into a dominant language tend to silence »authentic« philosophical voices and positions. Given the »linguistic hegemony« of English, which »has established the agendas for intercultural dialogues« themselves (Rosemont 2004: 52), the emancipatory effect of philosophizing in local languages cannot be categorically denied.

The third technique presumes that the threads of philosophizing abandoned in the throes of colonialism can be easily resumed despite the epistemic rupture caused by the philosophical activities of the colonial culture. Nevertheless, this claim could well be contested within comparative philosophy itself insofar as it fails to take into account the historical context in which philosophizing takes place. As Bhushan,

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standards then is my behavior »disobedient?« If the standards of the dominant understanding continue to be invoked here, have I been able to delink myself sufficiently? Why does this understanding continue to exercise a kind of moral authority over me? Are there other reasons why the classification of my behavior as »disobedient« continues to matter? For a critique from a Bolivian perspective, see Rivera Cusicanqui (2012).

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and Garfield (2011: xviii) point out for the Indian context, English was used by Indian philosophers in the colonial era, both to develop an *Indian* tradition and to position Indian thought and scholarship in a *global* discipline. By using English, these philosophers »did not abandon Indian philosophy but advanced it, bringing Western voices and techniques into its tradition, in the process constructing its modern avatar« (*ibid*.: xxvi).

It is indeed questionable whether a reappropriation of tradition can completely circumvent this colonial past. Although Indian philosophers (and others working in a postcolonial context) can today jump across this rupture – if this is indeed possible – they continue to be »indelibly marked by it« when they reconceptualize »the pre-rupture past in the categories of a post-rupture present« (Ganeri 2012: 199). In contemporary times, it seems that philosophy is not necessarily conditioned by limitations of language, as the different linguistic styles highlight. If we assume that ideas are embedded and understood only in specific linguistic-cultural settings, neither interpretation nor translation can ever be fruitful.

To summarize tentatively, colonial encounters forced indigenous intellectuals (and in some cases continue to do so) to introspect intensively on their own traditions. Such encounters, which were commonly played out as a clash of civilizational values by the colonial powers, compelled some of these intellectuals to rethink indigenous customs, reinterpret texts, and justify them to members and non-members of their community. In the process, the bounds of their traditional community were themselves contested and refashioned in certain contexts. The experience of colonization created a stronger need to bring out indigenous, but neglected, perspectives to the fore with new tools. Different cultural fragments were amalgamated into coherent, »authentic« traditions in an attempt at creatively counteracting this supposed clash of perspectives and attitudes.

In general, philosophers in this second phase underscore how culturally ingrained philosophical activity is. Universal claims advanced by any philosophy, are, according to this understanding, simply that: *claims*, which are more often than not, unsupported by substantial evidence. And yet, despite the attention paid to culturally ingrained modes of conceptualization, some philosophers in the second phase strive towards an intercultural space in which »the cultural origins of a philosopher will not predict the content of his or her philosophy« (Wiredu

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1998: 164). This common space somehow enables the comparative philosopher to shed, or momentarily forget, her cultural garb. As Wimmer states, dialogues or polylogues do not take place between cultures, political units, or religions, but between human beings trying to argue either for or against propositions, theories, etc. (Wimmer 2007b: 333).[23] Philosophers in this stage concertedly attempt to usher in a new mode of doing comparative philosophy, one which is historically informed and sensitive to broader cultural, political, and social issues.[24] As has been mentioned, methodological issues continue to be regarded as pertinent; different techniques are being devised which can facilitate a more viable comparison. And yet, methodological concerns take center stage.

As »philosophizing is socially and historically situated, it is, then, inherently grounded in and thus conditioned by social life« (Outlaw 1997: 278–279). If there is reason not to dismiss this claim categorically, does it make sense to think through how social life impacts the standards, rules, precepts, and principles? If philosophers in the second stage endeavor to bring down philosophizing from the transcendental realm of reason or divine revelation and anchor it in the positionality of the philosopher, what consequences, if any, does this change entail for a justification of her moral standards, principles, etc.? Should she ascertain whether, and how, the specificity of a philosopher's position affects her grounding of the latter? Moreover, should she implement her philosophical tools and expertise to take a stand on socio-political problems? Philosophers in the third stage take up some of these challenges.

Third Stage: The Rootedness of (Comparative) Philosophizing in a Global Context

The main insight which authors in this stage seem to share is that compelling solutions to philosophical problems can be found only when the confines of one's own tradition are surpassed. It is imperative to »look beyond our traditions to improve our philosophical problem-

[23] *Cf.* Mall (1998: 17).
[24] *Cf.* Stenger (2012).

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solving by our own lights« (Brooks 2013: 254). This philosophical problem-solving is, however, more than a theoretical exercise. Like in the second stage, a deeper transformation of the actors involved is sought by inducing relevant changes in the self-understanding of mainstream philosophy. These changes, it is believed, are clearly indicated in a discipline »that has indeed become overly narrow, insulated from other disciplines, and in many quarters oblivious even to its own culture as well as to others« (Solomon, and Higgins 2003: ix).[25] To this end, at least two paths may be taken. Authors following the first path attempt to ascertain the conditions under which certain global epistemological and moral values can be meaningfully postulated. Authors following the second path direct their attention towards the way comparative thought relates, and resonates with, daily life.

The First Path: A Global Intellectual Culture

Few comparative philosophers would deny that the need of the hour is a »global intellectual culture« or »global mindset« (Ganeri 2012: 213; Dussel 2009: 511). But should such a culture or mindset be undergirded by global values? What makes a value a global value? Moreover, is the presumption that certain values are common to cultures which intermingle and overlap even tenable? Furthermore, how does one draw up a list of such values? In this regard, one may glean at least two different techniques from the relevant literature, although both agree that global values, indubitably, need to be found.

One faction concentrates on the plausibility of certain values in the global context. According to this view, a global value does not necessarily need to be upheld universally, either consciously or uncon-

[25] Arindam Chakrabarti's observations do not seem to be restricted to the reception of Indian philosophical positions alone: »Now, we have grown up believing that liberalism, cosmopolitan non-hierarchical rationality and multi-cultural openness are typically Western ideals, whereas provincial insularity, considerations regarding who has the right to which kind of knowledge, and privileged access to special disciplines were features of a caste-dominated Hindu sort of thinking. Yet, Western analytic philosophy has, in general, shown little interest in opening up to the vigorous and rich traditions of epistemological, metaphysical, linguistic and aesthetic analysis found in the – now translated – major works of Nyaya, Vedanta, Grammarian and literary theoretic traditions in Sanskrit« (Chakrabarti 2002: 39).

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sciously: »Rather, the claim of a universal value is that people anywhere may have reason to see it as valuable« (Sen 1999: 12). Especially since the beginnings of colonialism, the standard philosophical understanding had explicitly downplayed the occurrence of certain global values. According to this understanding, one assumes firstly that cultures were, and are, tightly-knit, homogenous, and isolated units; and secondly that »progressive« epistemological and moral values can only spring from the Anglo-European tradition. As a consequence, the actual historical roots of modern Anglo-European intellectual thought and »the mixture in the genesis of ideas and techniques« were, and are, rendered invisible (Sen 2005: 134). Contextual studies today, however, showcase the faultiness of this assumption.[26] Despite the »peculiar amnesia« of Anglo-European philosophical self-understanding, colonialism proved to be a fertile ground for covert cultural borrowings (Ganeri 2012: 220). Such studies ably demonstrate that the divide between the »West« and the »Rest« is based on a »mythic unity« of the former (Sakai 2005: 180) and perhaps a mythic originality and insularity of the »West.«[27]

Using common philosophical understandings as a baseline, this faction regards moral values such as tolerance, mutual respect, human dignity, rights, justice, etc. as reasonable candidates for this exercise. (This list can be supplemented with epistemological values like truth, reasonable belief, rational consensus, and knowledge.) Taking a further step, one then comparatively reconstructs individual contexts in which these values can be said to be instantiated. The possible objection that the list features typical »western« values, which are then transposed on alien contexts, is found unconvincing.[28] To borrow a phrase used by

[26] See also Pratt (2002) and Harding (1998).

[27] *Cf.* Ganeri (2012: 214–224); Solomon and Higgins (2003: xv).

[28] In Narayan's words, the reiterated contrast between »Western« and »non-Western« cultures was a »politically motivated colonial construction« (Narayan 1998: 89). »Thus liberty and equality could be represented as paradigmatic ›Western values‹, hallmark of its civilizational superiority, at the very moment when Western nations were engaged in slavery, colonization, expropriation, and the denial of liberty and equality not only to the colonized but to large segments of Western subjects, including women. Profound *similarities* between Western culture and many of its Others, such as hierarchical social systems, huge economic disparities between members, and the mistreatment and inequality of women, were systematically ignored in this construction of ›Western‹ culture« (*ibid.*: 90). *Cf.* Holenstein (1985: 118).

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Rosemont, the singularity of these values is itself part of the »regnant ideology« propagated by the Anglo-European tradition, which claims that the values mentioned above are, and can only be, singularly Anglo-European (Rosemont 2004: 49).

As Amartya Sen warns:

> »Different cultures are thus interpreted in ways that reinforce the political conviction that Western civilization is somehow the main, perhaps the only, source of rationalistic and liberal ideas – among them analytical scrutiny, open debate, political tolerance and agreement to differ. The West is seen, in effect, as having exclusive access to the values that lie at the foundation of rationality and reasoning, science and evidence, liberty and tolerance, and of course rights and justice« (Sen 2005: 285).

This technique, thus, presumes that people situated in different cultural contexts have their own conceptual resources to back up global values; in some cases these values, in fact, even predate contact with Anglo-European traditions.

It assumes that comparative philosophers can facilitate the search for global values by digging out and presenting the global roots of values found across cultures. Furthermore, these philosophers should attend to the impact of individual traditions on this global intellectual culture.[29] There is reason to be optimistic that, due to her moral commitment, a comparative philosopher will not misuse a catalogue of values to classify, grade, degrade, or even upgrade cultures.

A related technique tends to operate with a more literal understanding of the term »global.« Understandings, which are predominantly found amongst the »human citizens of the global community,« should be consulted in our search for global values (Rosemont 2004: 49). Going by his own work on the Chinese intellectual tradition, Rosemont perceives civility, courtesy, reciprocity, respect, affection, honesty, etc. as probable candidates for global values (*cf. ibid.*: 63). Accordingly, he develops an understanding of »a role-bearing person,« in which the person is constituted by the roles she assumes in societal life. The values mentioned above come to play in all these roles, be it of a child, a parent, a sibling, a spouse, a friend, a colleague, etc.

With this figure of a role-bearing person, Rosemont not only seeks to counteract possible charges of »cultural imperialism;« the figure of such a person is implemented as a corrective to the maladies

[29] Ganeri takes up this task in (2011, 2012).

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besetting American social life (Rosemont 2008: 394).[30] This move cannot be said to transpose an alien understanding on American societal life; the notion of a role-bearing person is, in fact, used as a searchlight for relocating a more communitarian understanding of the self, since human relationships are »absolutely essential if [one is] to achieve a significant measure of human flourishing« (Rosemont 2004: 60). Rosemont thus endeavors to »provide arguments for changing the weighting or ordering of values already held« in American society (Rosemont 2008: 384).

If authors like Sen and Ganeri attempt to demonstrate that values closely associated with the liberal tradition are also found in other non-Anglo European contexts, authors such as Rosemont, David Hall, and Roger Ames explicitly search for common global values in an attempt to realign the narrow framework of the liberal tradition. By reflecting on common values which could, irrespective of cultural boundaries, undergird human interaction, both of these techniques underscore the need for a viable theoretical engagement with, and exploration of, other philosophical traditions or alternatives. Both presume that cross-cultural expertise and intercultural attitude qualify a comparative philosopher to take on a crucial role in this exercise. With a comparative philosopher's efforts, the discipline of philosophy can be restructured »so that it might become more globally comprehensive« (Lin, Rosemont, and Ames 1995: 754).

Admittedly, these techniques could lead to a different list of global values. More importantly for our purposes, however, is the following: both techniques, it seems, do not reduce cultures to a static set of past traditional beliefs. Cultures serve individuals as a foil; the latter »use reasoning to decide on how to see themselves, and what significance they should attach to having been born a member of a particular community« (Sen 2006: 119). Cultures are perceived as evolving entities, which adapt to situations and possess (at least some) powerful beliefs that are capable of convincing people, regardless of where the latter are located. They are »not neatly wrapped packages, sealed off from each other, possessing sharply defined edges or contours, and having distinctive contents that differ from those of other ›cultural packages‹« (Narayan 2000: 1084). If the authors mentioned earlier do indeed expound

[30] Rosemont worries that the »qualities of character that enable […] citizens to be self-governing« are not sufficiently nourished (*cf.* Rosemont 2004: 55).

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such a view of culture, it is strongly reminiscent of David Wong's analogy of cultures and conversations. Both capture, says Wong, diverse, evolving, changing processes between human beings, not all of whom at a given time possess unanimous views. Like simultaneous and complex conversations between several people, cultures too are dynamic processes hosting a gamut of (conflicting) beliefs, norms, values, and practices. Neither do they form a coherent body, nor are they all necessarily accepted by all of their members (Wong 2009: 103). Boundaries between cultures simply become human constructs that can be surpassed by those willing to engage in a conversation with hitherto new or changing partners.[31]

Moreover, if some values recur in different cultural contexts and in this sense know no cultural boundaries, the insights of one tradition can possibly serve as alternatives to members of another tradition. If other cultures have differing insights into human nature, conceive of human nature and experience differently, or comprehend the nature of reality otherwise, but the same values nevertheless come to play in these positions, then it seems sensible to engage with, assess and perhaps even re-contextualize these ideas, notions, concepts, and positions for one's own setting. After further examination these values could possibly turn out to be viable alternatives for us, for example, although we may be located in other cultural traditions. What then hinders us from adapting these alternatives to our own (philosophical) situation and testing their feasibility for us?

Global values may serve as a foundation from which a philosophical net may be cast to draw in other traditions along with their notions, concepts, ideas, etc. But why should the net be cast in this way? One argument would propound that global theories (on justice, for example) have far-reaching repercussions on the lives of third-parties in remote parts of the world. Given this inter-connectedness, philosophers should work out »capacious« ethical theories which include the voices of all those who could potentially be affected by them:

> We do not live in secluded cocoons of our own. And if the institutions and policies of one country influence lives elsewhere, should not the voices of affected people elsewhere count in some way in determining what is just or unjust in the way a society is organized, typically with profound effects – direct or indirect – on people in other societies? (Sen 2010: 130)

[31] *Cf.* Narayan (1998: 92).

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Alternatively, if such theories attempt to forestall injustices happening to actual people here and now, these theories must work towards a »plural grounding,« such that people situated in different contexts should, from their own specific perspectives, be able to share the reasons underlying a given theory (*cf. ibid.*: 395). In other words, plural grounding would go a long way in enabling the agency of the hitherto marginalized. It would allow them to implement conceptual resources which, from their own perspective, are more appropriate in making sense of their subjective experience and in dealing with the world.[32]

Another argument would propose that our search for global values is imperative given the ethnic, racial, sexual, and religious violence rampant in human history. In our search for »universal moral and political principles – and a universally acceptable language for expressing these principles,« there is no prima facie reason to believe that our own tradition alone can deliver the best, or perfect, exposition (Rosemont 2004: 64). A more solid grounding for these principles could, potentially, be found in traditions unfamiliar to us. Only a cross-cultural engagement with another tradition can reveal whether the tradition under investigation is able to serve as an alternative resource for grounding these values and thus for enriching and transforming our lives.[33]

Both techniques underscore how cross-cultural intercourse and fertilization can aid the search for global values. The values unearthed in this process, it is believed, need not necessarily lead to cultural homogeneity, but rather to a much-needed diversification, both in the values we consider to be global and in their grounding. Remarkably, the search for a single overarching value is not pursued. Equally, this search is not considered to be the exclusive prerogative of the philoso-

[32] Referring to indigenous populations, Rivera Cusicanqui writes (2012: 99): »A discussion of these communities situated in the ›origin‹ denies the contemporaneity of these populations and excludes them from the struggles of modernity. They are given a residual status that, in fact, converts them into minorities, ensnaring them in indigenist stereotypes of the noble savage and as guardians of nature.«

[33] *Cf.* Lin, Rosemont and Ames (1995: 749).

Positions propounding global values seem to widen the confines of an intercultural space. »Global« values, like mutual respect, dignity of humanity, civility, honesty, tolerance, etc. could be considered to be crucial in the making of an intercultural space. If members of different traditions (not all of them being philosophers) are said to propound them too, it seems to be possible to work out an intercultural space globally, with these non-philosophers too.

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pher. Given the complexity and ambivalence of human beings, the chances of finding an overriding single value on the global scale are relatively slim. It makes more sense to focus on overlapping values rather than collapsing all of them into one. With cross-cultural research, a comparative philosopher can help to reorder and reweigh the values found in a culture. The search for global values, thus, can contribute to the debate on local values. »The more openly and deeply we look through a window into another culture the more it becomes a mirror of our own […]« (Rosemont 1991: 7).

The Second Path: The Responsibilities of a Comparative Philosopher

Some philosophers in the third phase, however, strive for a stronger emphasis on the political dimension of comparative philosophizing. The »rules of control at work in the discursive practices of European Philosophy« must be challenged (Outlaw 1996: 62). On account of cross-cultural expertise and intercultural orientation, the comparative philosopher is perceived as having a special commitment to adopting a critical and creative stand on socio-political problems which afflict modern societies. She should be ready »to assume the responsibility for addressing the ethical and political problems associated with the poverty, domination, and exclusion of large sectors of the population, especially in the global South« (Dussel 2009: 214). Granting the plausibility of this position, how, one is tempted to ask, does she even begin to address the problems alluded to above? Is there one, or are there different, way(s), different technique(s), in which this responsibility can be met?

Several techniques may be gleaned from the relevant literature. One technique asks European Americans to do a »better job of decolonizing ourselves from our mindsets as colonizers« (Bernasconi 1998: 293). This decolonizing is a multi-faceted process, beginning with a re-examination and rewriting of the history of philosophy and ending (for the moment) with an inclusion of marginalized traditions (such as those of India and China) as well as those which have previously been completely dismissed as non-philosophical (those of Africa as well as of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, Australia, etc.).[34]

[34] This »decolonization,« let it be noted, has strong parallels with the decolonization technique involved in the second stage. On account of its close relation to the »politics«

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Robert Bernasconi makes extensive use of this technique in order to unmask social structures which continue to cast their long shadows on philosophizing, both in the local and in the global context. He explicitly attacks the dominant discourse which employs the strategies of primitivization and exoticization in order to »tame« the »other;« a process in which, however, an idealized Anglo-European self-image has been constructed. These strategies, both in their overt and covert forms, must be abandoned immediately: »To treat one's dialogue partner as primitive or exotic is to silence him or her […]. If the primitive is that part of ourselves that we recognize but at the same time disown, the exotic is that which, having being disowned, we romanticize« (Bernasconi 2005a: 242).

Bernasconi also pleads for a critical and contextual engagement with enlightenment thinkers (such as John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel).[35] Their one-sided views on race, for example, continue to operate subtextually in contemporary philosophizing that attempts either to ignore or downplay these seminal thinkers' views on race. In this way, a »benign, sanitized philosophy« which merely attends to the moral principles of such thinkers is resurrected (Bernasconi 2003: 13, 16). Such »pick and mix« accounts, however, cannot withstand analytical scrutiny. As long as they last, furthermore, a more just society free from racist institutions cannot be established.

In an attempt to forestall such tendencies, Bernasconi sets himself and other comparative philosophers three important tasks: 1) researching, acknowledging, and addressing the racism of canonical philosophers by relating their works to their whole body of philosophical thinking, 2) placing their understanding in the contemporary context of their own time, and 3) attending to the sources available to the philosophers at that given time (Bernasconi 2003: 13–15). By contextualizing key thinkers and their work, Bernasconi not only presents his case for a more critical view of the trite self-representation of Anglo-European philosophy, but he also demonstrates why intellectual descendants of these thinkers must adequately address and abandon the racial frameworks they once adopted. These philosophers cannot be

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of philosophy, it is included in this third stage. The »politics« of philosophy is explicated below.

[35] See for example Bernasconi (2000, 2003, 2005b).

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exonerated in any plausible way: neither did they lack relevant knowledge, nor were their theories on race unwitting, accidental, aberrant parts of their philosophical oeuvre. Bernasconi advocates a critical engagement with the history of Anglo-European philosophy that creates the possibility of modifying the content and self-image of academic philosophy. This grunt work must be done so that Anglo-European academic philosophy is able to address a broader, more global audience than is the case today.[36]

Furthermore, by drawing attention to how African traditions have been relegated to the nebulous realm of the »prephilosophical,« Bernasconi also deconstructs arguments postulating a break between »scientific philosophy« (its sole candidate being Anglo-European philosophy) and »prephilosophical thought« which continue to be maintained today (Bernasconi 1997: 185). Bernasconi hopes that an Anglo-European comparative philosopher, by working on her mindset, can open up and recognize that »all philosophies draw on prephilosophical experience, the old dream of a scientific philosophy is *ausgeträumt*, it is exhausted« (*ibid*.: 191). As a consequence, she should also abandon one of her key philosophical instruments, namely the »deafness of neutral reason« (*ibid*.: 192). This deafness considered the identity of the speaker or writer to be completely irrelevant to philosophizing. Mainstream academic philosophy will have to openly admit and critically re-examine how all hitherto philosophizing exploits the notion of the prephilosophical before seriously engaging with contemporary African philosophy. Anglo-European philosophy must become aware of its own prephilosophical roots and acknowledge how this experience shapes philosophizing. As is often maintained, the realm of the prephilosophical does not lie beyond a philosopher's focus. This admission would go a long way in engaging with current African philosophy, which is grounded in the prephilosophical experience of racism and colonialism.

A *second*, closely related technique concentrates on uncovering the locality of philosophical practices. Legacies and practices of self-understanding take place, it argues, within a highly complex socio-cultural matrix. Knowledge is produced within this framework by mediating the results of such processes. Thinkers involved in these knowledge-production processes, are, importantly, also actors in this matrix. They attribute certain understandings to others and assign them cer-

[36] *Cf*. Wimmer (2013: 124).

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tain roles; the same happens to them in turn. Thus, particular attention must be paid to »both how their identities are influenced by, and how they influence, the production and distribution of knowledges and socio-cultural reproduction« (Outlaw 1997: 288).

The locality of philosophical knowledge-production processes also directs attention to the rupture between mainstream philosophy and societal practices. Currently, mainstream philosophy ascribes to its own activities a transcendental space above and beyond concrete social and cultural life. In the words of Lucius Outlaw, Jr., it perceives itself as a »Guiding Light,« a beacon which transcends, and hovers over, locality and particularity (Outlaw 1987). But this self-description is not well-grounded. Philosophers have never been external, detached observers, but active participants involved in every step of the knowledge-producing process, be it in producing, certifying or mediating knowledge. Enlightenment figures like Kant, Thomas Jefferson, Locke, and Benjamin Franklin, for example, abstracted from and idealized their own experiences, which were then generalized to other men and universalized as ideal characteristics of *all* human beings. These particular characteristics were then simply, and thoroughly, expounded upon as capturing universal and essential features of all human beings. The »racialized, gendered, and ethnocentric« bent of »western« philosophy, which developed out of the particular experiences of a privileged few, can be traced back to the role of a philosopher in these knowledge-producing processes (Outlaw 1998: 389). The Anglo-European philosophical tradition rests, as we see, on the experiences of a privileged few, who used their own particular experiences as a universal standard for humanity.[37] Which philosophically sound reasons, then, justify the prolonged use of this standard philosophical self-understanding today? None at all.

In fact, philosophers should finally begin to adequately relate and connect with the »lived experiences« of people's concerns. Especially in culturally diverse societies, there is a need to initiate »decidedly self-conscious efforts devoted to the formation of a framework« which is

[37] Similarly Hall and Ames write (2003: 16): »The West has masked its ethnocentrism by the claim that its self-understanding has universal applicability. One paradoxical element of our peculiar form of ethnocentricity is the rejection of ethnocentrism. But we do not escape provincialism simply because we make naive claims to objectivity and universality.«

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inclusive and can yet critically recognize and appreciate the cultural practices and legacies of its members (*ibid*.: 392).[38] Ways of breaking through the »hegemonic monoculturalism« of the past have to be critically examined, conceived and implemented (*ibid*.: 389). The »epistemically disadvantaged or defective« structural social conditions that impinge upon and shape identity-formation, location in social space, and modes of belief must be amended (Alcoff 2007b: 40).

Philosophical activity should be able to generate norms informing, and relating to, the life-worlds and agendas of the people whose life this activity seeks to capture. In our context, for example, comparative philosophy should harness its resources to aid an articulation of »new identities and agendas by which to survive and to flourish« (Outlaw 1997: 283). Furthermore, by its own means, this field of philosophy should create room for and legitimize the »effort to recover and reconstruct life-defining, identity-conforming meaning-connections to lands and cultures« *(ibid.)*.

A *third* technique can be said to build upon the other two. It sets the Anglo-European philosophical tradition in a broader socio-political context and then examines how the military, economic, cultural and political dominance of north Europe between the late-fifteenth and nineteenth centuries precipitated the development of an allegedly universal philosophy »both in its own eyes and in those of the intellectual communities of the colonial world that lay prostate at its feet, and philosophically paralyzed« (Dussel 2009: 509).

Today, this paralysis continues in new guises like prostration, invisibility, a supposed lack of fertility and philosophical creativity, etc. Such a state of philosophical insignificance can be subverted, as this technique envisages, through a »South-South« dialogue of critical philosophers from postcolonial communities (*cf*. Rivera Cuscanqui 2012: 107). As a precondition, these philosophers must recognize their existence as philosophers of the South who have been cultivated by »regional philosophies.« Only then can they come together »in order to clarify our positions, develop working hypotheses, and then, upon this basis, initiate a fertile North-South inter-philosophical dialogue with a well-defined agenda« (Dussel 2013: 4). This agenda would enable

[38] In his work, Outlaw focuses on one upshot of his analysis, namely the need to integrate Africana philosophy in American academia. These thoughts can be extended to other contexts too. *Cf*. Yancy (2002).

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them, from their own particular standpoints, to affirm their exploitation at the hands of global capitalism. The »manifest fruits« of a »cultural colonialism« can be confronted thus (*ibid.*: 5).

Enrique Dussel's analysis parallels the argumentation made above. Philosophers in the South continue to be treated as »colonial subjects in epistemological and philosophical terms« who can at best be peripheral commentators of modern European philosophy (*ibid.*: 10). They are not taken seriously as thinkers about their own social reality; the existence thereof is, as mentioned above, simply denied by mainstream philosophy. Thus a status quo, an unreflective »colonial philosophy of the South,« is firmly maintained in place. However, philosophers of the South »who have the pretension of being thinkers« have to take upon themselves the responsibility of finally freeing themselves from their mode as colonial subjects (*ibid.*: 11). In resurrecting their ancestral traditions, the latter have to be subjected to »philosophical labor« so that high-quality historical, cultural and philosophical tools can be developed from within specific traditions. »In sum, what is aimed at is a proper philosophy, which is both an expression of the South and a useful contribution to its community of reference« (*ibid.*: 15).

Within the third phase, thus, at least two different paths can be discerned, which endeavor to transform the discipline of philosophy and the self-understanding of those involved. Proponents of the second path underscore the political dimension of comparative philosophizing. For them, philosophizing cannot be wholly truncated from the societies in which it takes place. The history of philosophy demonstrates the deep involvement of this field in other socio-political phenomena like colonialism and racism. The need to grapple with the socio-political dimension of philosophy is evident, both in culturally pluralistic societies and in a globally interconnected world. Today, the moral commitment which comparative philosophers avow also entails that they take a stand on acute socio-political problems. In both contexts, the intercultural attitude of a comparative philosopher and her awareness of the historicity, particularity, and culturality of the dominant mode of philosophizing, demand that her activity not be restricted to an explication of purely theoretical categories and principles.

In general, it can be stated that voices in the third phase of comparative philosophy advance a contextual approach, which locates philosophical activity in a broader socio-cultural context. It is asserted that such an approach enables more open access to salient philosophical pro-

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blems. Moreover, armed with this approach, a comparative philosopher can relate these problems to those faced by members of her local, but also those of the global, community. Philosophers have to begin to attend more closely to »realized actuality,« which includes »the lives that people manage – or do not manage – to live« (Sen 2010: 18). They must closely attend to the socio-cultural dimension of their own positionality.

To sum up: If our observations are plausible, philosophers in the first stage optimistically believed that the philosophical ethos could by itself ensure fair procedural conditions; as a result, a comparative philosopher simply needed to attend to the techniques of comparison. Philosophers in the second stage have been more cautious. Holding fair procedural conditions as to be crucial to viable comparisons, they propose that these conditions be explicated and strictly observed. They endeavor to develop a morally bounded space, within which genuine philosophical explorations in comparative thought might be carried out. Their counterparts in the third stage share this cautiousness. As in the second stage, it is asserted that philosophical knowledge is produced locally and »partly reflect[s] the communally practical (sociohistorical) contexts« of its production (Masolo 2003: 24). Likewise, one delves into how the schemes of representation can be reclaimed by the marginalized.

In their critical reflection upon the interplay between the local and global, philosophers in the third stage, like never before, examine the »*politics* of philosophy« (McGhee 2011: 32). They seek to supplement the theoretical debate on comparative philosophy by demonstrating the necessity of its existential dimension. Building upon the locality of comparative philosophizing accentuated in the second phase, one now sets to examine how the global dimension works in philosophizing within a particular context. Overcoming the »provinciality« of the dominant tradition in order to set straight the philosophical record in academia, they urge, is but one reason for this work. More importantly, the power of this dominant tradition must be checked, because certain notions of humanity, human development, progress, etc., which prevailed in the history of philosophy, continue to bear on global programs for economic and social development.[39]

Philosophers in the third phase build upon the moral commitment

[39] *Cf.* Bernasconi (1997: 190) and Rivera Cuscanqui (2012: 96).

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underlined in the second phase. It is imperative in their view that the discipline of philosophy be transformed. Such a transformation of philosophy is, however, a gargantuan task which needs to be tackled at various levels: Its self-representation must be modified, its history rewritten and reinterpreted, its conceptual framework contextualized, its ideological power remedied. In addition to a deconstruction of mainstream philosophy, the discipline has to be constructed anew. For this purpose, a more pluralistic understanding of philosophy is needed now, indeed one which has true global applicability. In this regard, traditionally excluded people – socially marginalized and colonized peoples, women, ethnic minorities, etc. – must now be able to participate in an equal manner. Their silence until now did not arise because they had nothing to contribute, but because their voices were swallowed up by the »plenitudinous sound of a hegemonic discourse« (Yancy 2002: 564). When philosophy as a discipline is able to reflect upon its moorings in several cultural traditions, it will be more easily comprehended (and related to) by decent and informed human beings regardless of where they are located. Such a widening of perspective has at least one added benefit for philosophers within the dominant Anglo-European tradition. A dialogue with other cultural traditions can increase the range of possibilities for any philosophical problem. In the process, feasible alternatives to philosophical problems (about truth, knowledge, global justice, etc.) can be discovered.

Nevertheless, comparative philosophers must attend more closely to the political dimension of their philosophizing than is currently the case. Today, comparative philosophy continues to be the privilege of better-situated males, often coming from traditions with relatively developed traditions of comparative philosophy. The terrain occupied by comparative philosophy is apparently unequal, with some traditions taking up a higher ground than others. Members of traditions assigned »lower« notches in this unspoken hierarchy tend to be used as costumed extras in »an almost theatrical display of alterity« (Cuscanqui 2012: 99). In this respect, the field seems to parallel, and repeat, the pernicious developments of mainstream philosophy – which it seeks to counter and off-set in the first place. Butnor and McWeeney (2014: 7) trace this exclusionary tendency to the fact that culture, language, and geography are commonly used as the primary markers of philosophical difference; the role of gender, class and other social identities was, and continues to be, eclipsed. They argue that »philosophical

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works should be assessed both in terms of their explicit content and in terms of the claims that they *perform* within the wider social-political contexts in which they are situated« (*ibid.*: 2). If our reconstruction is plausible, this demand can only be reiterated. A worthwhile comparative philosophy must lead to an opening up, a relating to, and an including of other social and cultural minorities, whose existence goes by and large unacknowledged up into the present day in a field that explicitly tries to fight off its own marginalization.

As this ideational reconstruction of developments showcases, an evaluative critique of the agendas, modes, and practices of philosophizing has been steadily developed since the beginning of the journal *Philosophy East and West*. Today, comparative philosophers endeavor to invoke and rejuvenate a wide variety of voices and standpoints from near and far, all of which focus on issues closely related to human existence. Their project, one could say, draws on recent developments and conceptual frameworks in academic philosophy. As our reconstruction indicates, these philosophers are found in diverse philosophical subdisciplines. Despite their analytical, hermeneutic, phenomenological, transcendental, deconstructive, etc. leanings, they endeavor to thematize and problematize standard ways of doing philosophy as well as to uncover subversive agendas at play in philosophizing.

Given their moral commitment and their awareness of the positionality and embeddedness of all philosophizing, comparativists, however, cannot by their own standards coherently take up a meta-perspective on mainstream philosophizing. As our thematic introduction indicates, ever since the inception of *Philosophy East and West*, philosophizing has been conceived of as an activity rooted in a particular socio-cultural context. If their own philosophizing is first and foremost to be understood as a critique of these activities, comparativists cannot be satisfied in carving out a niche for themselves and their like-minded colleagues, a niche which is walled off from mainstream thought. If they seriously perceive themselves to be contemporary versions of Socrates' gadfly, they will have to place themselves in the midst of mainstream philosophical activity, be it in teaching or in research. But given the current state of affairs, it has to be stated that the bites of these gadflies go, by and large, unnoticed.

Generally speaking, mainstream philosophers have not, as yet, seemed to fully comprehend the relevance of comparative philosophy to philosophy as a discipline. A specialization in comparative philoso-

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phy is neither encouraged nor rewarded; one result is that comparative philosophy continues to be sidelined in philosophical syllabi and professional publications. As for publishing comparative research, Ronnie Littlejohn rightly notes that, »scholars of comparative philosophy have been disenfranchised from mainstream journals in the past« (Littlejohn 2005: n.p.). This is where *Confluence* steps in. It will endeavor to take on philosophical issues in proper depth, so that cross-cultural philosophizing can be enabled. Simultaneously, it will seek to move out of the comfort zone of specialization and demonstrate the interdisciplinary relevance that comparative philosophizing can have.

II Our Journal's Rationale

Today, it seems to be easier to publish a work on comparative philosophy either in a journal dedicated to the study of a particular region (like India, China, Japan or Africa) or in one specializing in cultural studies. Due to the specific focus of these journals, however, broader concerns and issues pertaining to comparative research do not tend to get the space and attention that they deserve. This state of affairs is not particularly conducive to the development of comparative philosophy. Moreover, a philosopher, who is genuinely interested in keeping abreast of new developments in the field, first needs to invest time and energy in locating and excavating relevant work scattered in diverse journals before engaging with it. Furthermore, unless comparativists are fortunate enough to find themselves in a country in which comparative research has been steadily on the rise, their opportunities to engage in a dialogue with like-minded colleagues is severely restricted. *Confluence* aims to rectify such problems by providing such a space.

We aim to bring together scholars working on concerns and issues pertinent to comparative philosophy and thus aid a dialogue across the geographical divide, and perhaps across those of culture, gender, and class. We seek to initiate, assist, and nurture further methodic and methodological work. Journals like *Journal of Comparative Philosophy, Philosophy East and West*, *Polylog*, and *Sophia* have contributed substantially to improving the quality of comparative philosophizing in recent years. While supplementing this important work, *Confluence* aims to provide a forum for *doing philosophy* together. It remains

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steadfast in its commitment to a broadly ecumenical approach to the nature and practice of philosophy itself as well as to the aims and methods of doing philosophy. We, the editors of this journal, will strive to place all philosophical traditions on an equal footing, without assigning a singular priority to the philosophical traditions with which we ourselves are familiar.

We acknowledge the existence of alternative conceptions of the philosophical enterprise itself. Several philosophers engaged in comparative philosophy, for example, have defended the existence of two alternative philosophical orientations: truth-oriented and path- or praxis-oriented. They argue that these two alternative ways of doing philosophy involve two clearly distinct constellations of notions of knowledge, thinking, belief, language, morality, philosophy, and in the end, how to live. Truth-oriented philosophies define these notions in terms of truth (for example, apprehending, representing, believing, and basing one's actions upon truth). Philosophy is thus on this score primarily a theoretical endeavor aimed at truth. Path-oriented philosophies understand these notions in terms of finding, following, and creatively extending the path. Knowledge, reason, language, morality, etc. are about path-making. Philosophy, so understood, is creative and practical.

The term »confluence« underscores the rationale of our journal in different ways: Fully aware of our situatedness in concrete cultural and historical traditions, we will seek to provide a forum for previously under-explored or unexplored comparative perspectives on philosophical thought and for lively debates on controversial issues. A confluence must enable a steady moving back and forth between positions before philosophical streams of various bearings can emerge. In this regard, *Confluence* will provide space for research in which the moral commitment of the researcher alluded to above is clear. Our journal emphasizes the spirit of philosophical inquiry which we deem vital to comparative thought: an academic inquiry tempered by intellectual humility and criticism harnessed by an attitude of mutual learning. Only such an attitude can guarantee the critical research we seek to develop and nurture.

Participation in the conversation of comparative philosophy (reflecting the more general trend in academic philosophy in Europe, India, Latin America, Australia, China, Japan, the UK, and USA) has suffered and continues to suffer from a disproportionate underrepre-

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sentation – if not complete absence – of minorities, be they women, non-Anglo European ethnicities, disadvantaged classes, indigenous peoples (who remain under the yoke of internal colonialism), people from the global South as well as their descendants in diaspora, and displaced peoples. It is incumbent upon supporters of comparative philosophy to broaden the demographic scope of our conversation, so as to replace silence here with the voices of the aforementioned.

As we see matters, the aims of comparative philosophy are as varied as its practitioners. Furthermore, these aims are shared by those engaged in non-comparative or what we might call »domestic philosophy«: wisdom, truth, knowledge, global justice, individual or social self-knowledge and/or self-improvement, the global advancement of human well-being, or simply continuing the philosophical conversation. And yet, comparative philosophy performs both negative and positive functions with regard to mainstream philosophizing. By comparing one's domestic views with those of other philosophical traditions, one is better able to discover and make visible the tacit presuppositions of one's own tradition, and in so doing, bring these presuppositions into question. This self-examination extends to one's own definition of the philosophical enterprise itself.

Comparative philosophizing will enable one to shed light and make explicit the tacit and unexamined presuppositions of one's own tradition, and in so doing, reflect upon these presuppositions. This self-examination extends to one's own definition of the philosophical enterprise itself, which may help one see one's own puzzles, concerns or aims as *provincial*, and thereby, help rein in one's false universalism, the notion that one's own domestic tradition truly speaks for all traditions, for rationality per se, or for all humankind. Comparative inquiry seems to be a viable and an effective tool to decenter one's own provincial standpoint. In comparison, one may discover philosophical puzzles or problems wholly unknown to one's own tradition; one may discover solutions to one's own problems that had never been introduced or developed within one's own tradition; one may discover that the philosophical problems or puzzles that concern and perhaps define one's own tradition are not shared by other traditions (for example, regarding truth); one may encounter different conceptions of philosophy itself, and along with this, alternative epistemologies, moral philosophies, and philosophies of mind or language.

These benefits, we believe, cannot be shared by seeking recluse in

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a niche completely isolated from the debates prevalent in mainstream philosophy. We will need to pursue philosophy in such a manner that *constructive* ways of initiating changes in the prevalent ways of doing philosophy emerge. Confrontations, however effective they may seem from a short-term perspective, will be unable to initiate long-term modifications in philosophical (self-) understandings. *Confluence* will, thus, encourage critical contributions, without categorically dismissing the dominant Anglo-European tradition as merely an »imperialism of ›Dead White European Males.‹«[40] A decolonization of extant conceptual frameworks will have to be followed up by a reflection on new meaningful frameworks.

In this regard, however, our journal does not restrict itself to carving out and establishing an intercultural space with fellow philosopher-colleagues alone. It also seeks to bring in voices beyond the boundaries of our discipline that could be pertinent to the development of comparative philosophy. Epistemai of the world also include local and alternative ways of classifying the world, as the systems of traditional medicine testify. These ways, which are reflected in diverse religious and cultural practices, are commonly not acknowledged as legitimate forms of knowledge – unless they are restructured scientifically, as well as philosophically. *Confluence* seeks to make these voices heard too, thus helping retain and sustain the link from the past to the future. These practices are philosophically significant, as they compel one to ask: Can one compare multiple standpoints even though one's analysis is always perspectival? And if so, how? Does a meaningful comparison necessitate a methodological constraint on reason and rationality? Our journal would like to create a liberal atmosphere unhindered by disciplinary constraints. We realize that cultural and philosophical explorations, like disciplines, have their own boundaries; and yet one needs to transcend them through mutual conversation in order to make progress. To facilitate a movement of ideas, one must learn to discern the multiple strands in the flow of one's investigation. Like a confluence of two rivers, whose actual territory is often hard to pinpoint with the bare eye, we would like to intensify, complexify, and transform the ideas and perspectives prevalent in philosophy today.

Confluence endeavors to serve as a juncture where specific philosophical issues of global interest may be explored in an imaginative,

[40] Solomon and Higgins (2003: xiv).

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thought-provoking, and pioneering way. Instead of privileging a single philosophical approach to comparative philosophical thought, it explicitly tries to provide a platform for diverse philosophical perspectives. These perspectives can be the basis for delving into the different dimensions of philosophical confluence in the generation, development, and sustenance of ideas, both by comparing thinkers/positions within the same tradition and across traditions. This approach, we believe, will open up room to highlight both the similarities of the philosophical enterprise in different philosophical traditions and the differences between them. Philosophical reflection and analysis could overcome limitations that different cultures impose from within.

Furthermore, we would like to locate *Confluence* between area studies and »global philosophy.« Our journal will provide a forum for innovative and thought-provoking research in comparing culturally distinct traditions, without restricting these comparisons to a particular geographical area. In the past, area studies have initiated many crucial developments in comparative thought. However, many pressing (philosophical) problems (some of which were touched upon in the first section) call for a geographically broader scope of inquiry. They also indicate the need for comparative inquiry which does not fear to tread new pathways. For this reason, *Confluence* will encourage hitherto untried (or relatively uncommon) comparisons between traditions, such as between non-Anglo European traditions.

In light of current research, we tend to be skeptical about the development of a single coherent body called global philosophy, which seeks to develop one coherent and systematic conceptual apparatus to be implemented on the global scale. Such a philosophy can only operate with high-flying, abstract observations. In all probability, the prototypes constructed on the basis of these observations will be out-of-sync with developments on the ground. Attempts to weave together a seamless body of thought, which can integrate the important insights of *all* relevant world-views, are bound to face at least some of the problems described in these pages. For example, what feasible standpoint exists that might enable a philosopher to sift through insights, isolating and universalizing those most relevant? How does she ascertain that the voices of the other are not simply assimilated into her own position?

The project of comparative philosophy can be best nurtured by creating room for, and actively maintaining, a plurality of (theoretical) perspectives. We are aware that such a plurality could set forth incon-

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gruent and incompatible ways of dealing with philosophical problems. Nevertheless, like some authors mentioned above, we too believe that philosophy must be made more comprehensive globally. A critical review of the history of philosophy indicates that a single, monolithic, and uniform conceptual framework fails to capture the plurality of philosophical traditions we find today. The development of diverse conceptual frameworks, in turn, is a task which merits adequate attention, care, and a moral commitment that can guarantee judicious research. We hope that the contributions featured in *Confluence* will, like the epigram of this introduction, be fruitful and rich in this regard.

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Intercultural Philosophy: A Conceptual Clarification

Abstract
In this paper I would like to show how belonging to different cultures does not impede intercultural philosophizing and instead favors it. To that end, I will first pinpoint what exactly intercultural philosophy stands for in Section II. In Section III I will sketch certain crucial features of what is in fact a hermeneutical situation. In Section IV I will develop my own theory of an interculturally-oriented »analogous hermeneutic« and then try to show in Section V that it can furnish what is necessary to do comparative philosophy. A short conclusion will follow in Section VI.

Keywords
intercultural philosophy, interculturality, »analogous hermeneutics,« comparative philosophy, cultural encounters.

I Introduction

Let me begin with some autobiographical remarks. As a person whose philosophical socialization began in India and continued in Germany, for the last forty years I have been an insider and an outsider at the same time. This particular situation provides me with the opportunity to do philosophy with an intercultural perspective and to examine one tradition from the point of view of another. Admittedly, thinking from within more than a single tradition is disturbing, but it can be an enriching experience too. Interculturality, thus, is not simply an intellectual and aesthetic category; for me it is of existential importance.

In this paper I would like to show how belonging to different cultures does not impede intercultural philosophizing and instead favors it. To that end, I will first pinpoint what exactly intercultural philoso-

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II What Is Intercultural Philosophy?

Let me proceed by ruling out certain senses of the term interculturality. In this paper interculturality is neither used as a trendy expression nor as a romantic idea emerging in an age of global technological formation and world tourism. Furthermore, it is not understood as a compensatory move on the part of non-European cultures born of some inferiority complex. Moreover, it is also not just an *ad hoc* response in the face of the encounters occurring between world cultures today. Neither is it simply a construct, nor an abstraction; nor is it a syncretic idea.

Intercultural philosophy, rightly understood, *firstly*, is not a particular, concrete system of philosophy. Rather it refers to a philosophical orientation or a proto-philosophical stance, which allows and encourages the spirit of philosophy to be realized in different cultural contexts. No single philosophy can be the philosophy for all of humankind. Intercultural philosophy is, in other words, the name of a new orientation in and of philosophy. It accompanies all the different, concrete philosophical traditions and prevents them from taking on an absolute or monolithic position.

Doing philosophy means reflecting not only on our experience in relation to ourselves but also on how we relate to others and to the world at large. Reflection involves description, explanation, and interpretation. There is always a point of view (in terms of *naya* from Jaina philosophy) at work and whoever puts one's own point of view in an absolute position is guilty of not taking alternative ways of doing philosophy seriously. Some philosophers claim a privileged position for a comprehensive master principle called the »transcendental subject« which they universalize and singularize. But there can be no further subject existing alongside the empirical one.

One could argue that it is one and the same *philosophia perennis* which all philosophical traditions deal with, and which provides us with

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different answers. This thesis should be rejected from the perspective of an intercultural philosophical orientation because it is heavily overloaded with ontological, speculative metaphysical, and ideological commitments. This one perennial philosophy must resist the temptation of being made ontological. All ways of doing philosophy are committed only to the singular universal regulative idea of *philosophia perennis*. Karl Jaspers is one of the very few modern philosophers who seems to interpret *philosophia perennis* in the spirit of an intercultural philosophical orientation. »It is philosophia perennis,« he writes, »which provides the common ground where most distant persons are related with each other, the Chinese with the Westerners, thinkers 2,500 years past with those of the present« (Jaspers 1982: 56).[1] An intercultural philosophical orientation pleads for unity without uniformity. It is not a matter of unity in diversity but »unity in face of diversity.«

Secondly, intercultural philosophy delineates its field of enquiry by concentrating on the questions that have been asked in different traditions. Philosophical questions not only outnumber philosophical answers, but they are also more persisting. There is, in other words, a primacy of questions over answers in human life, and the discipline called philosophy is no exception to this rule. In Wittgensteinian parlance, philosophical questions are marked by a kind of »family resemblance.« Answers to philosophical questions from different traditions, on the other hand, are few in number and often do not survive the ravages of time. This asymmetry between questions and answers makes us wary and warns us not universalize one particular way of doing philosophy.

Thirdly, intercultural philosophical thinking rejects the idea of a total purity of a culture. This belief is at best a myth or a fiction. The same applies to philosophy, which is one of the finest products of the human mind and of human culture. In this context, it is necessary to ask: What, on one hand, makes European, Chinese, Indian, African and Latin-American philosophies particularly European, Chinese, Indian, African and Latin-American and what, on the other, makes them philosophies? Philosophy is a term, which, by itself, presumes a universal applicability. Any viable answer to this question must take into account

[1] K. Jaspers, »Einleitung,« in H. Saner (ed.), *Weltgeschichte der Philosophie. Aus dem Nachlaß*, München/Zürich: Piper Verlag, 1982, Author's translation.

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those cross-cultural elements that shape all philosophical traditions to varying degrees.

Intercultural philosophical thinking thus rejects any absolutist or exclusive view from any one philosophical tradition – be it European or non-European – claiming to be in sole possession of the one, singular philosophical Truth. In the past, the Greco-Eurocentric concept of philosophy could succeed in casting itself as exclusively absolute due to external factors like imperialism, colonialism, and contingent political power arrangements.[2] Such absolutist claims lead to a narrow culturalism, which is against the open and tolerant spirit of intercultural philosophical orientation. The general term »philosophy« possesses both cultural and cross-cultural aspects. The very notion of European philosophy, for example, testifies to this fact, for it underlies the universal applicability of the general term philosophy along with the legitimate use of the adjective European. The same analysis applies to Chinese philosophy, Indian philosophy, and so forth. Different cultures and philosophies influence each other and still retain their idiosyncratic features, all of which enables us to apply different adjectives to the nouns »philosophy« and »culture.« Nonetheless, in philosophizing, we engage in a cross-cultural universal, which is only secondarily Greek, Indian, Chinese, etc., and not the other way round.

Fourthly, this approach calls for attention to be given to a »minimal universality« of philosophical rationality across culturally sedimented differences. The universality of philosophical rationality shows its presence in the different philosophical traditions of the world. At the same time, it transcends the specific limits of the traditions and binds them together in the sense of the prefix »inter-.« Its presence is that of an »in-between,« as will be discussed below. The fear that philosophy could lose its identity, could become deconstructed and relativistic due to intercultural philosophizing, is unfounded. The deconstructivist aspect of intercultural philosophy does not relativize universal applicability as such. It merely seeks to relativize this applicability when the term »philosophy« is defined by the exclusive use of certain traditions. The exclusive relation between truth and tradition needs to be deconstructed. Truth *of* the tradition and truth *in* the tradition are two dif-

[2] F. C. Copleston, *Philosophies and Cultures*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980; R. A. Mall, and H. Hülsmann, *Die drei Geburtsorte der Philosophie. China, Indien, Europa*, Bonn: Bouvier, 1989.

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ferent things and must not be confused with one another. Such differences, however, cannot deny, or even undermine, the universal unity of philosophical thinking. In this regard, intercultural philosophy cannot be simply dismissed as an offshoot of postmodern thinking, although it is indeed supported by the spirit of postmodernity. It exists in its own right beyond mere temporality, historicity, and conceptuality.

Fifthly, intercultural philosophy stands for a process of emancipation from all types of centrisms, whether European or non-European. It *does* in fact allow for a preferential and differentiating treatment of philosophical traditions and yet it is neither discriminatory nor monolithic. It pleads for a »situated unsituatedness« or an »unsituated situatedness.« It enables us to critically and sympathetically examine one philosophical tradition from the point of view of the other and vice versa. In a certain sense, the phrase intercultural philosophy is tautological, for philosophy is by its very nature intercultural.

Sixthly, intercultural philosophy ushers in the idea of a new historiography of philosophy, which bids farewell to the Eurocentric, Hegelian way of writing books on the history of philosophy. The history of philosophy is not only the history of Western philosophy but also of all traditions of philosophy.

Finally, the spirit of interculturality endorses pluralism, diversity, and difference as values, and it does not take them as deviations from unity and uniformity. It is wrong to view diversity as Aristotelian accidents in the sense of a privation of unity. An intercultural horizon can very well envisage the »compossibility« (to use a Leibnizian term) of diverse cultural patterns striking a new note between total alterity and universality. The concept of order that intercultural thinking implies is an order in, through, and with differences, which allows for a chorus of different voices.

III Philosophical Encounters Past and Present

The following section critically examines three paradigmatic cultural encounters with the aim of finding out viable means for a peaceful and fruitful encounter between philosophies, cultures, and religions. The Arabic-Islamic encounter with the Zoroastrian cult in ancient Iran is an example of political and religious intolerance in spite of the fact that the Islamization of Iran was not always violent. The meeting of

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Indian Buddhism with the cultural traditions of China, Korea, and Japan exemplifies religious and political tolerance occurring together in spite of the tensions – big and small – accompanying this encounter. The encounter of Judaic, Christian, and Islamic philosophies, religions, and cultures in twelfth and thirteenth-century Spain is another example, although one where religious tolerance arises with political intolerance.

We realize that we are badly in need of an intercultural global liberalism, which, in opposition to the brand of classical European liberalism that paradoxically has gone hand in hand with colonialism, imperialism, and missionarism, instead argues for the value of unity without uniformity and takes pluralism seriously without falling into non-committal racial relativism. To be worth its name, liberalism must not be biased against certain ways of life in spite of its situatedness within a particular tradition.

The kind of intercultural global liberalism that we need today must be open and tolerant enough in order to be self-critical. Put negatively, the binding character of such a liberalism consists in its abstaining from exclusively universalizing a particular way of thought and life (as has happened with classical liberalism) and, put positively, it consists in fostering a private and public recognition of a plurality of values which might coexist alongside each other and lead to fruitful encounters with reciprocal enrichment between the cultures concerned. As Professor Kim (2000: 69–70) rightly stresses in his »Prospects for a Universal Ethics,« a search for common universal values must be guided by our conviction and vision that any search for unity has to take place in the face of diversity, which, rightly understood, is enriching, creative, and tolerant.[3] This diversity is not only a mere empirical fact, but it is also to be found in our cultural, philosophical, religious, and political frameworks.

The discovery of non-European cultures is mainly a European achievement leading to the unintended irony of relativizing European culture itself. For example, some missionaries went out to convert others, but some of them were themselves converted. At present, non-Europeans also think and write about Europe, explain it, and make jud-

[3] Y. Kim, »Philosophy and the Prospects for a Universal Ethics,« in M. Stackhouse, and P. Paris (eds.), *Religion and the Powers of the Common Life*, Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000.

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gements about it. Europe today continues to be a center, but it is not the only one. The *de facto* intercultural hermeneutic situation has outgrown the Greco-European and Abrahamic interpretation of culture, philosophy, and religion. Post-colonial Europe is encountering a non-European discovery of Europe. This change differs in kind from the invasions and discoveries of foreign lands in the past.

Furthermore, it is characterized by a fourfold hermeneutic dialectic: 1) European self-understanding, 2) European understanding of non-Europeans, 3) Non-European self-understanding and 4) Non-European understanding of Europe. In addition, philosophers, theologians, and ethnologists can avail of a double perspective today: they can turn to themselves and make their own culture an object of study.

Our intercultural orientation welcomes this change. The desire to understand and the desire to be understood go hand-in-hand. The mere desire to understand may turn out to be empty and the total desire only to be understood may become blind. In the long history of colonization, whether in culture, religion, or politics, the desire to be understood was quite powerful on the part of the colonizers. And it is not always wrong to maintain that orientalists, missionaries, and ethnologists did in fact play a conspiratorial role for quite a long time. They took great pains to learn foreign languages like Sanskrit, Chinese, etc. in order not so much to understand others, but to be understood by them.

Today, given the plurality of cultural encounters, it is better to be hesitant in advancing one's own claim to truth. Very much in the spirit of an intercultural philosophical orientation, Jonardon Ganeri (2012: 12) speaks of two types of orientation: »orientation by means of the polestar« and »orientation by means of a compass.« The polestar is a fixed, distant point upon which the traveller – or here, the inquirer – sets their sights. Orientation by means of a compass is quite different.[4] Different thought patterns are like compasses guiding us with the help of different maxims and principles on our way to a single regulative idea, the polestar. Radical othering involves claiming truth for oneself and at the same time underrating the importance and virtue of relativism and pluralism.[5] The foreignness of the other confronts us within

[4] J. Ganeri, *Identity As Reasoned Choice: A South Asian Perspective on the Reach and Resources of Public and Practical Reason in Shaping Individual Identities*, London: Continuum, 2012.

[5] J. Kekes, *The Morality of Pluralism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

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our own cultures. A general similarity between intra- and intercultural understandings and misunderstandings exists.

The coincidental meeting of different cultures, philosophies, and religions in the wake of modernity (with all its global technological formations) calls for an intensive and reciprocal dialogue on the part of all concerned. In the light of this situation, it would be short-sighted to solve problems of mutual understanding by regarding the truth and falsity of a definite culture, religion, or philosophy in metaphysical terms. Any *a priori*, metaphysical, or ideological decision precludes the possibility of genuine understanding.

The famous Latin-American philosopher Leopoldo Zea (1989: 32) rightly criticizes the self-centredness of Europe and tries to develop a genuine alternative to it through his pioneering interpretation of the Greek word *logos*. The concept of *logos* stands for two things: a) the human capacity of reason and understanding and b) for the ability to make use of words and language in order to communicate with others. *Logos* may be of Greek origin, but it is not true to say that the idea of *logos* is exclusively Greek and European.[6] In order to make sense of the term »art,« we do not need to understand its etymology. Rather, we ask, what do we do when we engage ourselves in artistic activities? Similarly, in order to know what philosophy is, we should not so much ask where the word comes from, but what do we do when we philosophize. Philosophers like Georg W. F. Hegel, Martin Heidegger, and Edmund Husserl succumbed to the view that doing philosophy is an exclusive property of the Greek and European mind. Such an attitude has led to a very restrictive definition of philosophy.

The problem of tolerance and intolerance has always played a vital role in cultural encounters. There are positions which are intolerant in theory, but which, for different reasons, are tolerant in practice. Their being tolerant in practice must then be accounted for in terms of the boundary conditions that force an intolerant theory to be tolerant in practice. But there are also positions that are tolerant in theory but may turn out to be quite intolerant in practice. This again may be due to boundary conditions that might politicize the otherwise tolerant theory and thereby undermine its moral claim. There is also the third possibility that no boundary conditions are able to overcome the negative and fundamentalist thrust of an intolerant theory. This is the worst

[6] L. Zea, *Signale aus dem Abseits*, Munich: Eberhard, 1989.

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type of intolerance and deserves no tolerant treatment in return. The spirit of an intercultural orientation requires a deep commitment to tolerance in intercultural understanding and communication.

For a peaceful and fruitful cultural encounter, there are two strategies to be put into practice. First, we should be prepared to fight back theoretical forms of absolutism by offering arguments against exclusive ideologies and by arguing for pluralistic approaches in epistemology, methodology, ethics, and morals. Secondly, we must find out practical ways and means of confronting the violent practice of absolutism. We normally, but not always, underrate the dangerous consequences of theoretical fanaticism and wait, sometimes too long, before it becomes practically far too powerful. In the name and for the sake of a peaceful cultural encounter there is no other way than protesting, in differing ways, against any exclusive ideology, as is seen in many reactions to human rights violations. Our age is sometimes called the age of human rights. Rights without duties and responsibilities may lead to an attitude defined by little more than demands. There are human rights that we deserve only when we are ready to do our duties and carry out our responsibilities. Rights and duties are two sides of the same coin. According to the great Buddhist king Ashoka, everyone has the right to choose the religion he or she wants but he or she has at the same time the duty and the responsibility to respect the religion of others.

A peaceful encounter among religions, for example, demands that there must be room for a theory and practice of pluralism, even in the case of so-called revealed religions. Polytheism and pluralistic theology, rightly understood, are more tolerant and conducive to peace among religions than monotheism. This is because a pluralistic approach to truth – secular or sacral – is by nature open and tolerant. A common conviction that cultures possess basic similarities and illuminating differences that enable them that they meet to differ and defer to meet is a need of our age.

Judging from the daunting weight of empirical evidence, properly peaceful cultural encounters may not be very likely, but they are also not impossible either. We may follow the advice of the social philosopher Max Horkheimer and be a theoretical pessimist and a practical optimist (Horkheimer 1981: 175).[7]

[7] M. Horkheimer, *Gesellschaft im Übergang: Aufsätze, Reden und Vorträge 1942–1970*, Frankfurt: Fischer, ²1981.

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Today, every philosophy ought to cooperate with others and form part of a larger whole, thus making every philosophy a cross-cultural phenomenon. We should accept and recognize more than one genuine *Gestalt* of philosophy. We should not err in thinking that our own way of doing philosophy might be the only possible way of doing philosophy at all. In this regard, a conceptual clarification, which is to say a philosophical grounding of interculturality becomes very pertinent.[8] Let us now turn to this task.

IV Towards a Theory of an Interculturally Oriented »Analogous Hermeneutics«

As stated above, the alien, the other, is given to us before we attempt to understand the other. In order to understand it, we stand in need of an adequate hermeneutic method that will allow us to work out analogous structural patterns, despite the inaccessibility of the other's contents.

In cultural encounters, we may distinguish between three models of hermeneutics:

(a) There is a hermeneutics of identity that identifies understanding with self-understanding. Such a hermeneutical approach is tautological and boils down to the empty thesis that, in order to be able to understand a particular cultural context, one has to be a member of that culture. There are several reasons for the prevalence of this assumption in many encounters, the consequences of which have been disastrous. Hegel is a case in point. For him, philosophy, culture and religion are Western and solely Western achievements. Non-Western philosophies, cultures, and religions cannot either be classified as philosophies or are mere preliminary stages of a process culminating in Western philosophy, culture, and religion. This view is untenable, but nonetheless continues to have its dogmatic defenders (*cf*. Hegel 2001: 128–268).[9]

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[8] F. M. Wimmer, *Interkulturelle Philosophie. Geschichte und Theorie*, Vol. 1, Vienna: Passagen-Verlag, 1990; Mall, and Hülsmann (1989); H. Kimmerle, *Die Dimension des Interkulturellen. Philosophie in Afrika – afrikanische Philosophie; Supplemente und Verallgemeinerungsschritte*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994; Copleston (1990); Jaspers (1982).

[9] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of History, With Prefaces by Charles Hegel and the Translator John Sibree*, Kitchener, Ontario: Batoche Books, 2001 (URL: http://socserv.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/hegel/history.pdf, last accessed on 18 March 2014).

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(b) Contrary to the above position there is the hermeneutics of total difference which completely ignores the other. Here it must be noted that total difference, if there is such a thing at all, cannot find any further articulation through which its fictitious character might be displayed. If the hermeneutics of identity aims at understanding in accordance with a complete change of what is to be understood, a hermeneutics of total difference, on the other hand, makes understanding at the very outset impossible. In both cases what is foreign is lost. Such approaches have indeed operated in some cultural encounters. In the days of colonialism, imperialism and missionarism, hardly any attempt was made to understand the other although there was a concerted attempt to make the West understood by the other. The other was considered to be so radically different that no understanding was said to be possible. One can call the hermeneutics of total difference a radical pluralism that disregards the necessity and feasibility of commonly shared values.

(c) It follows from what has been said above that both total identity and total difference (total commensurability and radical incommensurability) are fictions. An »analogous hermeneutics« rejects the hermeneutics of total identity because it reduces the other to an echo of oneself and repeats its own self-understanding in the name of understanding the other. On the other hand, total difference makes the understanding of the other rather impossible. There is no one trans-cultural universal hermeneutic subject over and above the overlapping dynamic structures among cultures. One can belong to one's own culture *and* be a critic of it. The concept of analogous hermeneutics is led by the conviction that truth and values are present in all cultures that invite us to cooperate in finding out a general framework of and for intercultural understanding and communication.

The word »hermeneutics« is, no doubt, Greek and Western, but its idea and practice is an anthropological constant. Indian thought, for example, possesses a very rich hermeneutic tradition. The long lineage of *bhasya*, *upbhasya*, *tika* and *tipanni* verifies this. The science of hermeneutics as an art of interpretation and understanding is undergoing a fundamental change in the global context of interculturality today and an unprecedented widening of horizons. This change means that every hermeneutics has its own culturally sedimented roots and cannot unconditionally claim universal legitimacy. Any dialogue, above all intercultural dialogues, must take this insight as a point of departure.

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In the history of Greco-Christian-European philosophy many have appealed to the term »analogy« in order to solve a very perplexing problem arising from the Holy Scriptures and Hellenistic philosophy, having to do with the two paradoxical messages of the incommensurability of God with his creation on the one hand and of the possibility of a comparison between the Creator and the created on the other. Since God and His creation do not belong to the same species, analogy in theology and speculative metaphysics has always suffered from a tension between univocality and equivocation. Our use of the term »analogy« here relates to things and beings belonging to the same species, and we can very well use the means of analogy as a legitimate source of knowledge. In the field of intercultural understanding, analogy stands for, firstly, a consciousness of non-identity, secondly, for a consciousness of difference, thirdly, for a consciousness of less than total difference and, fourthly, for a consciousness of less than total identity. Analogy is defined here as a likeness of relation between unlike things.

Hermeneutics in the intercultural context presumes an understanding of philosophy in which traditions are not radically different. Were such a difference to be the case, we would not be entitled to use the same general concept for those traditions. In that case, we would not even be able to articulate this radical difference, for the very general concept would lose its applicability. Thus, we are obliged to operate with an analogical understanding of philosophy and culture. Philosophies differ as instances of the same general concept.

My conviction is that the two fictions of total translatability and commensurability on one side and of radical untranslatability and incommensurability among cultures on the other must be given up in favour of a metonymic thesis of dynamically overlapping structures. Since no culture is a windowless monad, all cultures possess points of intercultural overlap occurring in varying degrees. Total identity is the dead end of philosophy and total difference lacks even the very minimum of agreement among ways of doing philosophy. This bare common minimum allows us to accept and respect that counter-arguments are arguments after all in spite of the fact that they are sometimes contrary and even contradictory.

Since no philosophical reflection can fully surpass the object of those reflections, there is always an open possibility of multiple expressions. This is the bedrock for our practice of translating one culture into another. A closer look at the history of ideas from an intercultural

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perspective clearly shows that the practice of translation does not succeed; it rather *precedes* the question regarding the possibility of the same. It is a wrong move to start with the possibility or impossibility of translation before taking actual steps at translation. The case is similar with regard to understanding the other. Our not being able to understand the other can be traced to not taking the necessary steps to do so. Regarding the problem of translating cultures, Paul Ricoeur (1974: 290–291) says that there is no absolute alienation and that there is always a genuine possibility of translation. One can understand without repeating, can imagine without experiencing, and can transform oneself into the other while still remaining the self that one is.[10]

Philosophy working in the field of cultural comparison subscribes to a hermeneutic model of reciprocity. A desire to understand the other should be accompanied by a desire to be understood by the other. An intercultural orientation offers us a medium, a common space of discourse, where philosophers of all traditions come together and converse with each other with full dedication to truth. This form of philosophical practice is a crucial feature of intercultural philosophy. Comparative philosophy today cannot use traditions as mere objects of comparison. It must ask the question of what those traditions can learn from each other. It is, no doubt, true that in our attempt at understanding others, we cannot fully avoid the hermeneutic circle. We must, however, take care not to dogmatize it either. Those who take the hermeneutic circle to be our philosophic fate fail to avoid repeating the error of pursuing self-understanding in the name of understanding the other. For this reason, intercultural philosophy rejects the idea of a hermeneutics of identity, which is intolerant of differences. In our attempt to understand others, we meet to differ and defer to meet. We also experience the other through its resistance to our attempt to assimilate it fully.

In my attempt at developing interculturally-oriented »analogical hermeneutics« I have greatly benefitted from the Jaina ideas of *anekantavada*, *syadvada* and *nayavada*. This methodology does not necessarily »ontologize« and it can be well applied to our present need for intercultural encounters of philosophical traditions in a global context. Added to this, this Jaina methodology is deconstructive of absolutist truth-claims of particular standpoints *(naya)*.

Anekantavada (many-sidedness or non-onesidedness), stands for

[10] P. Ricoeur, *Geschichte und Wahrheit*, München: List, 1974.

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the thesis that the nature of reality is such that it can be and should be approached from many perspectives. In other words, conflicting theories are different standpoints for viewing the same reality. No standpoint is *the* standpoint.

Syadvada, the doctrine of conditional predication, is a powerful methodology in the spirit of a multi-valued logic. The underlying notion is that the nature of reality is so complex that no one simple predication can do justice to it. Thus the prefix syad (maybe) leads to more than one predication. There are seven predications *(saptabhangi)*.

Nayavada (doctrine of points of view) stands for a systematic theory of standpoints *(naya)*. One particular *naya* cannot grasp the whole truth. The seven-fold predication is termed *saptabhanginaya*.[11]

The Jaina argument for a reciprocal recognition of different standpoints *(naya)* that are not exclusive, but rather complementary to each other, is one of the best methodological moves in the service of intercultural understanding. Two standpoints may be contrary or even contradictory, but they continue to remain standpoints. This insight leads us to the recognition of overlapping contents and it is the source of the logic of the conversation that far outstrips the two fictions of total commensurability and radical difference. The moment that we universalize one particular standpoint *(naya)*, we are led to a wrong standpoint *(durnaya)*, which is not only violent on a practical level, but implies some manner of theoretical violence. It is this theoretical violence which we get rid of with the help of the theory of *anekantavada*. Bimal Krishna Matilal (1981: 6) observes that »Mahavira carried this concept of non-violence from the domain of practical behaviour to the domain of intellectual and philosophic discussion.«

Applying this methodology, I have tried to work out an intercultural hermeneutic approach which is non-reductive, open, creative, and tolerant. It approves of overlapping centers, searches for them, finds, and cultivates them. These overlapping structures are the common factors which make communication possible, and they also allow philosophies and cultures to retain their individual characters.

[11] B. K. Matilal, *The Central Philosophy of Jainism (Anekantavada)*, Ahmedabad: L. D. Institute of Indology, 1981.

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V Comparative Philosophy: Then and Now

Until recently, the ill-conceived and privileged paradigm of comparison was a movement from the West to the East. This mode of comparison implicitly or explicitly started with a pre-fixed definition of philosophy, which led to different forms of centrism. Not only did this comparative philosophy have a strong hegemonic bias, it also proved to be unproductive and sterile because it mechanically placed philosophies of different traditions side-by-side to highlight rigid contrasts between Western and non-Western philosophies. For example, Indian philosophy was said to be practical, intuitive, and spiritual in a way that could hardly be differentiated from religion. Western philosophy on the other hand was said to be rational, analytic, logical, theoretical, and systematic. In all fairness, this attitude was found among Indian philosophers too. In my graduate days at the University of Calcutta even some of the academic philosophers maintained that *darshana* (view, vision, system, and philosophy) is more than philosophy in its Western self-understanding; it is superior to philosophy because it is a spiritual activity leading to liberation. It looks like an irony of fate that the same adjective »spiritual« has a negative connotation when used by Western thinkers and a positive connotation when used by Indian thinkers. It really hardly matters whether it is a *pundit* sitting in Benaras (Varanasi) declaring Indian philosophy to be *the* philosophy, or it is academics sitting in, say Freiburg, Germany or in Oxford claiming something similar for their respective enterprises. In any case we are guilty of self-absolutization. These comparativists seem to be blind towards the fact that these attributions can as well be applied when we compare philosophies *intra*culturally, to say nothing of working *inter*culturally.

Comparative philosophy can be meaningfully carried out today only if it is guided by an interculturally-oriented conviction that philosophy as such is not the sole possession of any one tradition, whether Western or non-Western. It was a wrong move in the early phase of comparative philosophy to set up rigid contrasts between Western and Eastern philosophies. Phrases like Indian, Chinese, Western, and German philosophy are intellectual constructs. In global discourse, all traditions – intra- and intercultural – converse with each other. It is not persons, countries, or even systems of thought that should matter to comparative philosophizing, but the problems, the questions, and their treatment in philosophical traditions all over the world. Added to this,

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the idea of a linear development of philosophy culminating in some single philosophical system or truth needs to be rejected. It does not matter whether such a culminating point is the philosophy of René Descartes, Hegel, Husserl, Nagarjuna or Shankara. An interculturally-oriented comparative philosophy should be understood as a two-way path between Western and non-Western philosophical traditions. All such traditions can learn from sympathetic criticism, mutual appreciation through the recognition of fundamental affinities, and illuminating differences. As Gupta and Mohanty (1996: xv) write: »Philosophy, then, can become a conversation of humankind, and not merely a conversation of the West.«[12]

Philosophy qua philosophy then has no one mother tongue, be it Greek, German, Sanskrit, or Chinese. Even though language structures do influence our way of doing philosophy, they do not fix it completely. Heraclites and Parmenides philosophized differently in one and the same Greek language. The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the variety one sees in Buddhist and Hindu philosophies (in Sanskrit), in the works of Lao Tzu and Confucius (in Chinese), and in those of Arthur Schopenhauer and Hegel (in German).

Today, comparative philosophy should be carried out in the intercultural mode argued for in this article. An intercultural attitude accompanies all cultures like a shadow and does not allow them to absolutize themselves; and this is the very condition for the possibility of genuine comparative philosophy. This attitude also leads to cooperation and communication between different cultures. To use a common metaphor, comparison is blind without intercultural philosophy and intercultural philosophy is lame without comparison. The spirit of interculturalism endorses pluralism as a value without undermining any commitment to one's own position.

Furthermore, an intercultural philosophical orientation does not fix the standard of comparison, the *tertium comparationis*, solely within one particular philosophical tradition. As noted in Husserlian phenomenology of shared overlapping contents, if extremes ever happen to meet in a common overlapping space, then this space is the habitat of a *tertium comparationis* available to the phenomenological method of description apart from any speculation. Similarly, our search for an

[12] B. Gupta, and J. Mohanty (ed.), *Philosophical Questions: East and West*, Maryland/Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996.

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overlapping *tertium comparationis* as the real seat of an analogical conceptual framework can end in the »in-between« realm of cultures, philosophies, and religions. This common intercultural space is phenomenologically and experientially given and it is empirically evidenced. It lives in and through the cultures, philosophies, and traditions. Its only habitat is the »in-between« avoiding any universalization of a local tradition. With the help of such a standard of comparison, we can be sensitive to both similarities and differences.

VI Conclusion

The understandable fear that interculturality might bring about deconstruction of terms like philosophy, truth, culture, religion, etc. is unfounded. It is the singular, monolithic, absolutist, and exclusivist use of these terms that calls for deconstruction, and not anything having to do with the ongoing search for truth that philosophers of all traditions might use as a regulative idea. The search for truth requires a way of seeing things that is acutely aware of its own place amongst many similar or dissimilar views and that declines to put one's own perspective in an absolute position. From this position, there is a need to develop some sort of a philosophical, cultural, religious, and political modesty in order to be able to communicate even in the absence of consensus. There is a primacy of communication over consensus, and acquiescence is more helpful than consensus, guided by the insight that one's own point of view may not be the last word of wisdom.

Although having a point of view means thinking, feeling, and acting from within a core tradition with a concentric horizon which may cover the whole of humanity, it does not prevent one from thinking globally but acting locally, thus steering clear of both extreme individualism and narrow communitarianism. One can cultivate an »intercultural liberalism« which does not reduce, does not wait for total consensus to take place and calls for intercultural understanding and communication in the face of diversity. The presence of overlaps and of convergences enables us to compromise in spite of divergences.

To compromise means understanding and not just transposing oneself into the mind and framework of the other, but rather sharing common concerns and seeking answers accompanied by a readiness to be changed in the process of the encounter. This is a readiness born out

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of an intercultural orientation whose *sine qua non* is the philosophical conviction that standpoints are standpoints after all. There is always interplay between worldviews, and understanding in an intercultural context is always sensitive and respectful to the diversity and complexity of human existence. Understanding means recognizing cultural identities as a good, which is the source of legitimate claims. Understanding means seeing in an analogous spirit, the legitimacy of other claims. The phenomenon of understanding is a two-way street, because our desire to understand the other and our desire to be understood by the other go hand in hand and are two sides of the same coin.

The idea of intercultural philosophy envisaged here aims at a philosophy that makes us sensitive to a general concept of philosophical truth omnipresent in differing philosophical traditions. Understood as an orientation, intercultural philosophy has several dimensions. Philosophically speaking, the singular *philosophia perennis* is no one person's possession alone. Considered theologically, interculturality is the name of inter-religiosity bearing the firm conviction that the singular *religio perennis (sanatana dharma)* is also no one's possession all alone. Politically, interculturality is another name for a pluralistic democratic attitude with the conviction that political wisdom does not belong to only one group, party, or ideology. All philosophies of history that, with absolutist flair, claim to possess the only true real message are politically fundamentalist and practically dangerous. The pedagogical perspective is the most important one, for it prepares the way for the practical implementation of an intercultural orientation. Preparing for this culture is the central task of all philosophers involved in comparative thinking.

–Ram Adhar Mall, Jena, Germany

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The Philosophical Roots of Racial Essentialism and Its Legacy

Abstract
Racial essentialism or the idea of unchanging racial substances that support human social hierarchy, was introduced into philosophy by David Hume and expanded upon by Immanuel Kant. These strong influences continued into W. E. B. Du Bois' moral and spiritual idea of a black race, as a destiny to be fulfilled past a world of racism and inequality. In the twenty-first century, »the race debates« between »eliminativists« and »retentionists« swirl around the lack of independent biological scientific foundation for physical human races and the ongoing importance of race as a social ordering principle and source of identity. Analyses of the idea of race are of philosophical concern for historical and conceptual reasons, as well as ongoing issues of contemporary identity and social injustice.

Keywords
essentialism, race debates, racial retention, W. E. B. Du Bois, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, science and race, racial eliminativism.

I Introduction

Racial essentialism is widely repudiated by that name, but aspects of the concept nonetheless persist in contemporary ideas of racial identity and social justice. This is a paradox, if not an outright contradiction.

Racial essentialism is a bona fide philosophical subject, not only as a matter of »applied philosophy,« but insofar as Western philosophers helped to create the idea of racial essences, based on core metaphysical concepts in their tradition. The idea of racial essences, as the source of racial hierarchies, emerged in the intellectual communities of modernity during the early days of modern anthropology and biology. Dif-

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ferent versions of that idea were promulgated by David Hume and Immanuel Kant, in ways that would be considered racist today.[1] The unchanging essence posit in the idea of racial essence goes back further to Aristotelian ideas of essence and can be found later on in analogies to metallurgical notions of purity in the nineteenth century.[2] A number of twenty-first century academic philosophers in the United States and United Kingdom (and perhaps more broadly) wrangle with ideas of racial essentialism in what are called »The Race Debates.«[3] The retention of essentialist ideas of race also has advocates committed to racial egalitarianism in contemporary political, moral, and legal contexts, who are often not aware of its philosophical lineage.

Part I of this paper is a discussion of racial essentialism of Hume and Kant. Part II is an interpretation of their influence through the opposition between the twentieth century heirs of W. E. B. Du Bois on the one hand and of Franz Boas (especially in the biological sciences) on the other. Part III concludes with a reflection on what may be an incommensurability in thought about the foundations of what we know as »race.«

II The Philosophical Roots of Racial Essentialism

As a conceptual answer to the question of what race is, racial essentialism is a vague hybrid of racial taxonomy and Aristotelian ideas of biological essence. Biological essences, as determinative of both species and racial identities, have been supposed to be inherited, and unchan-

[1] See H. Kimmerle, ›Hegel's Eurocentric Concept of Philosophy,‹ pp. 99–117 in this journal.

[2] Nineteenth century metaphysical ideas of race used the analogy of metals to apply ideas of racial essences, such that mixed race individuals were instances of »amalgamation.« See: N. Zack, *Race and Mixed Race* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), pp. 78–85. Contemporary discussions of reference and natural kinds typically restrict notions of essences to chemistry, e. g. the discussion of »water« as literally referring to H_2O rather than something »in the head;« and indeed, chemistry is probably the best candidate for real scientific essentialism, although not in any way that has anything to do with human races. See H. Putnam's classic ›Meaning and Reference,‹ *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 70, No. 19, Seventieth Annual Meeting of the American Philosophical Association Eastern Division, 1973, pp. 699–711.

[3] An April 2014 conference at the University of San Francisco bore this title: »The Race Debates: From Philosophy to Biomedical Research,« (URL: https://sites.google.com/site/theracedebates2014/, last accessed on 20 May 2014).

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ging.[4] The core components of racial essentialism are at least the following: There are human races; each race is distinct from all other races in important ways; members of each distinct race have either a general trait that causes all of their other racial characteristics or a set of racial traits that is the »essence« of their racial identities. Racial essences may be limited to physical traits, or, as prevalent over much of modern western intellectual history, include cultural, moral, and aesthetic traits. Furthermore, racial essentialism can be understood as a type of thinking about human difference that labels people in ways that apply to whole persons. For instance, while shortness or thinness are traits understood to co-exist alongside other traits, an essentialist view of a white, black, or Asian person categorizes the entire human being.[5]

Historically, racial essentialism was a convenient tool for creating doctrines of white racial superiority and non-white inferiority during the Age of Discovery when Europeans began commercial projects of resource extraction, appropriation, domination, and slavery.[6] The lands and peoples of Africa, Asia, and the Americas were taken as the »raw materials« for these projects; and moral racial hierarchies rationalized the contradiction between Enlightenment egalitarian ideals and how non-whites were treated by whites. By the mid-eighteenth century, the existence of biological human races, ranked according to worth and status, could be taken for granted by philosophers and other intellectuals. Thus, in his 1754 edition of *Essays Moral, Political and Literary,* Hume wrote in a footnote:

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[4] The unchanging nature of essences is an ontological presupposition and may not be reflected in the epistemology of categorizing living things. For recent experimental findings, see: J. Hampton, Z. Estes, and S. Simmons, ›Metamorphosis: Essence, Appearance, and Behavior in the Categorization of Natural Kinds,‹ *Memory & Cognition,* Vol. 35, No. 7, 2007, pp. 1785–1800.

[5] On the idea of totalistic labeling that is historically contingent, see I. Hacking, ›Making Up People,‹ *London Review of Books,* Vol. 28, No. 16, 2006.

[6] See, for instance »The American Anthropological Association's 1998 Statement on Race,« (URL: http://www.aaanet.org/stmts/racepp.htm; last accessed on 20 May 2014). For a discussion of the Statement's philosophical innocence, see N. Zack, ›Philosophical Aspects of the 1998 AAA [American Anthropological Association] Statement on Race,‹ *Anthropological Theory,* Vol. 1, No. 4, 2001, pp. 445–465.

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I am apt to suspect the negroes and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites […] There are Negroe slaves dispersed all over Europe, of which none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity, tho' low people, without education, will start up amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession.[7]

When Hume wrote, as now, species were viewed as the smallest group of a biological kind capable of reproducing fertile offspring and races were groups within species that could interbreed – a species difference was and is held to be greater than a racial difference.[8] However, Hume did not take care to distinguish between races and species, perhaps in keeping with his *polygenicism*, the doctrine that human races had evolved separately. When his contemporary James Beattie objected to his generalization because it lacked empirical support, Hume casually rewrote the footnote for the 1776 edition: »I am apt to suspect the negroes to be naturally inferior to the whites. There scarcely was a civilized nation of that complexion, not even of individual eminent in action or speculation.«[9]

The shift in Hume's footnotes from a focus on individual aptitudes to group cultural taxonomy set the stage for Kant's more explicitly essentialist taxonomy of races. Kant, as a monogenicist, believed that all humans descended from the same *stem*. Anticipating Darwin, he insisted on an explanation of human difference in terms of heredity:

Among the deviations – i. e., the hereditary differences of animals belonging to a single stock – those which, when transplanted (displaced to other areas), maintain themselves over protracted generation, and which also generate hybrid young whenever they interbreed with other deviations of the same stock, are called *races* […] In this way Negroes and whites are not different species of humans (for they belong presumably to one stock), but they are different races, for each perpetuates itself in every area, and they generate between them children that are necessarily hybrid, or blendings (mulattoes).[10]

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[7] D. Hume, »Of National Characters,« in T. H. Greene, and T. H. Grose (eds.), *Essays Moral, Political and Literary* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1875), 2 vols., Essay XXI, p. 249.

[8] There are a number of different species concepts at this time and debate over whether the concept is useful or necessary in biology. See: R. A. Richards (ed.), *The Species Problem: A Philosophical Analysis*, Cambridge Studies in Philosophy and Biology, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

[9] For a discussion of this controversy between Hume and Beattie, see: R. H. Popkin, ›Hume's Racism,‹ *Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 9/2, Nos. 2–3, 1977–1978, pp. 211–226.

[10] I. Kant, »On the Different Races of Man,« in Earl W. Count (ed.), *This Is Race: An*

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Kant included Hindustanis and Kalmuks in his taxonomy of races and simply asserted, »The reason for assuming the Negroes and Whites to be fundamental races is self-evident.«[11] Thus, Kant's monogenicism, as based on the knowledge that different races could interbreed, did not otherwise lead him to minimize differences among races.

According to Kant, the important characteristics distinguishing one race from another were moral, aesthetic, and intellectual: Man had a distinctive human essence that permitted him to develop civilization, but that ability varied among (what Kant referred to as) nations, because talent was unevenly distributed.[12] Race, for Kant, was conflated with nationality and geographic origin, with the result that the only race that could develop the arts and sciences were white Europeans. The differences in national characters resulting from »unseen formative causes« and geographical differences were evident in »the distinctive feeling of the beautiful and the sublime« – Germans were superior to all other Europeans, but the greatest difference was between Europe and Africa. In discussing Africans, Kant deferred to Hume as an authority, reiterating:

> The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the *trifling*. Mr. Hume challenges anyone to cite a single example in which a Negro has shown talents […] So fundamental is the difference [between Negroes and Whites] and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in color.[13]

Thus, Kant reasoned that there must be races because there were evident mixed-race individuals – ironic for us insofar as contemporary discussion of mixed race often zeroes in on how the existence of mixed-race individuals dispels notions of races.[14] And, Kant posited a human essence in an ability to develop civilization, but only among those humans who were racially white Europeans. His metaphysical speculations about formative causes and national characters were em-

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Anthology Selected from the International Literature on the Races of Man, New York: Henry Shuman, 1950, p. 17.

[11] (*Ibid.*: 19).

[12] I. Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, H. H. Rudnick (ed.), V. Lyle Dowdell (trans.), Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996, p. 3.

[13] I. Kant, »On National Characters,« in E. C. Eze (ed.), *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1997, pp. 55–56.

[14] See: Zack (1993); N. Zack, ›American Mixed Race: Theoretical and Legal Issues,‹ *Harvard Black Letter Law Journal*, Vol. 17, 2001, pp. 33–46.

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pirically empty. The influence of Kant's views on race was carried along with the influence of the rest of German idealism until the early twentieth century, when the sciences of biological heredity and anthropology developed independent empirical criteria for theories of human difference.[15]

III Twentieth Century Essentialism versus Biological Science

In considering twentieth-century racial essentialism, it is important to start with Du Bois, because many contemporary theorists of race continue to give him the last word. W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) was a mixed-race African-American sociologist, historian, and activist, who founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909 and edited its journal, *The Crisis*, for decades. As a deeply insightful proponent of the perspective of African-Americans, most famously in *Black Reconstruction in America*, Du Bois remains well known for his idea of double consciousness, his combination of literary and analytic writing, and his lifelong dedication to progress against oppression for American blacks and racial »uplift« within the African-American community.[16] But here, the focus is on Du Bois's racial essentialism, insofar as he repudiated late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scientific thought that focused on physical studies of racial difference, often in fraudulent ways and from a white supremacist perspective.[17] However, it was not the white supremacist motivation behind such research that motivated Du Bois to repudiate it, but its failure to address cultural differences and »strivings.« In »The Conservation of Races,« his 1897 address to the American Negro Academy (an organization dedicated to higher education and achievement in the arts and sciences for African Americans, of which Du Bois was one of the founders), Du Bois specifically disagreed with the scientific attempt of his time to use anthropomorphic data to measure racial difference,

[15] Kant was not alone in constructing a philosophical metaphysics of race. For further discussion of his views and Hegel's, see N. Zack, *Philosophy of Science and Race* (New York: Routledge, 2002), Chapters 1 and 2, pp. 9–41.

[16] For a brief general discussion of Du Bois's importance for philosophy, see, ›William Edward Burghardt Du Bois,‹ *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (URL: http://www.iep.utm.edu/dubois/, last accessed on 26 May 2014).

[17] See S. J. Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man*, New York: Norton, 1996.

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claiming that races »while they perhaps transcend scientific definition, nevertheless are clearly defined to the eye of the Historian and Sociologist.«[18] What he wanted race to mean for African-Americans was a combination of deference to the ascendance of Euro-American culture – that is, he accepted the achievements of white-dominated culture as human ideals – and aspirations for their collective future:

> We are Negroes, members of a vast historic race that from the very dawn of creation has slept, but half awakening in the dark forests of its African fatherland […] It is our duty to conserve our physical powers, our intellectual endowments, our spiritual ideas; as a race we must strive by race organizations, by race solidarity, by race unity to the realization of that broader humanity which freely recognizes differences in men, but sternly deprecates inequality in their opportunities for development.[19]

Du Bois's idea of race is implicitly metaphysical in its moral and spiritual dimensions and dismissive of empirical biological science in that it is not social science. That is, Du Bois did not believe that the physical sciences could be the ultimate authority on what race was, because he viewed race as primarily a psychic matter, directly intuited or experienced, and perhaps best expressed in literature and art. And yet, Du Bois does not dismiss a physical aspect to what he means by race. The sense in which Du Bois echoes and appropriates for Africans and African Americans Kant's essentialist notion of race was buttressed by his studies with leading economists and political and cultural theorists at the University of Berlin in the early 1890s. At its core, Du Bois' idea of race was shot through with German romanticism, especially the legacy of Johann Gottfried Herder which imbued each nation with its own distinct spiritual life or soul.[20] Although his ideas about race changed through the years, he described his own life as »the autobiography of a race concept« and at no time did he relinquish a spiritual, lyrical, and aspirational idea of race that went beyond biology but was at the same time physically hereditary.[21]

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[18] W. E. B. Du Bois, »The Conservation of Races,« reprinted in R. Bernasconi, and T. L. Lott (eds.), *The Idea of Race* (Indianapolis: Hacket, 2000), p. 110.

[19] (*Ibid:* 114).

[20] For a recent account and discussion of Du Bois's intellectual history that emphasizes this period of his life, see K. A. Appiah, *Lines of Descent: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Emergence of Identity*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2014.

[21] (*Ibid.:* 8–9 ff.).

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Long after Du Bois, African American thinkers have continued to appropriate the most essentialist and racialist Germanic thought (like the belief in the existence of races), together with struggles against racist oppression. Consider for instance the uncanny similarity between the pronouncements of chief Nazi theorist Alfred Rosenberg, famous for holding that »soul means race seen from within« (and also that »[physical] race is the external side of a soul«)[22] and the importance of the trope of »soul« in the Black Power movement of the 1950s–70s.[23]

There was another twentieth-century approach to race and racial liberation, beginning with Franz Boas, the anthropologist who awakened Du Bois's own interest in black history with his 1906 *Commencement Address* at Atlanta University.[24] Boas both emphasized the value and importance of the culture and history of non-white racial groups and took care to separate them from essentialist ideas of biological determinism and contemporary scientific studies of physical race. With the publication of his 1911 *The Mind of Primitive Man*, a foundation was created for subsequent anthropologists to approach the cultures associated with distinct races as contingent historical developments. Boas' insistence that differences in mental aptitude were as great within races as between them was a telling blow to essentialist hereditary racial determinism.[25] Claude Lévi-Strauss went on in the following decades to argue that all cultures shared psychic similarities,

[22] See, »The Racial and Religious Theories of Alfred Rosenberg,« (URL: http://archive.org/stream/TheRacialAndReligiousTheoriesOfAlfredRosenberg/RacialAndReligiousTheoriesOfAlfredRosenberg, last accessed on 10 June 2014).

[23] W. L. Weber, ›Soul: Black Power, Politics, and Pleasure (review),‹ *Symploke*, Vol. 6, Nos. 1–2, 1998, pp. 207–208.

[24] F. Boas, »Commencement Address at Atlanta University, May 31, 1906,« *Atlanta University Leaflet*, No. 19 (S.l.: s.n.) (URL: http://www.webdubois.org/BoasAtlantaCommencement.html, last accessed on 10 June 2014). In his 1939 *Black Folk Now and Then*, Du Bois described his experience as an awakening. He recounted the history of the black kingdoms south of the Sahara for a thousand years, concluding, »I was too astonished to speak.« From W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Folk Then and Now: An Essay in the History and Sociology of the Negro Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 84.

[25] The question of racial difference and IQ nonetheless continued to haunt the twentieth century. For a discussion on IQ and environmental influences, see: N. Block, »How Heredity Misleads about Race,« in A. Montagu (ed.), *Race and IQ*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 444–481.

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with the differences wholly accountable through the effects of historical events and material conditions.[26]

Not only did such distinctions between race and culture free twentieth-century biological scientists from a requirement to discover physical cultural determinants in racial distinctions, but first the idea of physical racial essences ceased to be useful to them, and then the idea of physical race itself was »retired.« A (very) short account of that scientific revision would highlight the following. Nothing has been found in human blood, physiology, or genes that can, independently of social ideas of race, support a scientific taxonomy of human races. Racial phenotypes are determined by genotypes that do not get inherited together but disperse and recombine at conception. There is more variation of those traits within social races, that is, the groups that are considered races within society, than between or among social races and it should perhaps be emphasized that this fact in itself precludes the possibility of scientific race, *a priori*. Some phenotypes are more frequent in some human populations than others, but populations are not well-defined groups and vary in number from under ten to hundreds of thousands, depending on the scientific interests of taxonomists. The geographical location of ancestors also fails to ground race because it bears no verified causal connection to those phenotypical traits considered racial in society. There is a consensus that all modern humans originated in Africa, but multiple-origin hypotheses assume too much travel and mixture among early populations to support the evolution of races. And finally, the mapping of the human genome yielded no information about general genetic material that is relevant to race. Of course, the traits considered racial in society, such as skin color or skeletal proportion are both physical and hereditary, but it adds no more information to physical scientific description and analysis of those traits, to consider them »racial« in physical biological terms.[27]

[26] See C. Lévi-Strauss, »Race and History,« in L. Kuper (ed.), *Race, Science, and Society*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1965.

[27] For extended discussion, analysis, and sources concerning this summary, see relevant chapters in Zack (2002).

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IV Incommensurable Paradigms

One explanation for why racial essentialism is widely repudiated, but just as widely presumed, is a semantic difference. Those who repudiate racial essentialism in non-philosophical discourse are often opposing stereotypical racial thinking or the assumption that general racial identity determines specific racial traits. The racist stereotypical form of essentialism was evident in Kant's notorious remark, »This fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid.«[28] However, the kind of racial essentialism at issue in this paper has not been essentialism as associated with racial stereotypes – as important as that is – but essentialism as a subject of metaphysics and/or philosophy of science.

There are two competing paradigms in contemporary thought about the metaphysics and/or philosophy of science of race: Retentionism and Eliminativism.[29] Retentionists seek to retain ideas of race in one or both of two senses: (1) Distinct cultures associated with distinct races should be preserved – for cultural, moral, or political reasons[30] and (2) Social ideas of race have a foundation in the biological sciences. Eliminativists insist on a recognition of the factual independence of two things: (1) ideas of physical human races that are common within so-

[28] For a wider discussion of this remark and what we would call racist ideas of race in the Enlightenment, see E. C. Eze, »The Color of Reason: The Idea of ›Race‹ in Kant's Anthropology,« (in K. M. Faull, ed., *The Bucknell Review, Anthropology and the German Enlightenment*, London: Associated University Presses, 1995, pp. 201–241, [Special issue]), pp. 218 ff.

[29] To say that there are just two paradigms is very likely an over-simplification. For instance, some might believe that culture is separate from biological race as a matter of fact, but that culture should or should not be connected to it to preserve racial identities. Or, some may believe that the lack of a foundation in biology for race makes the preservation of cultures associated with ordinary ideas of race a low priority or a high priority. There are many possible logical combinations and nuances possible.

[30] The African-American pragmatist and chief intellectual sponsor of the Harlem Renaissance worked from the premise that regardless of its scientific underpinnings, »race« as a set of ideas and practices should be supported for American blacks, so as to preserve their culture. Leonard Harris sums up Alain Locke's position, thus: »The Negro race and the Negro culture were for Locke two distinct phenomena that by dint of history were identified as synonymous. Loyalty to the uplift of the race for Locke was thus, *mutatis mutandis*, loyalty to the uplift of the culture« (L. Harris (ed.), *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989, p. 20).

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ciety and may line up with how society is organized and (2) scientific accounts of human physical difference. Both sides agree that human society has been hierarchically organized into distinct human groups that are regarded as »races« – by the members of distinct racial groups with respect to their own racial groups and in the perceptions of race by other distinct racial groups. In other words, people view themselves as belonging to a race and they recognize that others belong to races different from their own.

The interesting philosophical difference between eliminativists and retentionists turns on whether or not races are biologically real, and also, perhaps, what such reality or its lack would normatively require, which is to say, how we *should* think and speak about that reality, what we *should* do about it, and what educational, social, and/or legal changes we *should* aim to bring about. The reality of race is philosophically important, not because of issues related to biological determinism, but because the ordinary concept of race in society carries with it some belief in the physical biological reality of race. That is, the average person may not be able to say exactly what it is in science that independently establishes physical racial reality, but she believes that the relevant scientists know what that is. We have noted that no racial essence has ever been empirically identified and that within the human biological sciences, those who study human difference no longer find the notion of race useful. Moreover, the widely acknowledged greater differences within, rather than between, social races of exactly those physical traits considered racial, precludes the possibility that a physical race concept will ever be scientifically useful. The eliminativist takes these facts as indicative of embedded falsehood in the ordinary concept of race. As the term »eliminativism« suggests, addressing that falsehood may support a normative conclusion that social racial distinctions ought to be eschewed or »eliminated.« The retentionist seeks to retain the ordinary concept of race on one or both of two grounds: those differences linked to human evolution on different continents are sufficient to serve as a physical foundation for the ordinary concept;[31] at least some minimal and non-racist form of the ordinary concept can be preserved if separate ideas of heredity and appearance are related to

[31] R. O. Andreason, ›The Meaning of »Race«: Folk Conceptions and the New Biology of Race,‹ *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 102, 2005, pp. 94–106.

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biological studies of human difference that do not in themselves independently support an idea of race.[32]

The eliminativist is more willing than the retentionist to defer to the findings of biological science on physical matters – in this case, race – and may insist that all members of the educated community do the same. The retentionist will not allow science to have the last word in this way and in that sense retains a metaphysical notion of race, that very posit of biological race that does not require independent scientific confirmation, even when the very premise implies that there is a foundation for race in the biological sciences. Indeed, insofar as the human biological sciences no longer find a concept of human race useful or informative, the retentionist's position is more »metaphysical« – that is, in going beyond what is physical – than it was when biological scientists believed that their research did support ideas in society about racial differences and divisions. Now, as then, this position may shade into myth and allegory. If the retentionist seeks to retain social ideas of race only, and to give up even a minimal foundation in the biological sciences, then her position becomes indistinguishable from that of the eliminativist, in terms of acceptance of the conclusions of the biological sciences.

As a cognitive or intellectual matter, the endurance of racial metaphysics can probably best be understood as part of the legacy of racial essentialism – not in Kant's clearly flawed detailed analysis, but in Hume's comfort with what is obvious.[33] Moreover, the eliminativist would see no physical scientific grounds for using racial categories as labels applying to entire persons, while the retentionist, in retaining ordinary usage, would also be committed to the quasi-biological taxonomy that lingers in ordinary usage. However, the heart of the incommensurability between these views remains a yes or no answer to this question, »Should we accept the findings of the physical sciences as the ultimate authority for what is physically real?« This incommensurabil-

[32] M. O. Hardimon, ›The Ordinary Concept of Race,‹ *Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 102, 2003, pp. 437–455.

[33] When the retentionist is engaged in a richer form of identity theory, cultural analysis, or liberatory inspiration than bare metaphysics or philosophy of science, he or she may be expressing loyalty to the cultural group mores of their racial group. Eliminativists who are not being disingenuous in seeking to eliminate racial categories while racial discrimination continues without redress would generally respect such affiliative expression, as a moral or ethical matter – or a form of recognition.

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ity rests on each side having radically different ideas of what is meant by something being physical. For the retentionist, the ordinary idea of race refers to things that are fully physical in human experience, so that any scientific meaning of physicality would have to begin with that experience, making it perfectly reasonable to relax the demand for an independent scientific foundation for racial taxonomy. The eliminativist is likely to take the history of modern ideas of race into account and point to the fact that these ideas have always connoted a semantic deference to the biological sciences.

To conclude with a general question – Why should the concept of race be considered relevant in philosophy today? First, there is the historical interest in the concept within our discipline, although that is an issue of intellectual history, mainly. Second, the concept of race remains fraught with myriad confusions and continues to be discussed at cross-purposes, both within and without the academy. Philosophers have well-developed methods for analyzing how concepts are used, which can reconcile positions that are not incommensurable. Here are some examples: in US society, when people bring up what they call »race,« they are often talking about racism, prejudice, or discrimination based on beliefs about racial identities; throughout the world, racial categories are applied in different ways, such that someone from Southeast Asia may be considered white in the United States but black in the United Kingdom; sometimes, when people think the subject is racial difference, they are referring to ethnic or cultural differences. Moreover, insofar as race does not have the biological foundation it is presumed to have, racial distinctions can be analyzed as matters of history and culture. Also, new projects of »racialization« or designation of a group as »racial,« when it was not previously considered a race, can be studied as effects of differences in economic and political power. Finally, within wealthy nations and internationally, members of those groups identified as non-white are the majority of the poor and disadvantaged. That is more clearly an ethical issue, once released from a false (deterministic) biological foundation, and ethics is an important subfield of philosophy – although in the case of race, the force of its influence on political goals is somewhat weak. As well, and to return to the specific subject of this paper, clarification of what it means to say that race is real or not can ultimately only be accomplished with reference to whether or not race has the foundation in the biological sciences it purports to have in common sense. Persistence in assuming the reality

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of race, based on beliefs that it has a biological scientific foundation that it is known to lack, is accurately termed »racial essentialism« and/or »racial retentionism,« whereas rejection of the reality of race given knowledge of that same lack of foundation is the referent of »racial eliminativism.« However, it should be understood that this last philosophical clarification has no direct implications for politics or public policy. Human groups to whom nonexistent biological causes are attributed for their differences from others may be in as much or greater need of social affirmation and assistance than groups without such attributions – in large part because of what people continue to believe about those groups. Nevertheless, the philosophical clarification may be of use in ameliorating exaggerated ideas of difference between human groups.

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Hegel's Eurocentric Concept of Philosophy[1]

Abstract
European-Western philosophy from Plato and Aristotle to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Friedrich Nietzsche and to Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein has rightly claimed to represent a high standard. In ancient times and in the Middle Ages there were vivid exchanges with non-Western traditions, especially Egyptian and Arabic philosophies. But since the philosophy of European Enlightenment, a large part of European-Western philosophy maintains that philosophy of a high standard exists only here. This statement can be called Eurocentric and is highly contestable. The clearest and strictest foundation of philosophical Eurocentrism is given by Hegel. By analyzing and criticizing his concept of philosophy in Section II, I will discuss Eurocentrism in philosophy. In Section III, I will proceed to indicate the conditions necessary to overcome it.

Keywords
eurocentrism, Hegel, philosophy of religion, intercultural philosophy, sub-Saharan Africa, world history.

I Introduction

European-Western philosophy from Plato and Aristotle to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Friedrich Nietzsche and to Martin Heidegger and Ludwig Wittgenstein has rightly claimed to represent a high standard. In ancient times and in the Middle Ages there were vivid ex-

[1] This article is based on my Dutch article »*Hegels eurocentrische filosofiebegrip,*« in: H. van Rappard, and M. Leezenberg (eds.), *Wereldfilosofie. Wijsgerig denken in verschillende culturen*, Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2010, pp. 43–59.

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changes with non-Western traditions, especially Egyptian and Arabic philosophies. But since the philosophy of European Enlightenment, a large part of European-Western philosophy maintains that philosophy of a high standard exists only here. This statement can be called Eurocentric and is highly contestable. The clearest and strictest foundation of philosophical Eurocentrism is given by Hegel.[2] By analyzing and criticizing his concept of philosophy in Section II, I will discuss Eurocentrism in philosophy. In Section III, I will proceed to indicate the conditions necessary to overcome it.

II What Is Eurocentrism in Philosophy?

Hegel worked out a concept of philosophy, which expresses in a clear and strict manner what philosophy means in the European tradition. At the same time he claimed that philosophy in this clear and strict sense exists only in Europe. This claim is characteristic for the thought of the European Enlightenment, to which Hegel at least partly belongs. Therefore one can say that in the thought of this period of history a Eurocentric concept of philosophy prevailed. To give approximate time limits, Eurocentrism in philosophy can be seen as having been founded in the period from 1750 to 1830. The manner in which Hegel founded Eurocentrism still holds sway in European-Western philosophy up to the present day.

Eurocentrism, as it prevailed during European Enlightenment, was advocated in England by John Locke and David Hume, in France by A. R. J. Turgot and Voltaire, and in Germany by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Immanuel Kant, to give some examples. This means that during this period it was in play all over Europe. For the origin and dissemination of Eurocentrism, the idea of progress is very important. This idea means that world history as a whole, with all of its relevant developments, comes to its absolute peak in Europe in the second half of the eighteenth century. In this way it is possible to frame a concept of history that covers the whole world. However, this possibility comes at a high price. Although certain periods of history are judged in a differentiated way, as for instance the high estimation of Greek and Roman

[2] Also see N. Zack, *The Philosophical Roots of Racial Essentialism and its Comfortable Legacy*, pp. 85–98 in this journal.

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antiquity, »Europe is the standard within which all the different phenomena in space and time get their place as historic stadia.«[3] Europe of this period of time understands itself as superior with regard to all other times and cultures, and – as will be shown later – Europe defines what philosophy or science is.

Before this period of prevailing Eurocentrism, during the years from 1689 until 1714, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz exchanged letters with Catholic missionaries, who lived and worked in China, about the culture and philosophy of this country.[4] He admired Chinese philosophy and wanted to learn from it. And already in the years 1780 and then on a bigger scale since the beginning of the nineteenth century, philosophical Eurocentrism has been interrupted by an interest in Indian philosophy. During this period, important philosophical texts of the Indian tradition were translated in England and in Germany. The first English translation of the *Bhagavadgita* by Charles Wilkins appeared in 1785. Henry Thomas Colebrooke translated parts from the *Vedas* and in 1805 he published an *Essay on the Vedas*. A translation of the *Bhagavadgita* into Latin by the German poet and philosopher August Wilhelm Schlegel appeared in 1823 and was accessible to the learned public throughout Europe.

These were first steps, which show the rise of an interest in Indian thought as genuine philosophy. A milestone in this history was the essay by Wilhelm von Humboldt from 1826, in which he interpreted the *Bhagavadgita* in the context of the great work *Mahabharata* from the early history of Indian philosophy. A year later, Hegel wrote a lengthy review of this essay. In this review he appraised Indian thought in detail, which he estimated highly, but which he did not recognize as philosophy or – precisely speaking – not as »proper« philosophy. I will explain that a little bit later.

The interest in Indian philosophy, the translations by the English orientalists, and the contributions of A. W. Schlegel and Humboldt did not change, however, Eurocentric thought in the general public's consciousness. Also the philosophy departments of the universities went

[3] J. Rohbeck, *Die Fortschrittstheorie der Aufklärung. Französische und englische Geschichtsphilosophie in der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts*, Frankfurt: Campus, 1987, p. 87. This sentence, and all quotations from German texts in this essay, are translated by me.

[4] G. W. Leibniz, *Der Briefwechsel mit den Jesuiten in China (1689–1714)*, R. Widmaier (ed.), Hamburg: Meiner, 2007.

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on to judge non-European thought in the same way as Hegel. Exceptions are Arthur Schopenhauer, who studied Buddhism, and Paul Deussen, who knew a lot about Indian culture and compared Indian and European philosophy. Also, in a certain period of his work, Nietzsche was a follower of Schopenhauer, as is well known. And he had friendly contacts with Deussen for quite a long time. In the second half of the twentieth century there is a remarkable interest by some European philosophers in non-Western philosophies, especially those of the Far East. This is true for the later Martin Heidegger starting from about 1950, for Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as well for other European philosophers from this period who are still regarded as exceptions. I will come back to this later in Section III.

What does Hegel's Concept of Philosophy Mean for the Judgment of the Philosophies of Non-Western Cultures?

In a certain sense, the works of Schlegel and Humboldt mentioned here can be seen as the beginning of Comparative Philosophy, which in addition to European-Western philosophy also studies the philosophy of the Far East: India, China, and somewhat later also Japan. This philosophical work, which is similar to Comparative Religious Studies, has led to remarkable results. Here I will just mention the names of Nathan Søderblom, Rudolf Otto, Helmuth von Glasenapp, Gerard van der Leeuw, and Gustav Mensching. Comparative Philosophy, however, at that time and up to now is mainly not dealt with in the Philosophy departments of the European-Western universities, but in the rather small departments of Indology, Sinology, and Japanology or Comparative Religious Studies. This work does not penetrate the general public's consciousness either. Philosophy departments confine themselves to European-Western philosophy. Hegel's concept of philosophy is obviously still effective here, even if philosophers do not follow Hegel any more, as for instance is the case with Neo-Kantians. In this connection it should be mentioned that the judgments of non-Western cultures by Kant are radically negative in a way similar to those of Hegel (see below).

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What, According to Hegel, is »Proper« or »True« Philosophy?

Hegel's Eurocentric concept of philosophy is expressed in the review of Humboldt's essay and also especially in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, in which he differentiates between »preforms« of philosophy and what he calls »proper« or »true« philosophy.

According to what he writes in his review of Humboldt's essay, Indian thought with its »sources of philosophy,« which reach back far in history, merely represents »preforms« of philosophy.[5] »Indian religion, cosmogony, theogony, mythology etc.« cannot be called philosophy, because therein you can find »many fine reflections,« which are, however, mostly combined with »arbitrariness of fantasy« and »superficial representations« (Hegel 1971: 203). That can be seen for instance in the fact that the »outer appearance (the *maja*)« of the highest God Brahman is manifold in an unclear way (*ibid.*: 198). The »many shapes which he [Brahman] adopts always get more in number and also more arbitrary« *(ibid.)*. Brahma, in whom Brahman emerges as subject »appears mainly in relation to Vishnu or Krishna and to Shiva in a more definite shape and as *one* figure of *Trimurti*, the Indian Holy Trinity« *(ibid.)*. That, for Hegel, is a really important idea. Examined in more detail it is a lesser form of Trinity, »which only in Christianity has developed to the true idea of God« (*ibid.*: 199). In the Indian representation it »has grown out to something wrong« *(ibid.)*.

In the Introduction to his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel deals with Indian thought and with Chinese thought as well. In Chinese thought he finds only very abstract »notions and oppositions« (Hegel 1959a: 214).[6] Here he is referring to the figures and lines seen so often in the Chinese tradition, where one is continuous and the other one interrupted. »The first figure is called Yang, and the second one Yin« *(ibid.)*. They are the »principles of all things« *(ibid.)*. They are combined with each other in many ways, so that sixty-four figures are created, which determine matter as a whole. From the different combinations, the sky, the water, the fire, the thunder, the wind, the

[5] G. W. F. Hegel, *»Über die unter dem Namen Bhagavad-Gita bekannte Episode des Mahabharata von Wilhelm von Humboldt*, Berlin 1826,« in G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, E. Moldenhauer, and K. M. Michel (eds.), Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1971, Vol. 11, pp. 131–204, see especially p. 131, p. 133, p. 203, and pp. 198–199.

[6] G. W. F. Hegel, *Einleitung in die Geschichte der Philosophie*, J. Hoffmeister (ed.), Hamburg: Meiner, 1959a.

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mountains, and the earth are derived. »One can therefore say,« Hegel concludes, »that here from oneness and twoness all things have come forth« (*ibid.*: 215). The first continuous line, the Chinese »also call Tao, the origin of all things or nothingness« *(ibid.)*. In other texts of the Chinese tradition it is said »that from five elements the whole nature is made, namely from fire, wood, metal, water, and earth« *(ibid.)*. Statements of this kind are, however, according to Hegel, not philosophy, because they »depart too much from empirical observations« and not from thinking *(ibid.)*. A systematic order is missing, everything »stands there higgledly-piggledly.«[7]

In the field of ethics Hegel finds within Chinese thought »only poor morals« *(ibid.)*. He gives a low rank to the teachings of Confucius, as they contain »a lot of common sense« and a »mainly popular morality,« but no »speculative philosophy« *(ibid.)*. Therefore Confucius' thought cannot be regarded as »proper« philosophy. Although some of his ideas are »not without spirit,« they do not belong to »true« philosophy. Confucius was more »a practical political leader« than a philosopher *(ibid.)*.

With regard to ancient Indian texts, Hegel finds within them – similar to what is stated in the Humboldt review – quite »interesting general ideas« (*ibid.*: 216). Being is thought of as »originating and perishing« and as the »representation of a circulation« (*ibid.*: 217). The well known »metaphor of Phoenix,« which comes from the East, expresses »that death is part of life, that life passes into death and death passes into life, that being itself is already the negative and the negative is the positive, affirmative, and that the one turns over to the other, and that life in general exists only in this dialectical process« *(ibid.)*. On the other hand Hegel is critical of how these ideas »only occur incidentally« and in the context of Indian religion. They are »general, but totally abstract ideas« *(ibid.)*. They are not presented in a connected manner, which departs from thinking as such. Therefore this is not »proper« philosophy. Because these ideas are thoroughly intermixed with mythological representations they cannot be considered within the history of philosophy *(ibid.)*.

The »mythological forms of philosophy,« as he terms the efforts of the Indian tradition, are embedded by Hegel in the more general statement, that *»religion as such, like poetry, contains philosophical*

[7] »Wir sehen daran, wie Alles kunterbunt untereinandersteht« (*ibid.*: 215).

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ideas« (*ibid*.: 216; my emphasis). For that statement he refers above all to ancient Greek religion, to Homer, and to the poets of the tragedies; but also Friedrich von Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe are mentioned in this connection. These texts express, like Indian religion and poetry, »deep and general ideas« about »fate« and about »life and death, being and perishing, originating and dying« *(ibid.)*. This way of expressing ideas, however, will not be adopted in the history of philosophy. For this history limits itself to the systematic display of pure thinking *(ibid.)*.

The Authoritative Meaning of Hegel's Science of Logic

For Hegel there is only *one* measure when it comes to judging what thinking as pure thinking is.[8] What conforms to this measure is recognized as »true« or »proper« philosophy. This measure is his *Science of Logic*. Therein pure thinking is represented in its different forms. This representation is systematic and interconnected. It deals only with thinking itself and nothing else, and therefore with pure thought. Thinking carries out a reflective movement by directing itself on itself and thinking can thus represent what it finds in itself. By doing that, Hegel can be seen as going back to Aristotle's νοησις νοησεως, thinking of thinking, or to Kant's list of categories in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. Hegel starts with the thought of »pure being,« which he interprets as the immediate or the undetermined. »Pure being« can only be thought of by passing over to »pure nothingness.« Pure nothingness has to keep away all mediation and determination from pure being. The permanent movement of this process of thinking forms the dynamic unity of being and nothingness, and Hegel calls this »becoming.« As such, it forms the operational base of dialectical thought, which proceeds in many variations from a thesis via an antithesis to a synthesis.

Proceeding in ascending fashion, Hegel shows which steps from the immediate and undetermined lead to always more mediation and determination. Through this approach he derives the categories of quality, quantity, relation and modality, which are well known from

[8] G. W. F. Hegel, *Wissenschaft der Logik*, G. Lasson (ed.), Hamburg: Meiner, 1963, Vol. 1, p. 66–67; see for the following text Vols. 1 and 2.

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Kant's list of categories.[9] Interestingly, Hegel does not start with the categories of quantity, like Kant did, but with those of quality. In addition to Kant's list, the theory of concept, sentence, and conclusion is dealt with, which shows how a probative argumentation has to proceed. By doing that, Hegel goes back to some central themes of formal logic which have been worked out in the history of logic since Aristotle, and he shows how they form part of his dialectical way of thought. In the end he comes to the »absolute idea,« in which all steps of mediation and determination are summed up. Every step is critically self-referential. Thus it becomes completely clear what, according to Hegel, »thinking« or »pure thinking« means.

Because pure thinking does not accept any authority outside of itself, it is at the same time the expression of absolute freedom. And the absolute freedom of pure thinking demands, in the social and political relations of the human world, the realization of freedom in the best possible way by a »free constitution« (Hegel 1959a: 227).

The *Science of Logic* forms the foundation of Hegel's »system of philosophy,« as he presented its blueprint in the *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*.[10] Herein the theories of pure thinking and its applications are represented. This concept of pure thinking is used as a measure in order to judge where in European history and in other cultures particular ways of thought, which have this specific form, can be found and can be recognized as »proper« philosophy.

This position is in itself completely clear. Its Eurocentric character lies in the claim that Hegel's *Logic* and his »system of philosophy« are absolutely and universally valid and therefore can be used at any time and everywhere as a standard. With this claim it is forgotten, however, that Hegel's philosophy and his presentation of pure thinking in the *Science of Logic* are worked out in the German language of the beginning of the nineteenth century and that they make use of conceptual tools predominant in European philosophy in that period of history. Hegel is not aware of the cultural and historical dependence of his philosophy. This dependence is expressed in the whole development of thinking from the immediate and undetermined to absolute mediation

[9] I. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B. Erdmann (ed.), in *Kants Werke. Akademie Textausgabe*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968, Vol. 4, p. 66.

[10] G. W. F. Hegel, *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundriß (1831)*, F. Nicolin, and O. Pöggeler (eds.), Hamburg: Meiner, 1959b.

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and determination. That means, thinking is from the very beginning directed to its end: thinking of mediation and determination. Outside of this way of thinking, no other ways are accepted. By means of *this* thinking, Hegel wrongly claims, *everything* can be thought of and known and can find its place in the totality of thought.

With this concept another one is directly connected: that everything capable of being thought of and known can also be made. For reality corresponds with this way of thought. Reality *is* only and can only be *thought of* in the way as it is explained in the *Science of Logic* and the »system of philosophy,« which is built thereupon. But the way of thought as it is represented in Hegel's philosophy is not really »pure thinking.« It does not exist independently from the language of its time and by the same token depends on the given social and historical situation.

For this reason, the foundation of Hegel's concept of »proper« or »true« philosophy is problematic. But this concept is obviously used when Hegel decides where philosophy can be found or not. He answers himself the question: »where do we have to begin with the history of philosophy?« by saying »It begins there where thinking as pure thinking emerges, where it is generally present, and where this purity, this generality is essential, truthful and absolute« (Hegel 1959a: 224). This is, according to Hegel, the case in ancient Greece and is connected with the fact that political freedom flourished there (*ibid*.: 234–235). This statement means at the same time: in the thought of »the Oriental world cannot be spoken of proper philosophy« and there the freedom of the person is not even in principle discussed (*ibid*.: 227). As for the beginning of philosophy with the ancient Greek people, Hegel states that they do have the *freedom of thought*, but that *real freedom* still is affected with a restriction, for, as we know, in Greece slavery still existed (*ibid*.: 235). The principle of political freedom is already there, but is only realized with a group of free citizens.

The Application of Hegel's Concept of Philosophy in Judging Non-Western Cultures

The difficulty that we have pointed out in connection with Hegel's notion of »proper« or »true« philosophy also has consequences for his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*. In these *Lectures* it is a

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decisive criterion whether a certain part of the world is dealt with in the history of the world, if »proper philosophy« can be found there. In the Introduction to the *Lectures* some general arguments are given why in the Far East, in both Americas and Australia before the colonization, and on the many islands between South America and Asia and first of all in sub-Saharan Africa no state, no highly developed religion and no philosophy, no mere »preforms« of philosophy have existed, and therefore no history has taken place.[11] History is for Hegel a history of states, which, according to his clearly falsified concept, did not exist in these parts of the world. Research in cultural anthropology has proved that, for instance in sub-Saharan Africa, different types of states have existed, which have changed and developed in the course of time.[12] The same is true for central Mexico and the Andes of South America.

The kinds of religion present in these regions are »primitive« according to Hegel, because they do not know about a singular highest being, on whom everything is dependent and from whom everything gets its explanation, which is what could be expected in a community which is organized as a state. Also, in a state, one person is in the top position and makes the necessary decisions (this will be dealt with in more detail when the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* will be examined). Another step from religious representations to philosophical concepts, which is missing in those »primitive« religions, would be necessary, if one wants to get from a religious explanation of the world and of humanity to a philosophy which is based on pure thinking only.

The exclusion of non-Western parts of the world is here, in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, somewhat less radical than in those on the *History of Philosophy*. In the »Oriental world« of China, India, Persia, the Near East and Egypt, Hegel not only finds »preforms« as in the history of philosophy, but already a »first stage« of world history. For in these areas there existed already functioning states. The idea is maintained, however, where world history only reaches its aim of realizing liberty by being secured by a »free constitution« is in the Greek and Roman world of ancient Europe. This reali-

[11] G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, E. Moldauer, and K. M. Michel (eds.), Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989, pp. 111–132.

[12] M. Fortes, and E. E. Evans Pritchard, *African Political Systems*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940.

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zation of liberty attains full definition in Europe north of the Alps – Hegel speaks of the »Christian Germanic world« – that is to say in the modern constitutional state.[13]

As for the states of the Oriental world, Hegel says that only *one* person is free, the despotic ruler. This person creates a certain stability of public life in the regions where he rules. Therefore, one can speak here about history and about a first stage of world history. Under the conditions of the aristocratic societies of ancient Greece and the Roman Empire *some* persons are free: the free citizens, besides whom we find half-free artisans and tradespeople as well as the totally un-free slaves, who have to work in the fields, etc. The free citizens devote their lives to politics and bear responsibility for their actions. This part of the population has time enough and is in the situation to do philosophy in the proper sense of the word. In the modern world of the constitutional states, as they have emerged in Europe north of the Alps, as a final stage of history, *all* persons are free. Strictly speaking, one has to say that – differing from his text – in Hegel's time this was only true for the adult male citizens. This freedom of the citizens, which is guaranteed by a constitution, is the precondition for the definite flourishing of philosophy.

Those parts of the world, where no state, no highly developed religion, and no philosophy exist, need not be treated in the philosophy of world history, not even in the sense of a first stage of world history, where »preforms« of philosophy are possible. In these regions no freedom does exist. That is most radically the case in sub-Saharan Africa. There, »slavery forms the basic relation of the law« (Hegel 1955: 225). What Hegel writes about Africa is not only extremely negative, it also shows – unlike most parts of his philosophy – that he is badly informed. Let me give just a few examples. He describes sub-Saharan Africa as »one highland as a whole,« which has a »very small coastal strip inhabited only at certain places« (*ibid.*: 215). That is, of course, a nearly absurd description of the geography of Africa. In the fifteenth and sixteenth century wild groups of warriors, Hegel writes, have attacked the people of the coastal strip and have driven them to the edge

[13] G. W. F. Hegel, *Die Vernunft in der Geschichte*, J. Hoffmeister (ed.), Hamburg: Meiner, 1955, pp. 198–213.

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of the coast. These kinds of events, however, did not occur in the history of that region.[14]

The »religion of sorcery,« which is dealt with in more detail in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion,* is, according to Hegel, based on the primitive idea that man is the master of nature and gives commands to it. It is part of this religion that man »does not respect himself nor others« (*ibid.*: 224). Therefore it is permissible to the Europeans that they sell these people as slaves. Generally speaking, slavery is wrong, Hegel says, but in the African context he argues against its sudden abolition (*ibid.*: 226). In »all negro-states,« which are not really accepted as states, »the monarch has unconditional power over his subjects.« And this is »nearly the same« all over Africa south of the Sahara (*ibid.*: 231). This statement proves that Hegel has no idea about the different political systems in traditional African countries before the colonization by European countries. The »ethical life in the families,« which has been a main support of the African societies and still is till today, is judged by Hegel as »not strong« (*ibid.*: 228). If, from his dubious sources, he assumes the truth of the information that the king of Dahomey had 3333 wives (*ibid.*: 227), this says more about his preference for the number 3 than about the real situation in the area of what is now the state of Benin.

As mentioned above, Hegel's way of thought is Eurocentric in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion* too. Compared to the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy,* in which the Eurocentric concept of philosophy is expressed in the clearest way, and also to the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History,* where it is already weakened to a certain extent, it is even less prominent in the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*. All religions in the world are dealt with in these lectures. Insofar as they are not in line with the »absolute religion« of Christianity, they are not recognized as »true religions,« but just as »determined religions.« Hegel construes things in terms of an ascending line that starts from the »religion of nature.« The »religion of sorcery« and the »Chinese religion of the state and the Tao« form parts of it. Also the Indian religion of »being within oneself and imagination,« the Persian »religion of light« and the Egyptian »religion of the riddle« belong to the »religion of nature.« The »religions of the spiritual individuality«

[14] (*Ibid.*: pp. 213–234); *cf.* J. Ki-Zerbo, *Die Geschichte Schwarz-Afrikas,* E. Hammer (transl.), Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981.

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form a stadium in between on the way to the »revealed religion« of Christianity. As religions of this stage Hegel deals with the Jewish »religion of the sublime,« in which everything depends from *one* God, »Mohammedanism« as the extension of worshipping one God to all nations, the ancient Greek »religion of fate and of beauty,« and finally the ancient Roman »religion of suitableness.« This whole development is orientated towards *one* aim: the »absolute religion« of Christianity, as it is practiced in the European world.[15]

A More In-Depth Example of Eurocentric Thought: Hegel's Treatment of Animism

In order to give an example of Hegel's Eurocentric way of thought, I will present here his treatment of the first form of the »religion of nature,« namely the »religion of sorcery,« in more detail. The general characteristic of this religion is, as I have already mentioned, the »power above nature,« which the »single self-consciousness« has or means to have. This idea is, according to Hegel, »primitive,« but already contains »something spiritual.« A first form of the presence of God, who is spirit, in the human world, is here at stake. However, in the »religion of sorcery« the spirit is only present in the most simple and abstract way. Therefore, this religion is religion in the wildest and roughest form.

For a more precise description of »direct sorcery,« Hegel uses reports of travelers from the year 1819 on the religion of the Esquimaux. These people call their sorcerers »angekoks.« They believe that the angekoks have the power to make storms or calm winds or to allow whales to come close to the human habitat. They do that by using certain words, making certain gestures, and performing dances until they fall into some kind of trance. But these people have »no picture, no human being, no animal, nothing of this kind« for worshipping. According to W. Jaeschke, the editor of the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, which I am using here, Hegel did not carefully read and correctly use the reports on dance, which had been given in connection

[15] G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion*, W. Jaeschke (ed.), Hamburg: Meiner, 1985a, Vol. 4a, p. IV-V.

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with the description of general cultural habits and were not related to religious forms of sorcery.[16]

Hegel also finds the »religion of sorcery« in Mongolia, Africa, and China. For his detailed treatment of Africa, he uses reports of very early Christian missionaries, especially by the Italian Capuchin J. A. Cavazzi from the year 1687.[17] Hegel is aware of the fact that these reports are not very reliable, because the missionaries are biased in dealing with non-Christian ideas and habits. But he does not try to get more recent and more reliable sources, which were available during his time. He quotes Cavazzi's reports in detail and takes them over literally. The conjuring of spirits, the treatment of ill people with very cruel methods, and frequent forms of cannibalism are often mentioned in this context. Hegel writes about the practices and knowledge of rainmakers without giving any sources. They obviously have a great deal of knowledge about the changing situation of the weather, but they also use magical practices. Hegel talks in a similar way about medical men and women. They know a lot about medicinal herbs and they take into account the social and intersubjective relations of the patients when they try to cure them. Apart from that, they often apply magic practices.[18] Quite different and more adequate information about the behavior of rainmakers and traditional healers was available from the extant literature, which Hegel did not use.

It must be mentioned that the practices of the persons mentioned by Hegel, belong to a higher form of sorcery, according to him. Hegel speaks of »indirect« or »mediated sorcery.« The medicinal herbs are means to make the power of sorcery work. This is possible through some kind of reflection, which is a spiritual procedure that interrupts the power of sorcery. For Hegel it is important that in this connection some form of objectiveness takes place. The medicine is applied in a conscious manner. What is worshipped attains a certain independent status in this way. Hegel also deals with so called »fetishes,« which play an important role in African religions. Animals, plants, rocks, rivers,

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[16] See (*ibid*.: pp. 176–179) and G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion, Anhang*, W. Jaeschke (ed.), Hamburg: Meiner, 1985b, Vol. 4b, p. 693.

[17] J. A. Cavacci, *Historische Beschreibung der im unteren Mohrenland liegenden drey Königreiche Congo, Matamba und Angola […] aus dem Welschen übersetzt*, Munich, 1694. (Original Italian edition 1687.)

[18] Hegel (1985a: pp. 179–185).

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and also artefacts such as products of woodcarving are revered. They are used to protect places of residence or to mark holy spots, where religious practices are performed. In the context of the traditional African religions these elements also have their clear and generally accepted functions.

But according to Hegel, all those elements belong to the lowest and roughest form of religion. In China the religion of the state is developed one step further. The power of sorcery and all power over nature and human beings are attributed to *one* person, the emperor. By the way, the Chinese religion is not part of the lowest form of religion in all the different renditions of these lectures. In these cases Chinese religion belonged to the »religions of being within oneself and of imagination« (Hegel 1985a: p. 185–197), like the Indian religion.[19]

The Anchorage of Hegel's Eurocentric Concept of Philosophy in His »System of Philosophy«

In his 1821 book *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Hegel's Eurocentrism, as it is expressed in the above mentioned *Lectures*, is anchored in his »system of philosophy.« As is well known, in this book Hegel gives a more precise presentation of the passage on the »objective spirit« in the encyclopedic presentation of his system of philosophy, which he first had published in 1817. In the chapter »The Civil Society,« which follows after the presentation of right and morality and the philosophy of the family, and which precedes the treatment of the state, we find a justification of colonialism. This phenomenon has to be conceived of as a necessary and also a legitimate consequence of the inner dynamics of civil society. The civil society is, in Hegel's time, – and to a certain extent also today – »in an action without restraint«

[19] In another article I have shown that these presentations of Hegel, which are badly documented and which uncritically take over the biased views of Christian missionaries, can be confronted with texts of the younger Hegel from the years 1799–1801/02, when not the concept of »spirit« but the concept of »life« is in the center of his thinking. Departing from these texts, quite a different and much more adequate treatment of animistic religions is possible. See H. Kimmerle, »Religion of Nature,« in B. Laschagne, and T. Slootweg (eds.), *Hegel's Philosophy of the Historical Religions*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2012, p. 1–19.

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(Hegel 1967: 200).[20] By that it »proceeds within itself in population and in industry« *(ibid.)*. The contradiction between luxurious life on the one hand, and dependence and misery on the other hand leads to a situation in which »wealth« is concentrated in relatively few hands and a big mass of poor mob is produced. Thus the specific problem of the civil society becomes obvious, that it is »despite of its excessive riches […] not rich enough« (*ibid.*: 201), that of the riches, which come forth from the industrial production with its division of labor, do not exist enough to prevent the excesses of poverty and the origin of poor mobs. On the level of the civil society there is no solution for this problem.

This problem leads to the phenomenon of *colonization*, among other things. Civil society is driven outside of itself by its inner dialectics, its inner and outside limits. The first step outside of its own limits is the »pressure to the sea.« By that it becomes clear that the sea does not only divide one from another, but also connects people and grows out to the »greatest medium […] of commerce« (*ibid.*: 202). After this first step a next one follows, namely the »means of colonization, to which the fully developed civil society is driven.« In this situation one part of the population, that is to say the colonizing people, goes back to work on the land, which they used to do before the industrialization of Europe. Another part finds in the colonized areas new markets to sell products or new treasures of soil (*ibid.*: 203). That people live in these areas, who own the land and who have their own ways of production, is not relevant for Hegel. For him, only the free citizens of the European states are human beings with rights. The colonized areas are, for him, something like the sea, an empty space, into which the dynamics of the civil society can penetrate. Therefore, Hegel's argumentation, coming from what he calls »proper philosophy,« can be regarded as an ideological justification of colonization. The broad influence of Hegel's philosophy, also beyond his followers, can be explained because it has »grasped its time in concepts.«[21]

[20] G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, J. Hoffmeister (ed.), Hamburg: Meiner, 1967, pp. 170–203 (§§190–248).
[21] Hegel (1967: 16).

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III The Need for Intercultural Philosophy

Hegel's concept of philosophy can be regarded as a paradigm for what philosophy is in Europe and for Europe since the Enlightenment. Philosophy only exists in Europe and in the Western world. And, more than anything else, understanding philosophy in terms of »proper« or »true« philosophy gives Europe and the Western world its superiority in relation to the non-Western parts of the world. Differing from that view Intercultural Philosophy asserts that philosophy exists in all cultures of the world, not only in Europe and the Western world. This implies the thesis that philosophy belongs to the human condition and that it gives human beings dignity as well as many other things. This means at the same time that the philosophies of all cultures are of the same status and that they can communicate with each other on the same level.

With regard to the influence of Hegel's thought during the second half of the nineteenth century, it is important to note that Neo-Kantianism in this period was dominant in European-Western philosophy. Hegel's all-comprising »system of philosophy« is rejected and replaced by a critical justification of scientific knowledge. Nevertheless Eurocentric thought, as expressed by Hegel, still prevails – in philosophy and as a general perception. This can be explained because Kant himself was no less negative in his judgment of non-European cultures than Hegel. In his *Lectures on Physical Geography,* which he had given many times, a hierarchical view on the different parts of the world – with Europe on top – is formulated, and in an article from 1775 he develops a »Doctrine of Races,« in which he stresses the superiority of the white race.[22]

After World War I a Hegelian renaissance took place in European academic philosophy. Hegel's philosophy was then judged as the completion of lineage running from Kant via Johann Gottlieb Fichte and Friedrich Wilhelm Schelling to Hegel. Eurocentrism still was fully accepted in connection with this new topicality of Hegel's philosophy.[23]

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[22] I. Kant, »Physische Geographie,« in F. T. Rink (ed.), *Kants Werke*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968, Vol. 9, pp. 151–436; »Von den verschiedenen Racen der Menschen,« in M. Frischeisen-Köhler (ed.), *Kants Werke*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 1968, Vol. 2, pp. 427–444.

[23] Also Edmund Husserl who departed from an own foundation of philosophy as phenomenology embraces a view equally as Eurocentric as Hegel. See his *Die Krisis der*

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This was in accordance with the idea of the superiority of Europe and the Western world in the general consciousness of that time.

In the second half of the twentieth century the later Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty became interested in non-Western philosophies, as I have mentioned above. With Heidegger this was motivated by the growing discussions of his thought among Japanese, Korean and Chinese philosophers. Merleau-Ponty's thinking allowed for a connection with non-Western ways of thought through his study of leading literature in cultural anthropology, especially that of Marcel Mauss and Claude Lévi-Strauss. And Jacques Derrida formulated an explicit critique of the ethnocentrism of European-Western philosophy, particularly regarding the low estimation of cultures with primarily oral forms of communication and tradition. He points in this connection at the paradox where with many European thinkers at the same time there existed a higher estimation of the voice and of the spoken word than of written texts. As a French citizen who came from a Jewish Berber-family in Algeria, Derrida led an intercultural existence. And he gave his thought an intercultural turn. He went, however, not so far as to study non-Western philosophies in detail.[24] With the three philosophers mentioned here, their hesitant openness to non-Western thought is connected with their critique of René Descartes and the way of thought that he launched in European tradition, and by this token also of Hegel.

Comparative philosophy in Europe is still, with a few exceptions, pursued at the universities in the departments of Indology, Sinology and Japanology. But outside of universities, interest in the philosophies from the Far East is grown rapidly. By founding special »Schools for Comparative Philosophy« in Belgium (Antwerp) and in the Netherlands (Utrecht), Ulrich Libbrecht from the University of Leuven has done a lot to meet this interest. Intercultural philosophy does not restrict itself to dialogues between Western and Eastern philosophies, but studies the philosophies of all cultures. These are not just compared, but brought into dialogues with each other. Pioneers of intercultural philosophy are among many others: Ram Adhar Mall who has been

europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendentale Phänomenologie, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1936.

[24] See H. Kimmerle, *Jacques Derrida interkulturell gelesen*, Nordhausen: Bautz, 2005, pp. 9–18.

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teaching at different German universities, Franz Martin Wimmer and Georg Stenger in Vienna, Jürgen Hengelbrock in Bochum, Claudia Bickmann in Cologne, Raúl Fornet-Betancourt in Aachen and in Bremen, Hamid Reza Yousefi in Trier and in Koblenz, and myself in Rotterdam. Nevertheless, some philosophers in favor of intercultural philosophy have great difficulties maintaining their position at universities.

The intercultural concept of philosophy has to be contrasted with the Hegelian Eurocentric concept. Insofar as Hegel's concept of philosophy can be regarded as typical of the European-Western philosophy as a whole, the horizon of that philosophy has to be transcended. An important starting point has to be the intercultural concept of philosophy covering what European-Western and non-Western philosophers recognize as philosophical. What is to be done is a deconstruction of the Hegelian European-Western concept of philosophy in order to come to a critical broadening and new precise determination of the concept of philosophy, taking into account the position of intercultural philosophy.

A more detailed description of this concept of philosophy cannot be given here. For that, another presentation would be necessary. That I have always been aware of this task is obvious from the subtitle of my first book on African philosophy from 1991: »Approaches to an intercultural concept of philosophy.«[25] Since then I have repeatedly written about this subject. More recently two shorter books have appeared, in which I go on to work on solving that problem.[26]

–Heinz Kimmerle, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Netherlands, Emeritus

[25] H. Kimmerle, *Philosophie in Afrika – afrikanische Philosophie. Annährungen an einen interkulturellen Philosophiebegriff*, Frankfurt: Campus, 1991.

[26] H. Kimmerle, *Der Philosophiebegriff der interkulturellen Philosophie*, Nordhausen: Bautz, 2009a; H. Kimmerle, *Philosophie – Geschichte – Philosophiegeschichte. Ein Weg von Hegel zur interkulturellen Philosophie*, Nordhausen: Bautz, 2009b.

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Philosophizing in Africa: Problems and Prospects

Abstract
There is a respectable body of literature that can legitimately claim to be about, on, or of, African philosophy. In this article, I briefly discuss some general problems in the literature on African philosophy. I will take on the problem of the language of philosophizing in Section II, the problem of the history of African philosophy in Section III, the trends, »schools« or approaches to African philosophy in Section IV, the problem of relativism in Section V, and the problem of uniqueness in Section VI. The last and concluding Section VII will round up the discussion with a relatively positive note on the prospects of African philosophy.

Keywords
African philosophy, philosophical justification, indigenous resources, Yoruba, Akan, inter-cultural understanding.

I Introduction

There is a respectable body of literature that can legitimately claim to be about, on, or of, African philosophy. This literature includes whole-length books, anthologies, monographs, articles, postgraduate theses and dissertations, and undergraduate essays and projects. The literature deals with a large variety of questions and issues, for example, the very question of African philosophy, the question of the history of African philosophy, and methodological problems in African philosophy. Other works include discussions of issues in the main areas of philosophy, namely, logic, not African logic, etc., epistemology, metaphysics, and value theory, including ethics, aesthetics, and social and political philosophy. I have deliberately not qualified logic, epistemology, metaphy-

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sics, etc. as »African« because I hope the works would be adjudged good enough to be admitted into mainstream discussions in the disciplines.

So, what is African philosophy? A philosophy, by my understanding, may be qualified as African if it addresses an issue or problem that is of vital concern to an African people specifically, for example, the Yoruba (mainly of southwestern Nigeria), or the Akan (mainly of Ghana); or generally, to all Africans as a »race« (if the expression is not offensive), wherever they may be, that is, whether they are in the continent of Africa or in the African diaspora. For the avoidance of doubt, the person doing African philosophy does not have to be an African (by »race«); he may be an American, Indian or German. For example, I consider Barry Hallen an African philosopher or, if that is preferable, as doing African philosophy. This is because, though he is a US national and white, he has done considerable work on African philosophy generally, and specifically, by using data from Yoruba language and culture.

In this article, I briefly discuss some general problems in the literature on African philosophy. These include the problem of the language of philosophizing, the history of African philosophy, the trends, »schools« or approaches to African philosophy, the problem of relativism and the problem of uniqueness. It is not a survey article and I do not propound a particular thesis. I have only raised and briefly examined some problems that may crop up in discussing African philosophy. I have not attempted to raise all of them. The ones I have raised just happen to be the ones that interest me for now, and on which I have something to say.

II The Problem of Language

The problem of the language of philosophizing arises because there are myriads of indigenous languages in Africa, in which basic materials for philosophizing can be found. These languages include Yoruba, Akan, Kiswahili (mainly in East Africa), Zulu, Hausa (mainly in large parts of northern Nigeria and adjoining areas in Niger and Chad Republics), Igbo (mostly in eastern Nigeria) and Arabic (mainly in North Africa). The problem also arises because there are three or four »colonial« languages used in philosophizing in Africa, mainly, English, French, Portuguese, and possibly Spanish.

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The problem of language arises at least at two levels in African philosophy. The first level is that of indigenous African languages or so-called vernaculars – and there is a large variety of them – in which can be found the original cultural sources that of necessity constitute the basic materials for philosophizing. These materials include proverbs, maxims, tales, myths, lyrics, poetry, art motifs and traditional cultural practices like worship, and traditional institutions like chieftaincy and kingship. All these materials are necessarily part of a culture and its language. So indigenous languages are absolutely necessary in some way to philosophizing in Africa.

One reason is that much of the work being done now using these source materials is what can be called »folk« philosophy, »communal« philosophy, or »cultural philosophy« (*cf*. Bello 2004).[1] Thus, to make any philosophical claim on behalf of a culture, the philosopher must provide justification for her claim. The justification for any such claim must be based directly or indirectly on some word, phrase, concept, proverb or usage in the culture. For example, Kwasi Wiredu, in canvassing consensus (as against majority opinion) meticulously reconstructs the political decision-making process among the Ashanti of Ghana, even if it is somehow idealized (Wiredu 1996: 185–186).[2]

Consensus, according to Wiredu, not only characterizes the choice of the chief or the »natural ruler,« it also describes the actual decisions made in running the affairs of the village, town or kingdom, headed by the »Asantehene,« the king of the Ashantis *(ibid.)*. Whatever reservations one may have about consensus, one cannot deny that Wiredu has shown that Ashanti decision-making processes are based on consensus.

To show that Wiredu's disquisition on consensus is based on his intimate knowledge of Ashanti culture and language, we must note that in making that claim, Wiredu cites Akan sayings and usage. Though he has rendered the sayings in English (see *ibid*., esp., pp. 185–186), if he were challenged, he would have to give the original sayings in Akan, so that the person disputing his claim could see if she

[1] *cf*. A. G. A. Bello, »Some Methodological Controversies in African Philosophy,« in K. Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, pp. 263–273.

[2] K. Wiredu, *Cultural Universals and Particulars*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996.

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agreed with him or not. So, there is no escaping the vernacular, at one point or another.

The point must also be made that in using the cultural materials cited above in philosophizing, there are two levels of justification. One level is where the philosopher is making a particular claim on behalf of a culture, say, the Yoruba culture. Thus, for example, if she claims that the Yoruba take *ori* (literally: head) as part of the human person, she must justify that claim using materials from the Yoruba language and culture. The second level is that of philosophical justification. This is because the investigation of Yoruba beliefs about *ori*, for example, and how the individual comes to be endowed with one, is not *per se* philosophical. Students of Yoruba mythology, religion or folk beliefs also make such claims. What is distinctively philosophical about the claim is to raise some questions and attempt to answer them. Such questions include: Is *ori* an entity? If it is, what sort of entity is it? If it is not an entity, what is its relation to the person whose *ori* it is? And at what level of explanation is the concept of *ori* invoked?

To seriously attempt to answer these and other questions requires more than perfunctory knowledge of the Yoruba language and culture. Relevant here are: the belief that the person receives her *ori* (literally: head) kneeling down; the fact that *ayanmo* (literally: that which is chosen for one), *akunleyan* (literally: that which is chosen while kneeling down), and *adamo* (literally: that which is created with one) are used as synonyms for *ori*, and the belief that a person's *ori* may be changed, modified or affected for better or for worse by sacrifices, incantations, or a (more) powerful person, etc. (*cf.* Bello 1991: 58).[3]

This means that any analysis of the thought or philosophical system of any language group must take very seriously the culture and language which is an indispensable part of it. Thus, in discussing the Yoruba concept of a person, the philosopher must take Yoruba culture and language seriously. Similarly, in discussing the Akan concept of democracy, the philosopher must take Akan culture and language seriously. Unfortunately, this places a severe limit on the number of philosophers who can meaningfully participate in any discussion using an indigenous language.

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[3] A. G. A. Bello, ›Ultimate Reality and Meaning in Africa: Some Methodological Preliminaries. A Test Case: Sound as Ultimate Reality and Meaning,‹ *Ultimate Reality and Meaning (African Studies)*, Vol. 14, No. 1, 1991, pp. 53–61.

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This is because, as we have suggested above, the prospective participants must have more than a perfunctory knowledge of the culture and language of the Yoruba or the Akan, respectively. Otherwise, how would they determine if a word, phrase, or other cultural item has been correctly or incorrectly interpreted?

It can be said without any fear of contradiction that there is no African philosopher, living or dead, who has mastery over more than a few of extant or extinct African languages. The present writer, if he may be allowed to use himself as an example, has some competence in three or four: Yoruba, his mother-tongue; Twi, (the language of a section of the Akan) by virtue of having been born in Ghana and having lived there for part of his life; Hausa, having had the opportunity of living and attending Qur'anic or Arabic schools in neighborhoods in Bibiani, Kumasi, and Accra (all in Ghana), where he had Hausa-speaking teachers; and Arabic, because he attended Qur'anic or Arabic schools in his childhood. I daresay few contemporary African philosophers have these coincidences in their lives.

The second level at which the language problem arises in African philosophy is that of the languages in which mainstream philosophizing takes place. Most African philosophers, depending on which European power colonized their countries, use either English or French. There may be others who use Arabic, Portuguese, or Spanish. If we go back in history we would probably find others who used other languages, for example Greek, Latin, Amharic, or some old extinct language.

Obviously, for the benefit of those who do not know these languages, the philosophic texts written in those languages have to be made available in one of the contemporary languages that are widely used in Africa today. As an example, Paulin Hountondji's seminal book, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* would have remained inaccessible to English readers if it had not been translated from the French original.[4]

Therefore, the linguistic divisions in contemporary African philosophy go beyond the Anglophone and Francophone; it must include the Lusophone as well as the Arabic-speaking and probably the Spanish-

[4] P. J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983, and *idem*., *Sur la philosophie africaine*, Paris: Francois Maspero, 1971.

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speaking. As a general observation, there is a tendency for users or speakers of other languages than English to also speak/use English; a good example is Hountondji, though the reverse is not often the case. In other words, it is common to find contemporary philosophers from Francophone and Arabic-speaking African who also use English very well; it is less common to find Anglophone Africans who also use French or Arabic well. Again, this places some limitation of another (maybe less fundamental) kind on the interaction among African philosophers, though not as much as the one based on the indigenous languages. To put it provocatively: who says colonialism does not have any redeeming features?

The point being made is that it will serve a useful purpose if African philosophers have access to each other's writings. It is for the same reason that the books of Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, etc. are translated from German into English, etc. for the benefit of non-German readers. It is also for the same reason that the books of Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty are translated from French into English, etc. for the benefit of non-French readers. African philosophers should not settle for less.

In this discussion, there need be no assumption that the various philosophic doctrines credited to the various peoples on the continent have anything in common. But it will be interesting if they do. Moreover, they should be interacting with one another because they are bound to have either common problems of a philosophical nature or social and political problems to whose solution philosophy can contribute. Moreover, a time may come when the philosophies of some African philosophers will be the common legacy of Africans (and, hopefully, of mankind) in the same way that Plato's philosophy as well as others' has become the common legacy of Europeans and mankind.

III Problem of the History of Philosophy

In my »Towards the History of African Philosophy,« I have discussed what I consider the tasks of a history of philosophy.[5] I argued that since a history of philosophy is an empirical inquiry into the lives, times,

[5] A. G. A. Bello, ›Towards the History of African Philosophy,‹ *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, No. 8, 1998, pp. 1–10.

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influences and teachings of identifiable individual philosophers, or of schools, or of traditions of philosophy, a history of African philosophy must attempt to discover individual philosophers, their biographies, philosophical teachings, and influences on and by them.

A number of publications can easily pass as histories of African philosophy. These include Dismas A. Masolo's *African Philosophy in Search of Identity* (1994), and Hallen's *A Short History of African Philosophy* (2002).[6] However, both of these books contain only a history of contemporary African philosophy. To take Masolo as an example, his earliest written source is E. W. Blyden's *A Voice from Bleeding Africa* published in the second half of the nineteenth century.[7]

Masolo has subsequently published an article entitled »African Philosophers in the Greco-Roman Era,« in which he attempted to find an earlier beginning for the history of African philosophy.[8] Theophile Obenga, in his article »Egypt: Ancient History of African Philosophy,« attempts to push back the beginning of African philosophy to ancient Egypt, that is, before the advent of the Semites, or before its Arabization or Islamization.[9]

More work, however, needs to be done to persuade a skeptic (like the present writer) of the history of African philosophy that ostensibly, according to Obenga, stretches from 3400 CE to 343 CE (in Egypt) and from 1000 CE to 625 CE (in Kush). The skeptic may ask: Is it an unbroken history to the present? Efforts must be made to explain the continuities and discontinuities. Students of African philosophy want to see a history complete with periods and how they are determined, with more information about the philosophers' lifetimes and work, and with a study of philosophical traditions and how they developed and thrived. In the matter of the history of African philosophy, as it is with the history of Western philosophy or others, it is not enough to recite

[6] D. A. Masolo, *African Philosophy in Search of Identity*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994; B. Hallen, *A Short History of African Philosophy*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002.

[7] E. W. Blyden, *A Voice from Bleeding Africa on Behalf of Her Exiled Children*, Liberia: G. Killian, 1856.

[8] D. A. Masolo, »African Philosophy in the Greco-Roman Era,« in K. Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, pp. 50–65.

[9] T. Obenga, »Egypt: Ancient History of Africa Philosophy,« in K. Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, pp. 31–49.

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the ideas of individual philosophers; it is also important to trace influence on and by them.

For one thing, this will make the history more interesting. No man is an island, and it is unlikely that a philosopher will be completely uninfluenced by anything or anybody. Even great Western philosophers admitted influences on them. Kant, for example, credited David Hume with wakening him up from his »dogmatic slumbers.« Similarly, a discontinuous history may still be a history but it would not be interesting. In fact, it would have only archival value. It can be compared to the history of a human settlement which is completely destroyed: the history of the settlement terminates with its destruction.

Attempts have also been made to write »regional« histories of African philosophy, such as Hallen's »Contemporary Anglophone African Philosophy: A Survey« and Mourad Wahba's »Philosophy in North Africa.«[10] It is also desirable to have articles or monographs on »Contemporary Francophone African Philosophy« and »Contemporary Lusophone African Philosophy.« Such efforts are welcome in the face of the language problem highlighted above, to wit, that there is hardly an African philosopher who is proficient in all the contemporary European languages being used across Africa as lingua francas.

IV Trends, »Schools,« or Approaches to African Philosophy

In his seminal article »Four Trends in African Philosophy,« Odera Oruka identifies ethnophilosophy, philosophic sagacity, national-ideological philosophy and professional philosophy.[11] He later added the hermeneutic, and the artistic or literary trends (see Hallen 2004: 124). From the way the »trends« have been discussed, they are not mutually exclusive. For example, professional (academic) philosophers who have employed the tools of (philosophical, linguistic or conceptual) analysis

[10] B. Hallen, »Contemporary Anglophone African Philosophy: A Survey,« in K. Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, pp. 99–148; M. Wahba, »Philosophy in North Africa,« in K. Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, pp. 161–171.

[11] H. Odera Oruka, »Four Trends in African Philosophy,« in A. Diemer (ed.), *Symposium on Philosophy in the Present Situation of Africa*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1981, pp. 1–7.

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to cultural, linguistic or traditional materials, may also be said to be doing »ethnophilosophy,« in some sense.

Similarly, a professional philosopher, like Oruka, who interviewed some philosophic sages, can be said to have contributed to the tradition of philosophic sagacity. In the same vein, a professional philosopher who evaluates the writings of our national-ideological thinkers like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana (1909–1972; President 1960–1966), Julius Nyerere of Tanzania (1922–1999; President, 1964–1985), Nnamdi Azikiwe of Nigeria (1904–1996; President, 1963–1966), Obafemi Awolowo of Nigeria (1909–1987; Premier of Western Region, 1954–1960) and Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia (born 1924; President, 1964–1991), can be said to contribute to national-ideological philosophy.

The same may be said of the other »trends.« This means that Oruka's trends can actually be said to define traditions that are in the making in African philosophy. Contributors to these traditions will consist of professional philosophers and others with philosophical ability, including politicians, sages, and creative writers of different categories, for example, poets, dramatists and novelists, social scientists and journalists.

V The Problem of Relativism

The problem of relativism may arise because many an African philosopher interrogates her own cultural tradition. Thus, a Yoruba-speaking philosopher, for example, Segun Gbadegesin, in discussing the Yoruba concept of a person, interrogates Yoruba culture. Similarly, Wiredu, in discussing the Akan concept of mind, interrogates Akan culture. So, their philosophical claims will be »relative« (in the ordinary sense) to their culture. Now, since cultural traditions may differ, does it not follow that many African philosophers must be »relativists,« simply because their philosophical cogitations are »relative« to a cultural tradition? The danger here is that this innocuous or »benign« relativism may be mistaken to be equivalent to philosophical or »pernicious« relativism.

What I have called pernicious relativism can be described, in the words of Wiredu (2004: 12) as »the view that the soundness, or even intelligibility, of any set of categories of thought is relative to its time, place or context of origin.« This form of relativism, according to Wir-

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edu *(ibid.)*, can be challenged on the basis of »the empirically verifiable biological unity of the human species,« as well as »the actual fact of cross-cultural communication among the peoples of the world, in spite of the well-known difficulties of inter-cultural translation.«

This form of relativism is pernicious, in my view, because, if it were true, it would make inter-cultural understanding impossible. Such understanding is crucial for world peace and cooperation among nations. Luckily, we do understand each other. Thus, for example, Africans understand Western conceptions, just as Westerners understand African conceptions. That is why both groups are able to discuss and argue, agree and disagree with each other.

What I have called benign relativism, which is simply due to the fact that some philosophical cogitations are relative to a cultural tradition, can be easily granted. This is because cultural traditions may actually differ in the way they conceive some items of interest. An example of this is the concept of a person. The various ways in which a human person is conceived in Akan and Yoruba thoughts are enough to illustrate this point.

The discussions of the concept of a person in African philosophy are normally related to the mind-body problem in Western philosophy, where there are monistic and dualistic theories. Monistic theories include materialism, idealism, identity theory, double-aspect theory and neutral monism. Dualistic theories include interactionism, occasionalism, parallelism, and epiphenomenalism.

The Akan word for a person is *onipa*. In his article »The Akan Concept of Mind,« Wiredu identifies the following as constituents for a person: *nipadua* (body), *okra* (a life-giving entity), *sunsum* (that which gives a person's personality its force), *mogya* (literally: blood), and *ntoro* (that which is responsible for the cast of his personality).[12] It is to be noted here that, according to Wiredu, *adwene* (thought) is not one of the constituents of the human person, since the mind is not construed as an entity.

The Yoruba word for a human person is *eniyan*. The person's constituents include *ara* (body), *emi* (soul), and *ori* (literally: head; also destiny). The body further consists of *okan* (heart), *eje* (blood), *iye* (rationality, mind), *opolo* (brain), *ifun* (intestines), *ikun* or *inu* (sto-

[12] K. Wiredu, ›The Akan Concept of Mind,‹ *Ibadan Journal of Humanistic Studies*, No. 3, 1983, p. 119.

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mach, inner part), *edo* (liver), *owo* (hand), and *ese* (foot or leg). All these human parts serve different psychical, physical, and spiritual functions (*cf.* Omolafe 1997).[13]

From these different analyses, it is clear that the human person is credited with some physical and mental, psychical or spiritual functions. In a way, the comparison of African conceptions of a person with Western philosophies of mind is inappropriate for the simple reason that whereas in the West there are identifiable philosophers of mind, African conceptions are part of what can be called »folk philosophy,« which is philosophy only in a generous sense.

My own ideal of a philosophy, if I may be permitted to say so, is the written work of a live, flesh-and-blood person that contains assertions, explanations and justifications (Bello 2004: 265–266). This is a person, in the words of Bertrand Russell, in whom are crystallized and concentrated thoughts and feelings which, in a vague and diffused form, are common to the community of which he is a part (Russell 1963: 629).[14] I am ready to concede that my own ideal of a philosophy may not be met in every case, but that is the nature of all ideals. Others may be satisfied with less.

In order to ameliorate even this benign relativism, the African philosopher must embrace comparative philosophizing. She must be ready to compare the findings in respect of her own cultural tradition with findings from other cultural traditions, African or other. In this comparison, no cultural tradition needs to be assumed to be advantaged, or, for that matter, disadvantaged. In other words, comparison should assume a level playing ground for all cultures.

The reason for this is that though it is not untenable to suggest that no major natural language or culture is intrinsically superior or inferior to any other, it can, however, not be denied that one language may be more or less developed in some specific respect, for example, science, philosophy or literature, than another language. But languages can be developed in any respect by adopting, adapting, and borrowing from other languages.

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[13] J. A. Omolafe, »Yoruba Conception of a Person: Functional Implications,« Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, 1997, pp. 106–173.

[14] B. Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, London: George Allen & Unwin Limited, 1963.

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Comparison may yield the result that similar claims can be made in different languages. For example, Wiredu has shown that the opposite of *nokware* (truth) in Akan is *nkontompo* (lies), not falsehood, thus, in his view (though this has been contested by a fellow Akan-speaking philosopher), giving primacy to the moral as opposed to the cognitive. A similar claim can be made in Yoruba, where the opposite of *otito* or *ooto* (truth) is *iro* (lies). Therefore, similar implications may be drawn in both languages.

VI The Problem of Uniqueness

What about uniqueness? Is every cultural tradition not unique, complete with its epistemology, metaphysics, morality and even logic? There is a straightforward answer to this question. To the extent that different cultures have different languages, histories, usages, taboos and beliefs, every tradition is indeed unique. But that is not the end of the matter. This is because we may work with specific concepts and show that parallel or equivalent concepts may be generated in many cultures.

Before illustrating this point, I must express my worry that, as with relativism, a strong claim to uniqueness may pose problems for cross-cultural understanding. My hope is that no culture is so unique that it does not share concepts, conceptions, and ideals with other cultures.

Now, for example, the concept of God as ultimate reality (with capital »G«) in English has its equivalents or parallels in Yoruba, »Olodumare,« in Akan, »Onyankupon,« in Hausa, »Ubangidi,« in Arabic, »Allah,« etc. There may be differences within each conception or concept that are not admitted in the others. For example, the word »God« in English has a complement, »god« (with small letter »g«), has a feminine form, »goddess,« has a plural, »gods.« None of the other concepts is susceptible to those modifications or changes, though it may be argued with some plausibility that these modifications actually represent different concepts or conceptions.

As for morality, while there may be differences between various conceptions of what is moral, it is obvious that our common humanity will not allow a radical difference between such conceptions. To start with the differences, is it moral to kill children of multiple birth, for

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example, twins, triplets or quadruplets? The correct answer, in my view, is that it is not, but in some cultures such children are killed, since they are ignorantly or superstitiously regarded as bad omens. (Note that in some cultures, like the Yoruba, children of multiple birth are idolized). This must be taken as an example of a situation where »metaphysical« or superstitious beliefs interfere with morality.

In general, however, there is hardly any culture where truthfulness, sincerity, honesty, kindness, generosity and bravery are not morally commended and their opposites, lying, insincerity, dishonesty, unkindness, miserliness and cowardice are not morally condemned. This is the case whether we adopt virtue ethics, deontologist, or teleological ethics. The possible exceptions may be in times of a prolonged war or famine, or where people are marooned in the desert or the sea. The survival instinct predominates in such extreme conditions.

As to logic, two of the so-called laws of thought, namely, the law of identity and the law of (non-) contradiction, appear to have universal application. Classification, and there is no culture where it is not done, is based on the law of identity. There is no culture, for example, where there is no distinction between foods and poisons; such distinctions are based on the law of identity.

In his »Logic in the Acholi Language,« Victor Ocaya shows how the Acholi language supports the law of (non-) contradiction.[15] The present writer has attempted to do a similar exercise using the Yoruba language (Bello 2002).[16] According to Ocaya, the Acholi language also disputes the »law« of excluded middle, though this is not new in itself or unique to the Acholi language, since the law has been disputed almost from the beginning of its formulation by Aristotle.

As to epistemology, it is difficult to see how uniqueness can be claimed on behalf of any culture. This is because as human beings, we all have the same senses to work with, though we may disagree as to how to evaluate the evidence available to us. That, I believe, is why philosophers have espoused different epistemological doctrines, such as empiricism and rationalism. The other sources of knowledge that

[15] V. Ocaya, »Logic in the Acholi Language,« in K. Wiredu (ed.), *A Companion to African Philosophy*, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, pp. 285–295.

[16] A. G. A. Bello, »On the Concepts of Rationality and Communalism in African Scholarship,« in O. Oladipo, *The Third Way in African Philosophy*, Ibadan: Hope Publications Ltd., 2002, pp. 235–251.

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are claimed: divination, dreams, vision, numerology, prophecy, etc. occur in different cultures, though in different forms.

VII Prospects

The prospects for African philosophy are exciting. It has definitely come of age. More and more work is being done on the elucidation of concepts, either in comparison with cognate concepts in Western philosophy, or with cognate concepts in other African cultures. African philosophers have moved away from the monolithic characterization of African experience. It is now generally accepted that there are notable differences among African cultures and traditions and therefore philosophies.

African philosophers and other scholars must rise to the occasion. There are departments or institutes of philosophy in many of our universities. More centers are, however, needed to carry out in-depth and collaborative research into all areas of philosophy at the national, regional, and continental levels. Research into African philosophy has been greatly facilitated by the availability of the works of eminent contemporary Africa philosophers and scholars in both English and French.

These centers may also attempt to solve the language problems discussed by translating the available literature in English and French, that is, English into French and vice versa. The centers may also compile bilingual or even trilingual dictionaries of philosophical terms in major African languages. Thus, we may have an Akan-English or English-Akan dictionary, or an Akan-English-French dictionary. The exercise may start by compiling the philosophical metalanguage of the major African languages, for example, Akan, Bantu, Hausa, Igbo, Kiswahili, Yoruba, and Zulu.

Such centers of learning may, furthermore, endeavor to produce monographs on specific philosophical problems, or on the philosophies of major African philosophers from antiquity to the present. The assemblage of such monographs may eventually pave the way for the writing of a credible and comprehensive history of African philosophy from the beginning to the present. It may also lead to the compilation of an encyclopedia of African philosophy. The task of compiling such an

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encyclopedia will best be carried out by philosophers, or persons who have considerable training in philosophy.

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Ground, Being, and Evil: From *Conspiration* to Dialectics of Love

Abstract
This paper is an attempt to read some of the key concepts of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling in a cosmical and intercultural context. First, Schelling's relation to the Vedas is discussed. Here we introduce a triadic model, based on the Upanishadic ritual structure (microcosm-mesocosm-macrocosm) and cosmology. The structural logic of this model enables us to relate ancient Indian thought to the basic cosmological and ontological concepts (Unground, Ground, God) of Schelling. On this basis, we approach the problem of good and evil in Schelling from his reading of the *Bhagavadgita* and discuss some recent interpretations of this difficult question (Amartya Sen and Angelika Malinar), including a critical note on Martin Heidegger's dealings with the problem of evil. Finally, we introduce the term conspiracy/co-breathing from Schelling's *Freedom* essay. Here, this constellation is presented in a comparative reading with the *Nasadiya Sukta* hymn from the Vedas. The paper ends with the testimony for a dialectical process (of co-breathing and emerging love) at the very core of Schelling's philosophy.

Keywords
F. W. J. Schelling, Vedas, intercultural philosophy, cosmology, breath, mesocosm, conspiration.

Deep
in Time's crevasse
by
the alveolate ice
waits, a crystal of breath,
your irreversible
witness.
Paul Celan, *Etched away*

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I Introduction

This essay is an attempt to read some of the key concepts of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling in an intercultural and comparative context, in particular as related to ancient Indian Vedic thought. Jason Wirth, for example, has already proposed a reading of Schelling's thought as compared to the early philosophy of Nishida Kitaro and proposed some interpretative keys toward greater affinity between Buddhist philosophy *(dependent origination)*, the *Bhagavadgita*, and Schelling's economy of nature.[1] In this essay, the principal task will be to relate some of the central topics from Schelling's philosophy and cosmology (Ground, evil, love) to the Vedic philosophy of the beginning, or, better, Vedic cosmology. This comparison with its analysis will thus delve into some salient elements of two – in my opinion – deeply related ontological events in the history of philosophical thought: early Vedic cosmological thought as presented in the Rigvedic cosmogonic hymn (*Rig Veda* 10.121) and Schelling's philosophy from *Philosophical Inquiries Into the Nature of Human Freedom* and *Ages of the World*. I will thus try to pursue a comparative study, based on some typological and structural similarities and analogies.

II A Technical Note

First a short technical note on Schelling and the Vedas is needed: there is no direct textual evidence in Schelling's writings that he carefully read or analyzed Vedic hymns, in particular the Creation hymn (»Nasadiya Sukta,« *Rig-Veda* 10.129) which I will use for my comparison. There are indeed numerous references to the *Vedas* (and, more specifically, to the *Upanishads*) in the first part of his *Philosophy of Mythology (Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie)* but without the exegetical analysis of any particular hymn. In his mythological analysis on Indian religions Schelling pays no attention to early Indian myths or the religion of Veda. According to Sedlar (1982: 130–131), besides many of Schelling's »errors on the subject of India,« due to his insufficient knowledge of the early religiosity of the Vedas, Schelling »declined to accept Vedas as ›Indian‹ in character at all; instead he as-

[1] J. M. Wirth, *The Conspiracy of Life*, New York: SUNY Press, 2003, chapter 4.

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signed them to the period when the ancestors of the Indians were ›included in universal humanity.‹« More importantly, he felt that the Vedas did not contain the »explanation or the actual secret of the mythology itself.« Halbfass (1988: 78) also rightly observes that from Schelling's early positive views and general openness towards India, his later works turn towards a more critical and anti-Romantic approach.[2] As we will see, due to his personal contacts and friendship with the Schlegel brothers, August Wilhelm and Karl Wilhelm Friedrich Schlegel, the later Schelling was far more interested in the *Bhagavadgita* and other post-Brahmanical sources and was thus not able to correct his false views on Vedic literature and religiosity – which would have been possible due to emerging new translations and other newly available scholarly literature.

I will first present an original triadic cosmological model that will later enable me to compare Schelling with the Vedas. I will also add a note on the role of breathing in the Vedas in order to be able to understand the role of breath in my elaboration of Schelling. In his introduction to a translation of early *Upanishads*, Patrick Olivelle (1996) describes the triadic relation between the human body/person, the ritual, and the cosmic realities. The ritual sphere includes different ritual actions (such as formulas, prayers, songs), while the other two realms represent what we understand as microcosm and macrocosm. For the Vedic seers the central concern was to discover the connections between the three realms of the cosmos. They were said to be in possession of a secret knowledge of these cosmic relations (like *bandhu*) or, as later known by the Upanishadic philosophers, *upanishads*.[3] But it is Michael Witzel who for the first time, surprisingly late, introduced the name for the middle term of this triad, namely *mesocosm*, a name given to the ritual sphere in order to understand the relation between macro-

[2] See J. W. Sedlar, *India in the Mind of Germany: Schelling, Schopenhauer, and Their Times*, Washington: University Press of America, 1982; see also W. Halbfass, *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding*, New York: SUNY Press, 1988. Sedlar rightly observes that for Schelling ancient Indian texts (Vedas) were »very unsatisfactory reading« (1982: 44). See also chapter 8 in J. M. Wirth, *The Conspiracy of life: Meditations on Schelling and His Time*, Albany, New York: SUNY Press, 2003.

[3] See P. Olivelle, *Upanishads*, trans. and introd. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. liii): »The central concern of all vedic thinkers, including the authors of the Upanisads, is to discover the connections that bind elements of these three spheres to each other. The assumption then is that the universe constitutes a web of relations, that things that appear to stand alone and apart are, in fact, connected to other things.«

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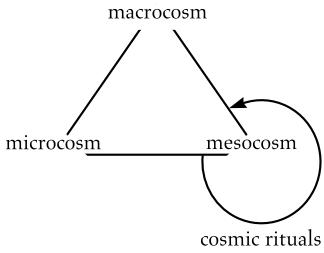
cosm and microcosm. *Mesocosm* is thus a *copula*, a third part of the triangle structure *the ritual – the cosmic realities – the human body/person* in the Vedic-Upanishadic context.[4] We will see the importance of this structure for Schelling's cosmological thinking. The Vedic triad I wish to propose is as follows:



The model stems from the reasoning and understanding of the connection *(bandhu* or *upanishad)* within the tripartite scheme, which could offer a novel approach to the new circular and processual structure of ontologico-ethical cohabitation and cooperation. In ancient cosmological thinking of the Vedic India, which was still closely related to the natural topography of the world of being, the place of this cosmic cooperation was in ritual (mesocosm) as a mediator between the world of nature and gods (macrocosm) and the world of humans (microcosm). The structural logic of this triadic thought could also be explained by

[4] M. Witzel, *Katha Aranyaka: Critical Edition With a Translation into German and an Introduction*, Harvard, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004. See n. 129 on p. xl of the Introduction for the history of the usage of »mesocosm.« Witzel wrote how curious it was that »the term has not been used in this context before.« He refers to its first usage in a book on Newar religion authored by R. I. Levy and K. R. Rājopādhyāya titled *Mesocosm: Hinduism and the Organization of a Traditional Newar City of Nepal*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990. Witzel argues for the reconstruction of the term »mesocosm« within the Vedic magical interpretation of the world, where we face different analogies or magical »identifications« between the macrocosmic and microcosmic realities or gods (for example sun-eye, wind-breath, earth-body, water-semen, fire-speech, etc.). This ancient way of thinking uses different »mystic« correlations and equivalents, some obvious (such as between sun and the eye or wind and breath) and some more hidden and esoteric (between moon and mind). But there always exists a nexus or a connection between two beings (in Sanskrit it is called *bandhu* and *upanishad*). See also M. Witzel, ›Macrocosm, Mesocosm, and Microcosm: The Persistent Nature of »Hindu« Beliefs and Symbolic Forms,‹ *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1997, pp. 501–539.

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what Josiah Royce offered with his lucid observations on C. S. Peirce's semiotics or his triadic scheme (interpreter – interpretant – interpretee). On an ethical level, the progress from dyadic to triadic relations means that

> [o]nce we enter into relations with others, others that are more than a pair, that is, we have entered relations that command our loyalty. Triadic relations are correlated with loyalty and peacefulness, whereas dyadic relations entail hostility and conflict.[5]

This is what happens on ethical and socio-political levels. But fundamentally, this scheme points to cosmic relations, and ultimately to ontology, where the line connecting microcosm with the macrocosm is radically weakened due to a necessity of another dialectics of the two (cosmic realities, sexes, persons), which incarnates in the circle with an arrow head and points towards the macrocosm as a copula and as a threshold: mesocosmic connections (or rituals) are now signs of a new dialectics, emerging out of a primordial constellation between the two primordial cosmic realities, two sexes, or two persons. Ontologically, this is what Schelling designated with the term *Conspiration* – a dialectical process in a sense of a co-breathing of Ground towards love.

We have to outline another important characteristic of Vedic thought: the role of breath and breathing. This will be important for understanding Schelling's concept of a primeval act of *conspiration* or two concepts – of *co-breathing* and *breath of love (der Hauch der Liebe)* in God. For the Vedic philosophers, or the tradition of Vedism/Brahmanism, there existed five originary elements of the world: earth, water, fire, air, and ether (*Aitareya Upanishad* III). We find references to wind and breath in the *Samhitas* (the oldest parts of Vedic collections), but the most ancient testimony and elaboration for the so-called »Wind-Breath-doctrine« (»Wind-Atem-Lehre«) can be found in the philosophy of nature of *Jaiminiya Upanishad Brahmana* 3.2.2. and 4 (JUB). This teaching is an example of a typical Vedic macro-microcosmic analogy between the macrocosmic Wind *(vayu)* and microcosmic breath *(prana)*. From the cosmological point of view, the wind is the

[5] J. Royce, *War and Insurance: An Address*, New York: Macmillan Company, 1914. Part II of the address is called »The Neighbor: Love and Hate.« I owe this reading to Eduardo Mendieta's insightful interpretation of Royce's thought in E. Mendieta, *Mediterranean Lectures in Philosophy*, L. Škof and T. Grušovnik (eds.), Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2008, p. 34.

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only »complete« deity since all other deities/gods/elements/phenomena (sun, moon, stars, fire, day, night, waters, etc.) return to him during the enigmatic stillness of the night, while he never stops blowing. But at the most abstract level, it is the difference between the perishable (day, night) and imperishable or »eternal« (Wind) that led to the so-called Wind-Breath doctrine. Analogously, then, breath in (wo)man is the most important of the five vital powers (breathing, thinking, speech, sight, hearing) since it is only breath that is present during deep sleep. Of course, in the moment of death, breath returns to its macrocosmic eternal origin, the Wind. Breathing as the most important vital power is thus equated with life itself, with the cosmic Wind, and later with person's self *(atman)*.[6]

III Good and Evil in Schelling's *Ages of the World*

Now it is time to approach Schelling's philosophy. Let me first outline Jason Wirth's interpretation of good and evil in his chapter on Schelling and India, entitled »Purushottama.« The chapter closes his important book *The Conspiracy of Life*. In his interpretation of good and evil Wirth focuses on the *Bhagavadgita*, and among the Indian sources he follows Sri Aurobindo Ghose's reading of this sacred text. I already mentioned the Vedic triad. Wirth thinks of another triad, as visible in the ancient caves of Shiva at the Elephanta Island, namely figures of *trimurti* or threefaced Shiva. The phrase »I am the one who was, who is, who will be« from *The Ages of the World* is revealed to Schelling as representing both Shiva and the potencies from his thought.[7] But more important for our understanding of this dichotomoy between the *trimurti* on the one and »our« Vedic triad on the other side, is what Schelling saw in the *Bhagavadgita*. In Schelling's understanding of Arjuna's famous battlefield dilemma (to fight or not to fight against his relatives) and in Wirth's reading of Schelling we have to forget about Kantian deontology or dilemmas of utilitarianism and, as it were, with Schelling and his understanding of the *Bhagavadgita*, »fare forward.«[8]

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[6] For the Wind-Breath doctrine, see M. Boland, *Die Wind-Atem-Lehre in den älteren Upanisaden*, Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1997.

[7] Wirth (2003: 220–221).

[8] As also understood by T. S. Eliot in his *Four Quartets* (cited after A. Sen, *The Argu-*

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The question of evil is of course extremely difficult to deal with. Wirth asks himself whether this thinking does not »make all things good and therefore also all evil things good?« or even »imply evil in the very heart of the divine.«[9] The answer, of course, is no. But there are different strategies leading to this answer. Aurobindo argues, says Wirth, that it is only in Indian religion that the enigmatic World-Power is one Trinity, or triad. Schelling, it seems, already wishes to think like Nietzsche, and Aurobindo later did: going beyond good and evil. Now, for Wirth, good and evil are only understood from the *third*, a copula, or *Being (Wesen)*, without reconciliation or sublimation *(Aufhebung)*. In this reading Schelling argues:

> Good and evil are equally *wesentlich* [or essential], without evil in any way ceasing to be evil and the good ceasing to be good. There is no development without the force that holds back and inhabits development and therefore at the same time resists it.[10]

But we can go even further, both with Schelling and his commentator, and find in Tantric religious practices the ultimate proof for this theory of good and evil.[11] Being scandalous in many respects, Tantric practices now testify for this insistence of both evil and good in the person, or God. The abject side of a human life needs to be known, and somehow approached, we all know. Schelling knew Tantric practices and referred to them indirectly: »The Good can only express itself as what is not itself, as what is not Good.«[12]

But I would like to propose another reading of Schelling's *The Ages of the World*. Two lines of arguments will be used: firstly, I will refer to Amartya Sen and his criticism of some interpretations of the

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mentative Indian, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005, p. 4, n. 4). Krishna's argument »And do not think of the fruit of action. / Fare forward.« is thus translated by Eliot into »Not fare well, / But fare forward, voyagers.«

[9] Wirth (2003: 226).

[10] *Cf.* (*Ibid.:* 228).

[11] Tantrism refers to a spectrum of soteriological and magical religious practices derived from Tantric texts. The body (microcosm) is homologized to the deity or cosmos (macrocosm) in order to attain supernormal powers *(siddhi)* which transgress »ordinary« or dual (subject-object, good-evil etc.) models of knowledge. See W. J. Johnson, »Tantra(s),« *Oxford Dictionary of Hinduism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 320–322.

[12] (*Ibid.*: 229).

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Bhagavadgita (also with the help of another more precise indological interpretation, namely of Angelika Malinar), and secondly, I will focus my attention on earlier testimonies – found in Vedic hymns and in early Greek sources *(cháos)*. Schelling is right only when his understading of *Bhagavadgita* is right, or plausible. The same holds for Wirth, of course. Secondly, Schelling's cosmology, or primordial ontology of good and evil, can be reinterpreted from the perspective of the triadic model I proposed (and not by the later model of *trimurti*).

In his *Argumentative Indian*, Amartya Sen pointed to different lines of arguments regarding Arjuna's doubts before going to the fight against his relatives. Arjuna doubts whether it is right to fight against his relatives. This happens on the eve of the great war between Kauravas and Pandavas, being the central event of the *Mahabharata*. Now, Sen refers to Bimal Matilal's book *Moral Dilemmas in the Mahabharata* (1989). According to Sen, and despite the compulsion to »fare forward,« namely beyond good and evil, as *Gita* suggests (and also in Schelling's sense), there is also another argument to »fare well,« or to retreat from the duty. According to Sen, »the univocal ›message of the Gita‹ requires supplementation by the broader argumentative wisdom of the *Mahabharata* of which the *Gita* is only one small part.«[13] Angelika Malinar, in her extensive reading of *Bhagavadgita, Rajavidya: Das königliche Wissen um Herrschaft und Verzicht*, proposes another series of arguments both pro and contra Krishna's famous instruction – that Arjuna cannot retreat from his obligations and thus has to wage the war, no matter what the consequences are.[14] Malinar compares *Udyogaparvan* (the fifth book of the *Mahabharata*) with the *Bhagavadgita* (the sixth book of the *Mahabharata*). As there are many proofs for a »peaceful resolution« argumentation in the former (when Kauravas and Pandavas are preparing for the coming battle), this clearly means that the problem of good and evil is far from being resolved in this sense.

[13] Sen (2005: 6).

[14] A. Malinar, *Rajavidya: Das königliche Wissen um Herrschaft und Verzicht*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1996. See p. 94 for arguments for a peaceful resolution.

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IV Schelling's Cosmology in *Freedom*

Now, approaching Schelling's cosmology from the angle of earlier testimonies in the *Vedas* will enable us to outline what I think is one of the key elements of the cosmologico-ontological interpretation of the good-evil problem. Thereupon we will be able to proceed towards the very core of the Schellingian *dialectics of love*.

For Schelling, in his *Freedom* essay, despite all seemingly paradoxical and extremely deep understandings of the nature of God or Ground, the highest of all beings/entities is ultimately the spirit: spirit is called the breath of love.[15] In the same text there is also an obscure reference to a »concept« called *Conspiration* (from Latin *conspīro*, literally: »to breathe together«). Why did Schelling choose this term for the explanation of his cosmology? For Schelling, »conspiration« is a sign of the primeval unity within the triadic circle of God-Ground-human being. From this circle, the dialectics of love (and evil) emerges. Schelling assumed through his deep intuitions that the human being, the Ground, and God are in a relationship, which can be represented by the signifiers, *spirit/love/breath*. This enigmatic, dynamic, and also synchronous inter-relationship of the human being, Ground, and God, initiates the possibility of thinking beyond binaries, such as transcendence and immanence, inside and outside, life and death, and love and evil. To this ontological *and* cognitive power Schelling gave the name *conspiration*. The triple structure – God/Ground/human being – is identified with the co-breathing of the original or ontological gesture of oneness of *conspiration*, which already means both exhaling the will of God into the Ground and into death/evil and an accompanying inhalation of this will of the primeval source or Nature on the part of the Ground/the human Being into life and love. Schelling is also aware that fire or warmth (radiance, flare, or *tapas* in the *Vedas*, as an element

[15] F. W. J. Schelling, *Philosophical Inquiries Into the Nature of Human Freedom*, J. Gutmann (trans.), (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1989), p. 86. About God as/and Ground – clearly, for Schelling »there is nothing before or outside of God« and God also »must contain within himself the ground of his existence« (*ibid.*: 32). But also, there is another aspect, a »processual« one, as it were, when »God contains himself in an inner basis of his existence, which, to this extent, precedes him as to his existence, but similarly God is prior to the basis as this basis, as such, and could not be if God did not exist in actuality« (*ibid.*: 33).

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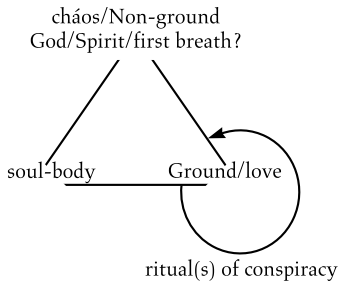
which accompanies knowledge)[16] is the principle which *warms* human beings with the warmth/heat/fire of the beginning, while also removing his being of its original breath or inspiration – as an eternal oneness of co-breathing. Fire and air, thus, are the most important elements of this constellation. As Wirth states as well, this process, originating in the Ground and at the same moment from the Ground, is the conspiration of life, the movement of life from within, a life, being on the boundary and beyond the boundary of its own being. Here this process is represented in the next triad, as I would propose:



The triad, in my view, represents the cosmological movement within and from the Ground to the human. I understand this dialectical and synchronous movement in the mesocosmic sense as an ontological event – thus as »rituals of conspiration.« But why did Schelling choose breath and co-breathing? This brings us to the *Vedas*, more exactly, to the Creation hymn. I will now relate the obscure emergence of evil from the Un/Ground in Schelling and relate it to the Vedic hymn *Nasadiya Sukta* (RV 10.129) and its famous cosmology/philosophy of the *Beginning*. Firstly, I believe we can read Vedic philosophy through Schelling's concept of the abyss *(der Ungrund; cf.* Greek *cháos* in Hesiodus, and Sanskrit *tad ekam)*. According to Raimundo Panikkar, in this primeval Openness (*cháos* in Greek sense) both Evil and Good are embraced.[17] How is this to be thought? We have seen that for Schelling, as

[16] In early Indian philosophy, *tapas* as heat is the very essence of ascetic fervor (religious austerity) and thus forms the very core of our cognitive powers, gathered *(yoga)* in order to attain what Schelling would call *conspiration*.

[17] R. Panikkar, *The Vedic Experience*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977, pp. 56–57: »Evil and good, the positive and the negative, both are embraced in the One, that encompasses everything […] Nothingness is not previous, but coextensive with Being […] The pro-

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for the Vedic seers, it is fervor *(tapas)* as an ontologico-cognitive power that forms the b/Being out of the primeval unity of conspiration. But in its original meaning, »conspiration« is related to *breathing* and air, and not to fire. This is what is now interesting: for Schelling, as for the Vedic philosophy, Ground/the One *(tad ekam) breathed* in the beginning. From It the first Being emerges. Here are the lines of the Vedic hymn:

1. Then was not non-existent nor existent:
then was no realm of air, no sky beyond it.
What covered it?, and where? and what gave shelter?
Was water there, unfathomed depth of water?

2. Death was not then, nor was there naught immortal;
no sign was there, the day's and night's divider.
That One thing, breathless, breathed by its own nature:
apart from it was nothing whatsoever.

3. Darkness there was: at first concealed in darkness
this All was indiscriminated chaos.
All that existed then was void and formless:
by the great power of Warmth was born that Unit.

4. Thereafter rose Desire in the beginning,
Desire, the primal seed and germ of Spirit.
Sages who searched with their heart's thought
Discovered the existent's kinship in the non-existent.[18]

The Vedic hymn on creation is among the most important philosophical hymns of the *Rksamhita*. The hymn is an account given by the Vedic poet and seer about the primordial stage or obscure »ground« *(abhu*, the Void, the Opening, *cháos)* of all existence. There was neither being *(sat)* nor non-being *(asat)*, in the beginning. There »existed« only »That One« *(tad ekam;* Greek *to hen)*, which, being beyond »life«

cess, according to the intuition of the Vedic *rsi*, is one of concentration, of condensation, of an emergence *by the power of love*« (my emphasis).

[18] *The Hymns of the Rgveda,* R. T. H. Griffith (trans.), Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1995, pp. 633–634.

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and »death« proper, *breathed and lived from itself*. The third and fourth stanza offer an explanation of the actual beginning of the world from the first two stanzas: if »That One« is the obscure un/ground, being *alive* (breath) even before there was a life and a death, then the primeval Warmth or fervor *(tapas)* is the actual force of creation. Later, in the fourth stanza, Desire *(kama)* is the germ of Spirit and as such the first sign of life. »That One« is in a neuter case and as such precedes any »personal« identification, except for the breathing. The fourth stanza is crucial for our explanation: *kama*, »the Desire to live,« therefore comes before mind *(manas)*, even Spirit. We can say that for the Spirit to arise in its supreme divine nature, there must be longing of That One for life. But in this eternal longing, according to Schelling, evil reveals, or manifests in humans.

I would like to wind up my analyses with the question about the nature of *cháos*/*abhu*, or the primeval opening/the Void of Being and within Being of love and evil. A word on Martin Heidegger is needed here. We can position Heidegger's ontology in closest vicinity to the mythologico-cosmical thinking of the pre-Socratics, Schelling, and also the Vedas. In my opinion, Heidegger was the most careful reader of Schelling's *Philosophical Inquiries Into the Nature of Human Freeedom*. For Heidegger, it is from the Ground/Chaos/*das Heilige* that Being grows. In this constellation, Being (in one of Its incarnations) is capable both of good and evil. But Being, for Heidegger, is *das Bosärtige* in itself, as we will see. On the other hand, Schelling thought consequently: if God is the Ground of everything, and if there is Evil in the world, then there is something other than God in the Ground – the Unground. But this duality in God is kept as One, *co-breathing* (the same we find in the Vedic hymn) with itself, in Love/Heat/*Tapas*. We can understand love to be longing, which is born for the ground out of the ground. The ground conceals within itself the possibility of the first corporeality, which is born of it. This is the primeval dialectics of love, and not only some mode of love, as proposed by Wirth. If we wish to resolve this cosmogonical question, we have to search at the beginning, not at the end (and proceed towards natality instead of mortality; which is true both for *Bhagavadgita* and Heidegger). Now, in us this primeval unity of co-breathing is already broken. Evil has to be revealed, and this is why God needs humans and humans need God. God and humans are *mesocosmically* connected/related through the Ground, and love. Schelling thinks: God has to become man for man to be able to return

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to God. With Schelling we know that it is from Love in the Ground that love can be preserved and hoped for. Schelling gives us the sacred soteriology of love. This is the eternal dialectics of love, which never sublates evil (as Hegel proposed in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*,[19] and which repeats itself in Heidegger). *Being* is now the place where sacred wounds of evil can be cured. Heidegger, by contrast, was already too far from Christianity to be able to resolve this difficult question and to think about love in this way. For him, ultimately, *Seyn* or Being stayed broken within itself. *Das bosärtige Seyn* from the *Feldweg-Gespräche (Country Path Conversations)*[20] was not able to cure Heidegger's ethical loss and this, in my opinion, is why he was never able to apologize publicly for his traumatic episode with the Nazis. Namely, for Heidegger, the ground is that place from which Being grows, which is capable of both good and evil alike. This Being itself is, in its essence, ambiguous; maliciousness remains one of its fundamental characteristic. It can manifest itself as devastation to which we bear witness throughout history and of which one of its expressions is the German Nazism adventure – as Heidegger responds to Marcuse in a famous letter to his question concerning concentration camps.[21] To return to *Country Path Conversations:* in this conversation, the *bosärtige*, or what is evil within *Seyn* or Being, remains part of a radically fractured and essentially divided and thus obscure Being.[22] But this Being is not what brings

[19] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, A. V. Miller (trans.), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977, see section »Absolute Freedom and Terror,« p. 360 (§590).

[20] M. Heidegger, *Country Path Conversations*, B. W. Davis (trans.), Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010, see pp. 138–139.

[21] Heidegger states: »To the serious legitimate charges that you express ›about a regime that murdered millions of Jews, that made terror into an everyday phenomenon and that turned everything that pertains to the ideas of spirit, freedom and truth into its bloody opposite,‹ I can merely add that if instead of ›Jews‹ you had written ›East Germans‹ [Germans of the eastern territories], than the same holds true for one of the allies, with the difference that everything that has occurred since 1945 has become public knowledge, while the bloody terror of the Nazis in point of fact had been kept a secret from the German people« (*The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, R. Wolin, ed., Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993, p. 163).

[22] See Heidegger (2010: 138). Slovenian philosopher Tine Hribar comments on this: »This Being […] is malevolent. Nothing can be done. Evil is evil, of whatever form it is. From the view of this malevolent Being, there were no crimes neither evildoers« (*Ena je groza* [*One is Fury*], Ljubljana, Študentska založba, 2010, p. 397). This malevolent Being – beyond good, but not beyond evil – and not man, is thus »responsible« for centuries of wars, genocides, ultimately the Holocaust. Whatever we attempt to do,

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happiness, or hope; it wishes to go beyond good, yet it has never deserted evil. This is why another dialectics is needed, one more attuned to what Schelling,[23] or in our times Luce Irigaray, another post-Schellingian thinker, proposes. Like Heidegger, Irigaray did not specify the triadic structure in her thought. But still, in a beautiful and pregnant passage from her *The Way of Love*, this dialectics is explained as follows:

> Macrocosm and microcosm in this way remain dialectically linked with the spiritual becoming of each one. Moreover, they are present in the relation with the other, leading to elevation toward the sky and return toward the earth, a rising of energy toward the summit of the body and a descent toward its base. The heart being the place where energy most continuously finds its impulse and its repose? The heart remaining what most constantly links sky and earth, sustaining itself on the lowest and the highest, on the real in what is most elemental and most sublime in it?[24]

V Conclusion

In this essay, I have approached the cosmico-ontological constellation of what could be designated by the secrecy of transition or disentangling connections of ontological event of creation and life, of its internal dynamics of »Nature« and »Spirit,« and ultimately evil and love as they appear in this process. For this purpose I have comparatively read Schelling with the *Vedas*. In this essay, I proposed to introduce into philosophical thought the Vedic or Upanishadic triadic structure (the cosmic triad) of microcosm ⟷ mesocosm ⟷ macrocosm and related it to its Schellingian version qua human being ⟷ ground/love/ ⟷ God/breath. As we have seen, Schelling posited the human being, the ground and God into the *triadic* relation, one that can be represented with the signifiers, *spirit/love/breath*. The name he gave to this enig-

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intervene, morally condemn, there is an ultimate Being that is inaccessible to us and essentially stays *within* the regime of evil. See also A. J. Mitchell, ›Heidegger and Terrorism‹, *Research in Phenomenology*, Vol. 35, 2005, pp. 181–218.

[23] Schelling mentions »dialectics« in *Philosophical Inquiries Into the Nature of Human Freedom*, more precisely he relates it to the inner logic, as already explained above, of the groundless ground (see 1989: 88–89). He describes this process with the beautiful and enigmatic words »secret of love« *(ibid.)*.

[24] L. Irigaray, *The Way of Love*, London: Continuum, 2002, p. 148.

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matic, dynamic and synchronous interrelation was *conspiration*. This experience, for Schelling, is part of the enigmatic and dynamic or *ritual* interrelationship between humans (our inner core), Ground and God, as exemplified also in the *Vedas*. In its own way, this cosmico-ontological logic is present also in thinkers, which were in the closest vicinity of Schelling – namely Heidegger and Irigaray. Finally, this essay argues, that cosmico-ontological conflicts can be resolved only with the introduction of the triadic relations into philosophy: this gesture, perhaps, will be able to secure us the path towards peace. It is from conspiracy as a process of co-breathing of transcendence and immanence, the inner and the outer worlds, life and death and, lastly, love and evil, that new dialectics of love can be imagined, nurtured, and hoped for.

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Symposium:
Does the Concept of »Truth« Have Value in the Pursuit of Cross-Cultural Philosophy?

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Abstract
The symposium »Does the Concept of ›Truth‹ Have Value in the Pursuit of Cross-Cultural Philosophy?« hones on a methodological question which has deep implications on doing philosophy cross-culturally. Drawing on early Confucian writers, the anchor, Henry Rosemont, Jr., attempts to explain why he is skeptical of pat, affirmative answers to this question. His co-symposiasts James Maffie, John Maraldo, and Sonam Thakchoe follow his trail in working out multi-faceted views on truth from Mexican, Japanese Confucian, and Tibetan Buddhist perspectives respectively. As these positions substantiate, the aforementioned non-Anglo-European traditions seem to draw on an integrated view of thinking, feeling, and living a human life. For their practitioners, truth is less of a correspondence with a given external reality. In fact, it enables human beings to strike the right path in living good, social lives.

Keywords
theories of truth, truthfulness, concept-clusters, comparison, Chinese Confucian philosophy, praxis-guiding approach, Mexican philosophy, Japanese Confucian philosophy, *makoto*, Tibetan Buddhist philosophy, Gelug school.

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Introductory Statement[1]

The answer one gives to the methodological question entitling this symposium cannot be a general one in my opinion; individual comparative or cross-cultural philosophers can only respond for themselves. A contemporary scholar trained in the Anglo-American analytic tradition might, for example, be seeking conclusive arguments in favor of the »deflationary« theory of truth as against correspondence, coherence, semantic or pragmatist theories, and consequently might seek insight into the issue(s) by looking at how the concept of truth, or a close analogue thereof, was dealt with in one or more non-Western traditions. Clearly this scholar's overall methodological approach to comparative thought is to ask: »To what extent do these texts suggest answers to philosophical questions which vex us?«

This kind of dependency on the comparative scholar's concerns clearly holds equally for concepts other than truth, such as justice, beauty, logic, human rights, the existence of God, theories of reference,

[1] I applaud the rationale, scope, and goals for introducing this new journal *Confluence* to the philosophical world, in the hope of making the discipline as truly all-encompassing in the future as it has been mistakenly thought to be in the past. I am consequently pleased and honored not only to have been asked to serve on its Board of Editors, but to also participate in setting the symposium topic for this first issue. I thank the Editor, Professor Dr. Kirloskar-Steinbach, for both invitations. After framing the topic question and having it accepted, however, to my chagrin I discovered that I could not myself answer it competently in the 4–5 pages I had been allotted, in which I was to both say something about problems of truth in general, and from my own field in particular, Chinese thought. I have endeavored to meet both goals, but have clearly begged many more questions in so doing than I have answered, and worse, may well have framed the issue in a way my co-participants in the symposium would find confining. I have therefore added, in addition to some references, a number of endnotes that either elaborate on a theme in the paper, and/or carry it in another possible direction, to provide more opportunities for coherence among and between the several papers in this symposium.

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and many other topics of Western[2] philosophical interest. Thus, for those of a comparativist bent who address non-Western materials against a Western framework in this way, the answer to the methodological question, and others like it, will obviously be answered affirmatively, as has been done by the great majority of comparative philosophers – and theologians, beginning with the early missionaries to East and South Asia in the seventeenth century, and continuing today. This approach gives the »Other« some otherness, but tends to concentrate attention on similarities rather than differences cross-culturally.

Much good work has been done with this approach in the past, beginning with a number of the missionaries themselves, from whom we might date the founding of the field of comparative religion. Matteo Ricci was not only the first missionary to China, he was one of the best in acquiring highly sophisticated sinological skills. But because he was looking for it with great care, we should not be surprised that he found the concept of the Abrahamic God in Chinese texts, a concept which non-Christian scholars have had difficulty finding since then.[3]

The manifold insights of comparative scholarship stemming from a focus on cross-cultural similarities notwithstanding, there are significant problems with this approach in my opinion, sufficient in number and scope to have made me very skeptical of affirmative answers to the methodological meta-question, especially when accompanied by the dogmatism that all too frequently attends claims to having found the TRUTH – objectively, no less.[4] For myself – especially as a translator –

[2] Given the great variety of philosophical orientations within Western civilization it is in one sense unmeet to use the adjective as a blanket term for all of them. But then there would be no contrast for the expression »non-Western philosophy,« and no philosopher of my acquaintance has been loath to use the latter expression, which provides at least some warrant for the former.

[3] The best all-round book on Ricci to my mind is Jonathan Spence's *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (1985).

[4] To take only one example of this (and several related themes in this paper), Bryan van Norden of Vassar College gave a talk at the Columbia Society for Comparative Philosophy in December, 2013, and included the following in the Abstract he forwarded:
»Most of my talk will address two issues:
1. Did Chinese thinkers assume something like a Correspondence Theory of Truth?
2. Were Chinese thinkers interested in truth in any sense?
In short, my responses will be:
1. It depends on what you mean by a »Correspondence Theory.«
2. Of course.«

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I prefer to work with the idea of there being better or worse interpretations of classical and sacred texts and thus attend more to cultural differences when reading them,[5] requiring in turn a different overall approach to the other tradition, especially, in my own case, the writings of the early Confucians: to what extent do these texts suggest we might ask very different philosophical questions? Or, put another way, what sense can be made of these texts *on their own terms*?[6]

In addition to finding God in places where he almost surely is not there are other problems with the similarities approach. First, it presupposes that the philosophical questions addressed by the Greeks and their successors were asked in the same or very similar ways by reflective people in every civilization and were thus truly universal.[7] This presupposition is highly dubious to my mind, and I believe requires its truth in all efforts to prove it. Worse, if, after perusing some non-Western texts, it appears that the questions and relevant concepts are not to be found in them, it becomes very tempting to conclude that the philosophical authors and compilers of those texts were simply not as intelligent or sophisticated as our own – for which, unfortunately, there is an abundance of evidence.[8]

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[5] Thus I allow there to be more than one very good reading of a work, and of differing ways of life. This however, makes me a pluralist, not a relativist. For me there can be no *best* interpretation (by whose cultural criteria would it be evaluated?), but it doesn't follow that I can't distinguish better or worse interpretations (or ways of life). My being a deontologist does not imply I cannot say many good things about the ethics of utilitarianism or virtue ethics, and I can easily distinguish all three from the ethics of fascism.

[6] This altogether original idea was first put advanced for the study of Chinese thought by David Hall and Roger Ames in their seminal *Thinking Through Confucius* (1987).

[7] To be sure, we still speak of »true north« and »a true friend,« but these expressions are carryovers from the Greeks, who, if Heidegger (in *Sein und Zeit)* and some others are to be believed, linked the concept of truth to the concept of *being* much more than to language. Similarly, it is highly doubtful that Pontius Pilate would have understood a grammatical response from Jesus to his question »What is truth?« (John 18:38).

[8] In September 2013, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* published an article, »Chinese Philosophy Lifts Off in America.« News indeed. As recently as 2008 there were only three universities in the USA that could train Ph.D.'s in Chinese thought (Hawai'i, Stanford, and Duke). One comment on the *Chronicle* article reads in part: »The then Chairman of the University of Washington Philosophy Department [1981], from whom I was taking a graduate seminar, insisted that China had no philosophy and once, when I suggested that chaos and cosmos might function in Western philosophy in a role analogous to yin and yang in the Chinese tradition, he dismissed it, saying, »From now on, when you walk through that door, leave that Chinese crap out in the hall.«

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A second difficulty with this approach, to return to the scholar seeking proof of the deflationary theory of truth, is that any concept or theory of truth claimed to be found in non-Western texts, if it is to be useful philosophically, cannot be too dissimilar from our own; which, since the eighteenth century at least, has been closely linked to formal logic, language, and linguistics: »is true« and »is false« are predicates of sentences in the indicative mood. Thus, in order to speak about theories of truth in Western philosophy today we also need to consider related language-based theories of *meaning* and *reference*, and we will need additional concepts such as *validity*, the *sentence* (as opposed to the word), its philosophical corollaries *statements* and *propositions*, plus a few others like *semantics, denotation, connotation*, etc.[9]

All of these terms plus several others linked to them constitute what I have called a »concept cluster,« such that they bind each other, and are necessary for the full philosophical elucidation of any of their components, reflecting an overall world view. (Morals, or ethics today employs a concept-cluster including *freedom, rights, autonomy, individual, principle, choice, reason, liberty*, etc. In early modern England, however, the discussions would cluster around »honour,« and include other terms necessary to understand it such as »sake,« »liegeful,« »varlet,« »villein,« »soke,« »sooth,« »shent,« »chivalric« and another half dozen or so additional terms that are no longer in the English lexicon.)[10]

My investigation of early Confucian texts has not turned up lexical equivalents for the terms in the contemporary concept cluster surrounding *the term »truth« itself*, and consequently I would argue that the concept of truth as Western philosophers are interested in it today is not to be found in those texts, and consequently in turn, no theory of truth can be attributed to Kongzi (Confucius) or his early followers.[11]

[9] The roots of this orientation can be traced to the work of people like Boole and Venn – and exhibited in the children's tale written by the logician C. L. Dodgson (Lewis Carroll), *Alice in Wonderland*. It becomes a »movement« when Bertrand Russell began calling attention to the seminal writings of Gottlob Frege during the latter decades of the nineteenth century.

[10] For more on concept clusters, see the paper I did with my collaborator and close friend Roger Ames (Rosemont, and Ames 2010).

[11] Philosophers have drawn linguistic and epistemological swords on this issue for some time. To some, my position will seem to be »unfair to babies,« making the point that we are willing to attribute concepts to infants before they have the words to express them. And it must be allowed that at times it is legitimate to assume that a single concept

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Worse, if this claim can be sustained, it means that we will miss much of what the non-Western texts may have to say to us today if we do not try to meet them on their own terms.

It may seem highly counterintuitive at first blush that a text like the *Analects* that basically chronicles brief conversations between Kongzi and his students has no statements at all of the form »That's true,« but such is indeed the case. How is that possible?

The counterintuitive nature of the claim is largely due to another unspoken presupposition, that the basic function of human language is to describe and explain the world in which we live (the sciences have been importantly determinative of this orientation). If one's culture sees language primarily as a vehicle for conveying information, it had better have terms for distinguishing the accurate from the inaccurate information conveyed, which »true« and »false« do very well.

But if we keep in mind that language use is a social practice, it will be easier to appreciate that different cultures may see its basic functions in different ways. In my view the Kongzi (Confucius) of the *Analects* is best understood as using language not to describe the world but as *praxis-guiding discourse.*[12] He is little concerned with his students knowing *that*, but rather knowing *how,* knowing *about,* or knowing *to.*[13] He is basically concerned to get them to act and react in certain ways, and to have certain motives and responses to situations. When we read in 13.18,[14] to take a famous example, that when Kongzi was

might indeed have been held by the author of a text without a lexical item for it if the translation runs more coherently. But it is the idea of concept-clusters that can stop the morphemes of other languages from becoming Rorschach blots to the translator: the significance of pointing out the lack of a lexical equivalent for »truth« in classical Chinese lies in the fact that none of the other terms associated with it in the English-speaking philosophical world will be found in the Chinese texts either.

[12] In addition to Roger Ames, I believe Chad Hansen would concur with this position. In his influential *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought* he regularly uses the expression »way-making discourse« as one basic reading of the pregnant Chinese graph *dao* (道) which he discusses throughout the book (Hansen 1992).

[13] It may well be surprising to some that classical Chinese scientists saw knowledge in pretty much the same way. Nathan Sivin, a distinguished scholar of Chinese medical, astronomical, alchemical, mathematical, and other Chinese sciences said of the term translated as »knowledge« in English, that it »refers to understanding and recognition of significance as aspects of knowledge, not to objective factual knowledge isolated from the act of understanding and evaluation« (Sivin 1995; see esp. Chapter 8, p. 328, n. 46).

[14] All references to the *Analects* are from Ames, and Rosemont, Jr. (1998).

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told about a young man who turned in his father for stealing a sheep he said »In my village a father covers for his son, and a son covers for his father,« we are not to read him as making an anthropological statement as a participant-observer; clearly he is telling us normatively that in any conflict between family and state, the family must always win. An equally clear example of the Master's orientation is in 11.22, when Master Kong gives contradictory answers to the same question about how to proceed in a filial situation, asked by his students Ranyou and Zilu. A third then asks him why he gave such conflicting answers, to which he replied, »Ranyou is diffident, and so I urged him on. But Zilu has the energy of two, so I sought to rein him in.«

These are but two of numerous examples of Confucius using language not to convey information, but to guide behavior, and instill attitudes toward that behavior, as when he insists that simply providing materially for one's parents does not make one a filial offspring, for even dogs and horses are given that much care. In 2.7 he asks, »If you do not revere your parents, what is the difference?«

There is nothing strange about seeing the basic function of human language in this way, because when not philosophizing and asking »Is that true?« we often say contradictory things ourselves on occasion, such as »You're never too old to learn,« and »You can't teach an old dog new tricks.« This orientation obliges us to attend not simply to *what* is said, but equally, and often more importantly, *why* it was said in the social context in which all language use takes place, in which case we may evaluate the *appropriateness* of what is said, to whom, and when. And altogether unsurprisingly, although classical Chinese has no close lexical equivalent for »true« (or »false«) – or any of the terms in its concept-cluster – it does have a graph (義 *yi*) which is properly translated as »appropriate,« and can be negated as »inappropriate.«[15]

In sum, while I would not want to discourage other comparative philosophers from continuing to seek answers to questions generated from within their own cultural heritage, I have found it much more useful to approach the philosophical and religious texts of other cultures on their terms rather than mine as much as possible. I have

[15] I have discussed this view and its implications in my *A Reader's Guide to the Confucian Analects* (2012).

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learned much in this way – not least about my own culture, seen from another perspective; there are certainly more things in heaven and earth than can be dreamed of in any one philosophical tradition.

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Responses

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Reflections on Henry Rosemont's »Introductory Statement«

Professor Rosemont contends that the concept of truth of interest to Western philosophers cannot be found in the early Confucian texts such as the *Analects* and that no theory of truth can be attributed to Kongzi (Confucius) or his early followers.[1] I likewise contend that conquest-era Mexica (Aztec) philosophy lacks such a concept and theory of truth.[2] Truth as correspondence, mirroring, representation, or aboutness plays no role in the Mexica's theory of language. Mexica philosophy embraces instead a concept of well-rootedness (*»neltiliztli«* in Nahuatl, the language of the Mexica) that derives its meaning from a conceptual cluster that includes: furthering one's ancestral lineage *(mecayotl)* and inherited lifeway; arranging, ordering, and balancing one's lifeway; as well as appropriateness, rectitude, authenticity, and the ability to be assimilated into one's lifeway *(in cuallotl in yecyotl)*. Mexica *tlamatinime* (»knowers of things,« »sages,« »philosophers«) characterize without equivocation: human beings; the human heart *(yollotl);* human domestic, social, political, and economic arrangements; human ways of acting, thinking, emoting, speaking, eating, and dressing; ceremonial practices and offerings; *in xochitl in cuicatl* (»flower and song«), that is, artistic processes and their products (both linguistic [spoken and sung] and nonlinguistic [instrumental music, picture-writing, and weaving]); and human interrelationships with other-than-human persons, as *nelli* (»rooted«) or *ahmo nelli* (»unrooted«).

The concept of *neltiliztli* is embedded within a larger philosophical conception of human endeavors that I see as path-seeking or »praxis-

[1] Rosemont, Jr., (2014: 154).

[2] Maffie (2002, 2011, 2014a). See also Gingerich (1987). For further discussion regarding the absence of the concept of truth in indigenous American philosophies, see Brotherston (2001); Pratt (2002); Hester and Cheney (2001); and Norton-Smith (2010).

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guiding« (to borrow from Rosemont[3]) rather than truth-seeking. Like early Confucianism, I believe that Mexica philosophy of language embraces a path-seeking or praxis-guiding approach to language (as well as to ethics, aesthetics, and epistemology). It speaks not of describing facts or representing reality, but of *ohtlatoca* (»following a path«). It embraces an enactive, performative, regulative, and pragmatic conception of language. Right-path speech aims first and foremost to disclose the path as well as to create, nurture, sustain, and perform relationships between humans, other-than-humans, and cosmos that further the path. Speech acts are judged appropriate or not relative to this goal. Right-path language aims neither at representing reality nor conveying semantically true content. What matters to Mexica *tlamatinime* is whether or not speech acts are rooted in the Mexica way of life and whether or not they sustain, promote, and advance that way of life. What's more, they regard well-ordered speaking as a creative, causally potent force in the world alongside well-ordered living, child-rearing, farming, singing, weaving, and ceremony. Well-arranged words are cut from the same cloth as well-arranged musical notes, dance steps, weaves, drum beats, offerings, and buildings. One and all are avenues of rooting, arranging, ordering, securing, and extending into the future the Mexica path or lifeway, the Mexica way of walking upon »the slippery surface of the earth.«[4]

Mexica philosophers liken the human existential condition to one of walking down a narrow, rocky path along the ridge of a twisting, jagged mountain peak. Humans invariably lose their balance while walking upon this path. They slip, fall, and as a consequence suffer hardships including pain, thirst, hunger, madness, poor health, and death.[5] Human life is inescapably perilous because the very earth upon which humans live is perilous. Indeed, the earth's name, *»tlalticpac,«* means »on the point or summit of the earth,« suggesting a narrow, harpoon-sharp place surrounded by constant dangers.[6] Bernardino de Sahagún, one of several Franciscans sent to New Spain early in the sixteenth-century, extensively interviewed survivors of the Conquest.

[3] Rosemont, Jr. (2014: 155).
[4] See Sahagún (1953–1982: 228); and Burkhart (1989: 58).
[5] See Sahagún (1953–1982: 101, 105, 125–126, 228); Burkhart (1989); and Gingerich (1988).
[6] Michael Launey, quoted in Burkhart (1989: 58). See also Sahagún (1953–1982: 101, 105, 111).

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Sahagún compiled his findings in a book entitled *Historia general de las cosas de la Nueva España*, which includes the following proverb expressing this theme: »*Tlaalahui, tlapetzcahui in tlalticpac,*« »It is slippery, it is slick on the earth.« The proverb was said of a person who had lived an upright, balanced life only to lose her balance and fall into wrongdoing, as if slipping in slick mud.[7] Such wrongdoing resulted in hardship and misfortune. Sahagún records a father's advice along these same lines to his coming-of-age son: »Behold the path [*ohtli*] thou art to follow. In such a manner thou art to live […] On earth we walk, we live, on the ridge of a mountain peak. To the one side is an abyss, to the other side is another abyss. If you go here, or if you go there, you will fall, only through the middle can one go, or live.«[8]

The North American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson (influenced, apparently, by the path-oriented philosophies of the native Delaware and Haudenosaunee peoples of North America) expressed a kindred outlook when writing, »We live amid surfaces, and the true art of life is to skate well on them.«[9] According to the Mexica, we humans live amid slippery surfaces, and the art of life – including the art of using language – is to walk well upon them. Mexica *tlamatinime* accordingly aimed at teaching humans how, like skilled mountaineers, to maintain their balance upon the narrow, jagged summit of the earth. They aimed at instructing humans how to gain a *middle footing* on the path of life, and how to middle themselves in all endeavors. Alternatively expressed, they aimed at instructing humans how to behave as accomplished artisans weaving together the various forces constituting the cosmos and themselves into a well-balanced fabric.[10] Mexica philosophy accordingly embraces an *ethics* – as well as *epistemology*, *aesthetics*, and *social philosophy* – *of nepantla*, one of reciprocity, middling mutuality, and dynamic balancing. Mexica wisdom enjoins humans to weave together into a well-balanced fabric their feelings, thoughts, words, and actions as well as their relationships with family, community, and other-than-human persons (such as plants, animals, springs, earth, and sun). In order to live wisely, live well, live artfully,

[7] Sahagún (1953–1982: 228); trans. by Burkhart (1989: 58).
[8] Sahagún (1953–1982: 101, 125).
[9] Emerson (1955: 303). For the possible influence of indigenous philosophy on Emerson, see Pratt (2002: 214–215).
[10] For related discussion, see Gingerich (1988); Maffie (2014a); and Myerhoff (1974).

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and live a genuinely human life, one's living must instantiate *nepantla*-middling and *nepantla*-balancing. In order to minimize the inevitable hardships of life on the slippery earth – the only life humans enjoy since there is no future life after death – one's life must be an artfully crafted *nepantla*-process. In sum, philosophic reflection for the Mexica is first and foremost a *practical* endeavor concerned with creating a good life, not a *theoretical* endeavor concerned with discovering truth.

Jane Hill argues that contemporary Nahuatl-speakers (or Nahuas) »feel that language consists, not in words with proper reference that matches reality, but in highly ritualized dialogues with proper usage matched to a social order that manifests an ideal of deference.«[11] They value neither plain language nor literalism. Speech emphasizes »not denotation, but performance: the proper accomplishment of human relationships as constituted through stereotyped moments of dialogue.« It is »inattentive to the referential dimension.«[12] For this reason, the »forms of behavior appropriate to various roles were encoded in memorized speeches, [such as] the *in huehuetlahtolli*, ›sayings of the elders.‹«[13] What matters for conquest-era Mexica as well as for contemporary Nahuas is whether language is rooted and whether it sustains and creatively furthers the »good path« *(cualli ohtli)*, and thus whether it enables humans to »live well« *(cualli nehmeni)*.[14]

If Rosemont and I are correct, our findings confirm David Hall's contention that Western philosophy's concern with semantic truth is »parochial.«[15] Philosophers can no longer glibly assume, along with Alvin Goldman for example, that »truth is a vital concern for humankind across culture and history,«[16] that all humans »seek true or accu-

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[11] Hill (1998: 82).

[12] *Ibid*.

[13] *Ibid*.

[14] Contemporary Quechua-speakers in southern Peru appear to share a similar attitude towards language. According to Catherine Allen, they maintain that humans have a moral responsibility to direct the flow of cosmic energy *(sami)* in ways that promote personal, domestic, community and cosmic balance. This is accomplished in a variety of ways: »in marriage alliances, in discharging of community *cargos*, in private and communal rituals, even in how one offers speech and how one receives the speech of others« (Allen 2002: 74).

[15] Hall (2001). For additional discussion, see Hall and Ames (1998, 1987); Hansen (1985, 1992).

[16] Goldman (1999: 33). For critical discussion, see Maffie (2002).

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rate information,«[17] or that a »single concept of truth [viz. correspondence or coherence] seems cross-culturally present.«[18] Truth is not a common interest shared by all world philosophies and hence not well suited to serve as a common ground for sustained cross-cultural philosophical conversations. Focusing on the concept of truth is nevertheless useful – at least initially – since it enables us to highlight the differences separating Western and (at least) some non-Western philosophies. It helps us see path-seeking and truth-seeking as two alternative philosophical orientations and ways of doing philosophy. In doing so it raises questions concerning the enterprise of comparative philosophy itself. How we are to do comparative philosophy: as truth-seekers, path-seekers, or some other way(s)? Is there a single way of doing comparative philosophy? What are the aims of comparative philosophy: universal truth, mutual understanding, human flourishing, etc.? Focusing on the concept of truth alerts us to the fact that not all world philosophies share an interest in truth and thus an interest in discovering or adjudicating truths when doing comparative philosophy.

What's more, path-seekers also tend to be philosophical pluralists. By their lights, all philosophies consist of stories. Path-seekers tell one kind of story, truth-seekers, another kind. Yet neither kind is any more or less true than the other. Similarly, path-seekers tell different stories from one another. According to Mexica *tlamatinime*, for example, the Mexica had their stories, the Mixtecs and Chichimecs, theirs. Here again, no one is more or less true than the other. They are simply alternative stories by which to live one's life. There is no single, correct, or true story to tell or to discover. There is no single correct way to philosophize, think, act, or live that is anchored in some transcendent reality.[19]

The presence or absence of truth thus signals a profound division between Western traditions on the one hand and pre-Han East Asian and many indigenous philosophical traditions of the Americas on the other, since, as Bertrand Ogilvie writes, »Western thought, ever since the birth of philosophy in ancient Greece, has made truth the pivot of

[17] Goldman (1999:3).
[18] (*Ibid*.: 33).
[19] For further discussion, see Hester and Cheney (2001); Burkhart (2004); Maffie (2011, 2003).

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its activity, to the detriment of every other undertaking.«[20] Yet such divergence should not surprise us. After all, nothing dictates that all peoples at all times and all places must think in the same terms or think with the same concepts. Nothing dictates that truth – correspondence, coherence, or otherwise – must function as the cornerstone of philosophical inquiry, belief, knowledge, or the use of language. Arguments defending the intrinsic rationality – and hence normative universality – of pursuing truth in matters of speech, belief, or knowledge famously fail or beg the question.

This divide over truth has further, quite far-reaching consequences for cross-cultural philosophy. *If* the concept of truth is »built into« the concept of belief (as Bernard Williams maintains and as most Western philosophers would agree) since belief »aims at truth« (to believe that *p* is to believe that *p is true*),[21] and *if*, in addition, the concepts of truth and perhaps also belief are built into the concept of knowledge (for example, defined as justified truth belief), then it would appear that truth-oriented and path-oriented philosophies will understand belief and knowledge in accordingly divergent ways – a further, profound divide that we must acknowledge in further cross-cultural conversations. And indeed, Confucian and Mexica philosophies do just that: they define belief and knowledge – along with desire, hope, want, and need (what Western philosophers call sentential or propositional attitudes) – in path-oriented ways such as furthering the path or way.[22] Mexica philosophy speaks not of propositional belief (»belief that«) and knowledge (»knowledge that«) but of »*ohtlatoca*« (»following a path«) and »know how« respectively. Right-path knowing *(tlamatilizztli)* consists of knowing the way, knowing *how* to find and map one's way through life; knowing *how* to live properly, to participate in the cosmos, and to live an authentically Mexica life; and finally, knowing

[20] Ogilvie (2004: 103).

[21] Williams (1978).

[22] For relevant discussion, see Hester and Cheney (2001); Maffie (2011, 2014a); Hansen (1992); Hall and Ames (1987, 1998); and Ames, and Rosemont, Jr., (1998). Rodney Needham advanced a similar argument long ago regarding cross-cultural comparisons in anthropology. In *Belief, Language and Experience* (1972: 188) he wrote: »Belief […] does not constitute a natural resemblance among men, and it does not belong to ›the common behavior of mankind‹. It follows from this that when other peoples are said, without qualification, to ›believe‹ anything, it must be entirely unclear what kind of idea or state of mind is being ascribed to them.«

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how to extend this way of life into the future. Right-path knowing is active, enactive, performative, participatory, and creative.[23] It is understood in terms of skill, competence, and the ability to make things happen – not in terms of the intellectual apprehension of truths or states of affairs (what Mehdi Hairi Yazdi calls »knowledge by correspondence«).[24] What's more, knowing how (practical knowledge) is not reducible to knowing that (theoretical knowledge). Path-seekers do not understand the relative differences in the practical efficacy of different kinds of »know how« in terms of differences in capturing truth or corresponding with reality. Given their rejection of metaphysics, there simply are no metaphysical explanations of the practical differences between different kinds of »know how« to be had. Explanations of practical efficacy in terms of correspondence, mirroring, or representation, lapse into the realm of the unintelligible.

In closing, truth-oriented and path-oriented philosophies appear to represent two alternative ways of doing philosophy that involve two alternatively conceived constellations of concepts of knowledge, thinking, belief, language, morality, philosophy, and in the end, how to live. Truth-oriented philosophies understand these notions in terms of truth (for example, apprehending, representing, believing, and basing one's actions upon truth). Philosophy is first and foremost a theoretical endeavor aimed at truth. Path-oriented philosophies, by contrast, understand these notions in terms of finding, following, making, and extending the way. Knowledge, reason, language, morality, etc. are about path-making. Philosophy, like life itself, is first and foremost creative and practical.

–James Maffie, University of Maryland, USA

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[23] According to Hansen (1992) and Ames (2003), classic Confucianism and Daoism embrace right-way conceptions of knowing. Hansen (1992: 8) translates the Chinese word »*zhi*« as »know-how, know-to, or know-about.« Hester and Cheney (2001) and Pratt (2002) maintain that indigenous North American philosophies conceive knowing in terms of knowing how, not knowing that.

[24] Yazdi (1992: 43).

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Truth Is Truthfulness: The Japanese Concept of *Makoto*

1 What Concept of Truth Is Valued in the Pursuit of Western Philosophy Today?

»Our most common understanding of what we are about is truth […] Philosophers may deflate the meaning of truth and define it by radically different terms, and yet it remains the single most important philosophical norm by which we understand our discipline.« So writes Linda Martin Alcoff, in her presidential address to the American Philosophical Association in December of 2012.[1] Her comment would seem to exclude from philosophy disciplines and thought-traditions that evinced no such primary concern with truth. But in her address Alcoff is anything but exclusionary. She wants to be as inclusive as possible in recognizing diverse philosophical approaches and traditions, as well as differing conceptions of truth and of the role of language in philosophy. She quotes the Ghanaian philosopher and statesman Kwame Nkrumah, who deplores the lack in current Western philosophy of something very close to what Professor Rosemont calls »*praxis-guiding discourse.*« Nkrumah is amazed that Western philosophers

> affect an aristocratic professional unconcern over the social realities of the day. Even the ethical philosophers say that it is not their concern to improve themselves or anybody else […] They say that they are not interested in what made a philosopher say the things he says; but only in the reasons which he gives. Philosophy thus […] loses its arresting power.[2]

[1] Alcoff (2013: 30).

[2] Nkrumah (1970: 54); cited in Alcoff (2013: 23–24). This view seems parallel to the orientation Rosemont finds in Confucian texts that »obliges us to attend not simply to *what* is said, but equally, and often more importantly, *why* it was said in the social context in which all language use takes place« (Rosemont 2014: 156).

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By implication Nkrumah advocates philosophy's involvement in practical affairs and the use of language to guide behavior.

Alcoff explicitly examines and criticizes the contention that truth is reached through detached, impartial description. She gives examples to expose the pretense that philosophers' practice of critical detachment has (or should have) no social or political effects on the world, and her examples indicate the need for a »critical engagement« with the ordinary world. She wants philosophers to »make greater demands on truth than simple reference.« Her own project is to show how social and political practices (such as those affecting the demography of philosophers) have made a difference to the truth claims of philosophy. She follows Michel Foucault and others in showing that »our ontologies of truth are embedded within, and partly constituted by, our social domains.« Given this, »we cannot keep epistemology tidily separate from social and political inquiry if we truly want to understand not only truth-effects [the effects of truth claims on human experience], but truth itself.«[3]

Alcoff, along with Rosemont, recognizes that the predominant philosophical conception of truth in the Western academy today is indeed propositional truth. But she wants to expand that concept so as to be more truthful about truth itself, as she understands Friedrich Nietzsche's project. She distances herself from Richard Rorty, who said in effect that the concept of truth no longer had value in the pursuit of philosophy. And she notes that Gianni Vattimo's *Farewell to Truth* bids adieu only to the absolutisms of objectivist truth, precisely to enter into »a more truthful public sphere.«[4] Alcoff joins others in advocating a contextualist approach to truth and to doing philosophy, as opposed to the Western conceit of universal truths independent of contexts.[5] Con-

[3] Alcoff (2013: 29, 32).

[4] Alcoff refers to Gianni Vattimo, *A Farewell to Truth* (2011). In my understanding of this work, it is not that Vattimo himself has no place for truth versus falsehood or truth versus lies. Rather he attempts to place objective truths in a wider context of interpretative schemes. He advocates a critical examination of the contexts wherein politicians, for example, seem able to justify their lies. Vattimo bids farewell to objective or factual truths only insofar as the search for such truths remains oblivious of the horizon, paradigm, or context that defines objectivity by setting the rules of interpretation.

[5] Alcoff (2013: 36). In her contextualism, Alcoff aligns herself with a number of contemporary philosophers from analytic, continental, and non-Western traditions: Martin Heidegger, Gianni Vattimo, Michel Foucault, Helen Longino, Nancy Cartwright, and Latin American philosophers Simon Bolvier, Jose Marti, José Carlos Mariátegui, and

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text includes the use of language and the engagement of the philosopher who speaks.

My point is that the notions of praxis-guiding discourse and contextual understanding (as shown in the Confucian *Analects*' story of the stolen sheep) are present in contemporary Western philosophy too, precisely *in the name of truth*. We would miss an important point in Rosemont's comments, however, were we to disregard the cluster of concepts to which a contextualist notion of truth belongs. In Alcoff's sketch it appears that *truth* belongs with *norm*, *context*, *engagement*, *efficacy*, *experience*, and *the ordinary world*.[6] This new constellation deflates the usual textbook cluster (*reference*, *validity*, *proposition*, *denotation*, *connotation*, etc.) in Western philosophy as it is practiced worldwide. In Vattimo's interpretation of truth, this new cluster would also prioritize *civic friendliness* and *communitarian sharing*,[7] notions that appear consonant with the Confucian idea of *appropriateness* mentioned by Rosemont. Whether or not there is a corresponding cluster in ancient Chinese philosophy is an open question. In any case, the very idea of a concept cluster implies recognition of the importance of context.

II What Value Is Given to Concepts of Truth in East Asian Philosophical Traditions? The Example of *Makoto* in Japanese Confucian Philosophy

The contextual concept of truth and its corresponding cluster brings us closer to a concept and cluster explicitly developed by a modern Japanese philosopher. Watsuji Tetsurō (1889–1960), a thinker whose *Ethics* (1937–1949) draws upon Confucian and Buddhist philosophies to critique Western individualism, develops a notion that associates *truth*

Leopoldo Zea. I would place Heidegger's notion of truth as *aletheia* in a different cluster: disclosure and hiddenness, opening and precondition (for propositional truth), essence or essential presencing, authenticity. I will return later to the notion of truth in Heidegger's work.

[6] Alcoff (2013: 25) contrasts the dream of critical detachment with the view that takes »the ordinary to be both source and touchstone for philosophical truth,« a view shared by an unusual cluster of philosophers: Ludwig Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Willard Van Orman Quine, Charles S. Peirce, and David Hume.

[7] »Beyond the Myth of Objective Truth,« in Vattimo (2011: 1–45).

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with *truthfulness* or *sincerity* and with *trust*. But what does sincerity have to do with descriptive truth? How could there be a link between something as subjective as sincerity or truthfulness and something so detached – or, alternatively, so socially contextual – as truth?

Translators of Watsuji's *Ethics* have used *sincerity* and *truthfulness* to render the Japanese term *makoto*, a word whose connotations can range from fidelity and honesty to reality and factual truth.[8] Watsuji traces the term to the ancient Chinese notion *cheng* 誠 and in that context places it in a cluster that includes 誠実 fidelity, 信実 truthfulness, 忠実 faithfulness, 心術,言行の純 purity of mind, words and deeds, 真言真事 true words and true things, along with the antonyms 虚偽 and 虚妄, falsehood and deceit.[9] Much depends upon our translations, of course, but as a student of Western philosophy Watsuji is well aware of the concept of propositional or descriptive truth, denoted by the modern Japanese word *shinri* 真理.[10] He deliberately uses that con-

[8] Watsuji generally writes *makoto* in phonetic script, but also uses the sinograph 誠. Historically, 実 and 真 have also been used to render the Japanese word.

[9] Watsuji writes, »From ancient times, a Chinese word *sei* [誠] has been used to denote [*makoto*]. It is also translatable into such words as *seijitsu* [誠実] (»sincerity«), *shinjitsu* [信実] (»truthfulness«), *chūjitsu* [忠実] (»faithfulness«), and simply *jitsu* [実] (»realness«). The Chinese word *sei* [誠] means that one is pure and without falsehood in one's attitude of mind as well as in one's words and deeds. It is therefore evident that the word *sei* stands opposed to falsehood or deceit and that it is equivalent in meaning to true words and true things [真言真事]. The phrase *Sei is the path of Heaven, and to realize it is the path of a human being* [誠者，天之道也；誠之者，人之道也] has been popular among Japanese people from ancient times. The difference between the path of Heaven and that of a human being […] lies in Heaven being truthful and without any deceit of its own [真実無妄] and human beings needing to realize this as truthfulness [誠]« (Seisaku and Carter 1996: 273). Watsuji's original text is *Rinrigaku* 倫理学 (1962: 288). The quoted phrase comes from the *Zhongyong* 中庸, often called the *Doctrine of the Mean* (20:18). For a translation, see Ames and Hall (2001).

[10] It appears that the now common term 真理 for *truth* was introduced in Japan, along with Western philosophy in general, in the late nineteenth century. Inoue Tetsujirō's 1881 dictionary also cites 真実 and simply 理 for types of truth. Inoue Enryō used 真理 to specify »reasoned truth« as distinct from truth (真) in a more general sense. Rainer Schulzer notes the significance of the new concept of truth for unifying all disciplines at the newly established Tokyo University in the 1880s: »Truth is the *formal* regulative idea, which *a priori* contains nothing and excludes nothing […] In one of his lectures, Enryō listed 47 synonyms for the ultimate truth in Buddhism (真理 is not listed) […] Even despite such richness, I suggest, for the reasons discussed above, that *shinri* was not only a new *word* that came into use in Japan, Korea, and China, but indeed that it transported a new *concept* with it« (Schulzer 2012: 55). Appendix G of the dissertation gives a synopsis of the usage of 真理.

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cept as part of the cluster he develops and suggests how it is derivative of truthfulness. The correspondence between thought and external things (as Watsuji summarizes the Western notion) does not deserve the name of truth if it does not derive from a practiced correspondence between words and acts, a correspondence shared in a community. If we use the term *truthfulness* to render the latter, more basic notion, then Watsuji argues that truth is reached when truthfulness (or sincerity) informs our judgments. To be truthful does not mean to subjectivize an already given truth; rather truth occurs when truthfulness is directed to things in the world.[11] Watsuji's theory of truth presupposes an ontology developed in earlier sections of his work, in short, in arguments asserting that the concept of a world of external things independent of communal human existence and practices does not capture how things actually are. Truth, like trust, presupposes community, human beings living together. Among Western philosophers, perhaps only the concept of truth espoused by Vattimo comes close to the communal aspect of Watsuji's concept.[12]

Truth for Watsuji is more than correct statement, more than a conformity of words with facts. Watsuji notes that one could intend to deceive but inadvertently describe the facts correctly, and such a description would not constitute truth. Put negatively, truth requires not betraying the trust of others. Similarly, truthfulness is more than the conformity of one's words with one's actions. Words might happen to conform to actions despite one's intent to break a promise, for example. Truthfulness depends on preserving a relationship of trust (信, 信

[11] »In this way, insofar as truth (真理) occurs spatially and temporally, it is a practical truth oriented to action; it is true reality (真実) or truthfulness *(makoto)*, not the truth of contemplation directed to objects. What we call the conformity between thought and the things of the external world, or knowledge possessing universal validity, concerns only this latter kind of truth. The former, the truth of the subject (主体的真理), is ›*makoto*,‹ the truthfulness inherent in actions. It is the truthfulness of human beings that is realized only in the moral unity of human relationships [人倫的合一]. Fundamentally, human beings become aware of this truthfulness by living it, and applying it to the things found in human existence. Speaking of truth or falsity with regard to things in the external world is only a stage of this. Hence, truthfulness does not arise by transferring truth from the standpoint of thought to that of praxis. On the contrary, truth occurs when truthfulness moves into the standpoint of contemplation or thought« (Watsuji 1962: 286–287; my translation).

[12] Vattimo (2011: 10) also notes that the notion of truth-speaking or *aletheuontes* appears in St. Paul's epistles as well as in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, book 6.

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頼). (Watsuji does not seem to consider the possibility that one can speak sincerely and yet misrepresent the facts.)

Watsuji's theory of truth reflects his explicit criticism of traditional Western epistemologies and ethics, as well as his reliance on pre-modern Japanese philosophies that were not influenced by Western sources. The Confucian thinker Hayashi Razan (1583–1657), for example, had defined *makoto* as a kind of correspondence:

> The sinograph for trustworthiness [信] combines those for person and speech. Thus to say something that is not trustworthy is not to act like a person. This suggests that trustworthiness is sincerity, that it refers to what is not false […] Trustworthiness is truth [真実], respect for things, and sincerity [実, read *makoto*]. As truth, trustworthiness entails being doubtless; as sincerity, it means one has no misgivings about things […] [Those who are trustworthy] speak with sincerity in their mouths as well as in their minds: there is no discrepancy between what is said and what is thought.[13]

Itō Jinsai (1627–1705) further clarified the concept of *makoto*. Jinsai relates *makoto* or »sincerity« to how things truly are, not first of all to a disposition of mind or heart. But the practice of aligning one's heart and one's words with how things are is also implied. Sincerity, Jinsai says, is constancy and lack of artifice, modeled in nature and called for in human beings. Drawing upon Chinese Confucian thinkers, Jinsai defines *makoto* first in terms of the Way of Heaven or, we might say, of nature.[14] Nature is without artifice, is free from irregularities. Ex-

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[13] Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo (2011: 310, hereafter SB). Razan also says (in John Allen Tucker's translation): »[Wisdom, humaneness, courage] are all, in every respect of practice, one genuine truth [真実]. Yet unless they are carried out with sincerity [実 *makoto*], then wisdom will not be wisdom [and so forth]« (SB 2011: 308). In another passage Razan writes, »Sincerity is the principle of truth and nature (誠トハ、真実自然ノ理也).«

[14] »Sincerity (*sei* 誠) means truth (*jitsu* 實), without an iota of empty fabrications (*kyoka* 虚假) or contrived embellishments (*gishoku* 僞飾). Master Zhu [Xi] stated, ›Sincerity means authentic truth, without any irregularities‹ (*shinjitsu mō naki* 眞實無妄). That is correct. However, most words have antonyms. By considering them, we can clarify our understanding of the meanings of words. Sincerity is an antonym of artifice (*gi* 僞). Thus the definition, ›authentic truth, without any artifice‹ (*shinjitsu mugi*眞實無僞), contains the full meaning of sincerity more powerfully than does Master Zhu's exegesis. Chen Beixi 陳北溪 (1159–1223) observed, ›Sincerity was first used in Confucian discussions of the way of heaven […] In them, it signifies consistency (*ikko* 一箇) […] Summer's heat is followed by the cold of winter. With sunset, the evening moon appears. The birth of spring brings summer's growth. Winter is the season to store the harvest that autumn brings […] For myriad generations, life has been so.‹« Cited in

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amples he cites make it clear that the Chinese term *cheng* 誠 denotes, among other ideas, the consistency or constancy of nature. Western notions of constancy and consistency can describe not only things in the world and the processes of nature, but also human behavior and subjective dispositions like sincerity and fidelity. Jinsai and his Chinese sources also give 眞實, *truth* and *reality*, or *true reality*, as synonyms for 誠, *sincerity*. Employing a related cluster of concepts, Jinsai's sources cite irregularity, artifice, and error as antonyms. The translations of 眞實as *truth* and *reality* depend upon contextual interpretation, of course, and may seem to beg the question of the relation of *cheng* 誠 to Western notions of truth. But the link between »sincerity« and »truth« in this East Asian tradition becomes clearer once we see the connection between the constancy of natural things as they are and the call for human beings to be faithful to them. Unlike Heaven or nature – in Jinsai's words, »the unitary generative force pervading all reality«[15] – humans can be inconstant, full of artifice, and erroneous.[16] Jinsai's Confucianism exhorts humans to be sincere, since sincerity is »the whole substance of the moral way« (道之全體) and the foundation of other virtues like humaneness or authoritative conduct (仁), rightness or appropriateness (義), propriety (禮), wisdom or realizing (智), filial piety or filial responsibility (孝), trustworthiness (信), and so forth.[17] The connection with descriptive truth is explicit in another passage, where Jinsai quotes the Chinese scholar Chéng Hào 程顥 (1032–1085): »trustworthiness (信) means being truthful in all things […] neither embellishing nor detracting from the truth when speaking with

Tucker (1998: 173). In a footnote *(ibid.)* Tucker further quotes Beixi: »It was not until Yichuan […] said ›Sincerity is freedom from error,‹ that its meaning became clear. Later [Zhu Xi] added two words, saying, ›Sincerity means reality, truth, and freedom from irregularities,‹ and thus the principle became especially transparent.«

[15] At the beginning of his treatise Jinsai defines the term »the Way of Heaven« (天道) and writes, »A unitary generative force (*ichigenki* 一元氣) pervades all heaven and earth.« Tucker finds similar phrases in Chen Beixi (Tucker 1998: 71).

[16] Jinsai takes up the problem of seeming inconsistencies in Beixi's description of nature or the way of heaven. He notes, for example, that frost can occur in summer, and peach and plum trees have bloomed in winter, and he asks, »How can we avoid the conclusion that heaven is insincere?« In response, Jinsai concludes with the words of Master Su 蘇子 (1036–1101): »People will do anything, but heaven permits no artifice!« (Tucker 1998: 173–174).

[17] Tucker (1998: 174). I supplement Tucker's translations of the names of the virtues with the translations of Ames, and Rosemont, Jr. (1998).

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others.«[18] Other pre-modern Japanese Confucians similarly connect truth, reality, and sincerity, and their critics speak of a truth attained by personally knowing reality.[19]

In citing these examples, I have followed the translations of the Japanese word *makoto* and the Chinese *cheng* 誠 as *sincerity*, but the translation does not always fit. Dictionaries define *sincerity* as the quality of being truthful, and negatively as the absence of pretense, deceit, or hypocrisy – all attributes of human behavior and speech. To be sure, its synonyms *genuine* and *real* can describe things in the world, as do some secondary and archaic definitions of *sincerity:* »being in reality as it is in appearance,« and »being without admixture; free; pure.«[20] The English word may derive from the Latin *syn-crescere:* to grow together, as one thing, without adulterants[21] – an etymology that would allow the word to describe things or processes in the world. But current uses of the English *sincerity* restrict the word to describing

[18] »Being truthful in all things« is a translation of *jijitsu o motte suru* 以實. Jinsai explains that »trustworthiness (信) involves neither embellishing nor detracting from the truth when speaking with others. When something exists, we should say so. If nothing exists, we must admit as much. If things are many, we ought to recognize them. When things are few, we must admit the same. Such is trustworthiness.« This term, like »sincerity,« connotes constancy: »Trustworthiness also means fulfilling one's promises […] Ancient sayings such as ›trustworthy as the four seasons,‹ and ›trustworthy rewards and sure punishments,‹ also convey this nuance« (Tucker 1998: 163).

[19] As a critic of Buddhism and Daoism, Jinsai wrote that »Sincerity [誠] means truth [実] […] Zhu Xi says ›truth [真実] without deceit – that is sincerity‹ […] Sincerity is the Way of the sage. The Buddha taught emptiness [空] and Laozi discussed the void [虚], but the Way of Confucius is nothing if not the true principles of reality [実理]. A great chasm of incommensurability yawns between reality [実] and the void« (SB 2011: 356). I have added the quotation of Zhu Xi, not translated in SB. A critic of both Confucianism and Buddhism, Andō Shōeki (1703–1762), taught the importance of personally ascertaining truth and correctly knowing reality: »As for living truth [活真], the earth is located on the central axis of heaven and earth […] the dwelling of the living truth of earth never leaves nor is anything ever added to it, and its spontaneous action does not halt for even the briefest moment. That is why the living truth is so much alive« (SB 2011: 425). »I do not say this based on some speculation of my own, nor because I have been so instructed by some teacher […] I have always been able to apprehend this truth in its totality by looking at the hearth, by observing the human face, and by seeing what was there to see in the hearth of my home and in my own face. Since what I saw was put there by nature […]« (*ibid.*: 428). The critic Tominaga Nakamoto (1715–1746) espoused »the Way of truth« that transcends Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shintō (*ibid.*: 430–434).

[20] *Britannica World Language Dictionary* (1954: 1218).

[21] Ciardi (1980: 360).

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persons and their behavior. Apologies, regrets, efforts, and other speech acts and forms of human behavior can be *sincere;* nonhuman things cannot be. In contrast, the Japanese *makoto* does not distinguish between a quality of human dispositions or acts and a quality of nonhuman things or states of affairs. Corresponding roughly to the English *true* or *genuine* as opposed to *fake* or *false, makoto* can describe a feeling or a story as well as things like food, flowers, or homes. Although the word is usually written either in phonetic script or with a single sinograph, it can also be parsed in two sinographs meaning true things or true speech.[22] The word implies both the true state of things and being true to the true state of things.

The single concept *makoto* connotes what many languages use two words to say. The English language has the words *truth* and *truthfulness*, the German language has *Wahrheit* and *Wahrhaftigkeit*, and other languages have similar semantically associated words for these concepts. As we noted, truthfulness, like sincerity, is usually understood as a subjective virtue, whereas declarative truth is supposed to pertain to objective reality or facts. A commonplace notion in the West is that truth is independent of the disposition or the stance of the speaker or actor. This commonplace notion says that truth is what it is regardless of what anyone says or thinks about it. Truthfulness and sincerity, in contrast, depend entirely on the disposition or actions of the person.

The disconnect between truth and truthfulness in laypeople's terms seems even more pronounced in predominant Western philosophical theories. Sincerity and truthfulness are rather vague notions that may play a part in ethical theories in Western philosophy, but play little or no role in theories of knowledge. The concept of truth, on the other hand, has been subjected to rigorous analysis and debate. If there is any common denominator in contemporary Western theories of truth, it is that truth is a property of language. Truth, in predominant theories, relates a statement to a matter or state of affairs that exists independently of the statement. The gap between objective, descriptive truth and intersubjective truthfulness or sincerity would seem to ren-

[22] In addition to the Japanese phonetic script and the three different sinographs 誠, 真, and 実 used as single Kanji to render *makoto,* the word can also be parsed as *ma* 真, true, and *koto* 事, thing or state of affairs, with the occasional substitution of *koto* 言, speech, for its homonym *koto* 事, thing.

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der the Confucian connection alien or even unintelligible to many Western philosophers. Alcoff and other Western critics of objectivist epistemologies may approximate the East Asian vision, but insofar as they miss the connection between truth and truthfulness, their contextual concept still contrasts with Watsuji's concept and that of pre-modern Confucian philosophers.

III Of What Value Is It to Read Western Theories of Truth and Japanese Theories of Truthfulness in Light of One Another?

The contrast between the East Asian Confucian notion of truthfulness or sincerity (誠) and predominant Western concepts of truth poses a challenge to cross-cultural philosophy. If we leave the matter merely with a contrast, we could conclude only that some philosophical traditions primarily value a theoretical concept of descriptive truth that relates statements to an external world and that other traditions value an intersubjective and practical notion of truthfulness. That contrast can indeed expose assumptions about the different ways that cultures have conceptualized the relation between humans and their world. But if we stop with the contrast, we would not learn as much about the issue as we could. I think that the exercise of cross-cultural philosophy can highlight possible connections between descriptive truth and intersubjective truthfulness in a way that an engagement with texts of a single tradition cannot. From our engagement with non-Western texts, we can move back into Western philosophical traditions with new eyes, as it were, to seek insights that make the tie between truth and truthfulness more convincing. Cross-cultural philosophy can make more plausible the connection developed by Watsuji and implied by pre-modern Japanese Confucian thinkers like Itō Jinsai and Hayashi Razan, who did not presuppose an »external« world. At the same time, it can cast insights offered by Western philosophers in a new light to illuminate the role of truthfulness that is often only implicit in their theories.

Some contemporary Western philosophers in both analytical and continental traditions have proposed theories of truth that take into account the stance and disposition of the speaker or the perceiver. The proponent of speech act theory, John L. Austin, implies an interesting connection between trustworthiness and truthfulness, on the one hand, and the kind of truth that relates statements to facts, on the other. He

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argues that when we make declarative statements, we implicitly say, »You can count on me or trust me; I am in a position to know.«[23] With regard to declarative truth, Austin advocates a contextual notion.[24] But Austin also expands the ascription of truth beyond declarative statements and implicitly includes the kind of »praxis-guiding discourse« we find in Confucian texts. For Austin, »assessment as to truth is directed most fundamentally to the illocutionary act,« that is, the act of making a statement or of giving a directive, or in general of saying something with a specific force.[25] Austin's expansion seems puzzling at first: giving directives, recommendations, commands, and the like, are clearly illocutionary acts, but would not seem to pertain to truth.[26] We normally do not say that a command or an exhortation is true or false. Yet such locutions are possible only because the speaker implicitly declares that he or she is authoritative or in a position to rightly enjoin others. A reference to the stance or disposition of the speaker is implied in every illocutionary act. The phenomenologist James G. Hart admirably clarifies the illocutionary feature of locutions: Declaratives always indicate the responsibility of the person who makes a statement. If one says, »The tree is diseased« without evidence, and does

[23] I am grateful to James G. Hart for bringing my attention to Austin's views and for helping me to understand them.

[24] »The truth or falsity of statements is affected by what they leave out or put in and by their being misleading, and so on. Thus, for example, descriptions, which are said to be true or false or, if you like, are ›statements‹ […] are selective and uttered for a purpose. It is essential to realize that ›true‹ and ›false,‹ like ›free‹ and ›unfree,‹ do not stand for anything simple at all; but only for a general dimension of being a right and proper thing to say as opposed to a wrong thing, in these circumstances, to this audience, for these purposes and with these intentions.« Austin (1975: 144–145), cited in Longworth (2013: n.p.). »According to Austin, there is more involved in any such assessment than a simple comparison of requirements imposed by linguistic meaning with the facts […] Austin appears to endorse a form of *deflationism* about truth […] According to this form of deflationism, saying that a statement is true is just a way of saying that the statement has one or another of a range of more specific positive qualities – for example, that it is satisfactory, correct, fair, etc.« Longworth *(ibid.)*. Austin, however, did insist that predicating truth of a statement retains a descriptive function which does not reduce to the performative functions that the act of predication also has.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] In Austin's terminology, giving directives, recommendations, commands, and the like, are illocutionary acts, each of which may also involve different »perlocutionary« acts defined by their effect, such as persuading someone, encouraging someone, or warning someone.

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not say, »it seems to me that […]« or »a friend told me that […]« then there is a kind of reprehensibility.[27] By shifting the focus from declarative and exhorting statements to the acts and the agent behind them, these philosophers help us clarify how the truth of statements is tied to the truthfulness of the speaker.[28]

We can also find an implied link between declarative truth and intersubjective truthfulness in the hermeneutical tradition of Western philosophy. The account of truth there takes as its starting point Heidegger's account of truth as disclosure. Heidegger develops alternative notions of truth and of the functions of language that are nevertheless linked to standard concepts of propositional truth. Propositional truth, he claims, presupposes the prior notion of truth as unconcealment and its concomitant concealment, the interplay of disclosure and hiddenness that he saw in the ancient Greek word *a-letheia*. For truth to reside in propositions, the matters that propositions refer to must be laid bare to us, and propositions must have the power to refer and to make evident. Yet the disclosing power of language cannot be reduced to the referential power of propositions. Language can also disclose one's vision of the way things should be and can exhort one to action; language can disclose one's heart and console or reprimand others. In Heidegger's account, language preeminently discloses the wonder of Being. Being needs human be-ing for its disclosure, that is, for the very presencing of phenomena.[29]

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[27] Hart (2009: 94–95).

[28] Two other prominent Western philosophers have written persuasively about the connection between truth and truthfulness. Robert Sokolowski, in his book *The Phenomenology of the Human Person* (2008: 20 and passim), uses the word *veracity* to designate the essentially human desire for or impulse toward truth; the virtue of truthfulness is its proper cultivation. For Sokolowski, veracity is also the common root behind sincerity and accuracy, concepts that Bernard Williams invokes as the two virtues of truthfulness in his *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (2002). In these rich resources for comparative philosophers, Williams and Sokolowski focus on the value of truth in a way meant to reflect »everyone's concept of truth« (Williams 2002: 271), rather than a specialized concept in some theory of truth.

[29] For the truth of non-propositional language see, for example, Heidegger (1976: 22–31). Heidegger's concern with this alternative notion of truth is as pervasive in his thinking as his concern with Being. Being and truth are indeed interlinked, as Rosemont mentions, but only because, in Heidegger's reading, Being and truth are matters of the interplay of disclosure and hiddenness. They are so intimately interlinked that Heidegger sometimes speaks of the truthing of Being (to put it in a verbal form), the uncover-

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Hans-Georg Gadamer's elaboration of this need brings out the link between disclosive truth and the disposition of the perceiver. For Gadamer we must be predisposed toward phenomena in a certain way to allow them to more fully disclose themselves. The disclosure of phenomena, of how they are in the world, requires the right attunement toward them, a certain responsiveness, openness and willingness to be directed by the matter at hand. David Johnson notes a parallel here with the Dutch philosopher Adriaan Peperzak, who argues that the good perceiver must be open and attentive to what appears, even humble before it, to allow things to speak for themselves.[30] The matter at hand makes demands on our acts of perception, as other people make claims on our acts of recognition. To perceive things and to recognize others in a truthful way, we must be rightly attuned to them – hospitable toward them, as Johnson puts it. In his cross-cultural exercise, Johnson draws upon Nishida Kitarō's notion of acting intuition to show how this attunement is a matter of practice or cultivation. »Acting-intuition is thus a mode of openness that accepts the world on its own terms and allows it to show itself to us and to speak in its own voice.«[31]

The point of this cross-referencing is to make more plausible Watsuji's concept of *makoto* as the attunement of sincerity and, at the same time, as a quality of the world. Austin's insights make more explicit the connection between the stance of the speaker and the declarative truth of statements. Gadamer clarifies the truth of disclosure presupposed by declarative truth and draws attention to the disposition or attunement that disclosure calls for. Vattimo, whose notions of civic friendliness and communitarian sharing were mentioned earlier, brings specificity

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ing and the obscuring of beings, as the essential meaning of Being. But this »truthing« requires Dasein, the very being of us humans. See Heidegger (1989, passim).

[30] For this articulation of Gadamer's and Peperzak's insights I am indebted to Johnson (2014, esp. 58).

[31] Johnson (2014: 64). Johnson (*ibid*.: 62) notes that »a posture of self-effacement« enables such world-disclosure to occur, and partially cites Nishida's statement: »In the sense that the true is the real and the real is true, the true must be that which is in light of acting-intuition. I think we can say that truth is the self-expression of reality in *logos*« (Nishida 2012: 172). For all the deep differences between Nishida's Buddhist-inspired philosophy and Tibetan Buddhist theories as described by Professor Thakchoe in this symposium, there are also deep resonances regarding selflessness that differentiate both from most Western approaches. Nishida insists that the self withdraw in the cultivation of acting intuition. Acting intuition is selfless action. For clarification of these notions see Maraldo (2014a: 350, 359–362).

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to the intersubjective theory of truth developed by Watsjui and implied by some Confucians through the centuries.[32] For their part, insights from the East Asian and other non-Western traditions bring to light the role of truthfulness and cultivation – following a way or path – and this is a role that is commonly undervalued in Western theories of truth.[33]

I think that this manner of crossing through philosophical traditions can illuminate classical notions of truth. Those who pursue cross-cultural philosophy inevitably move between different traditions, and so the question is how to do so responsibly or, we may say, truthfully. Gadamer argues that the task is not simply to meet a text on its own terms but also to become aware of the assumptions and prejudices we bring to that meeting. Only then are we able to meet the world of the text halfway, moving into it and making sense of it from our own world of experience. I would add that we can return to our own world enriched by the encounter, better able to pursue philosophical issues such as the nature of truth where it is a concern, but also better able to discern the limits of this concern.[34]

Especially where stark differences become evident in this encounter, I find it far more valuable to elucidate contrasts than to identify similarities, precisely because contrasts are better able to expose unexamined assumptions, to advance self-examination on a cultural level, and to suggest alternatives. To be plausible, of course, a contrast between concepts must assume that they have some common ground as well as distinct differences, and I think that this is the case with notions of truth in Japanese and in Western traditions. The Japanese link between truth and truthfulness contrasts with Western contextual truth as well as propositional truth, but both sides assume some sort of alignment: an alignment of hearts in trust, an alignment of words with deeds, an alignment of descriptions with context, or of statements with facts. It seems that non-Western traditions that have nothing like Wes-

[32] »[…] a broad horizon of civic friendliness and communitarian sharing does not depend on the truth or falsehood of statements;« rather they »make truth, in the descriptive sense of the term, possible« (Vattimo 2011: 9, 11).

[33] Heidegger is an exception insofar as he envisions philosophy as following a path and treats practical knowledge or »know how« as basic to propositional belief.

[34] Indeed, I think this return is precisely what Rosemont, together with Roger Ames, is doing by demonstrating the contemporary relevance of ancient Confucian role ethics. See for example Ames (2011).

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tern concepts and theories of truth may nevertheless value some sort of alignment or match. »What matters to Mexica [knowers of things] is whether or not speech acts are rooted in their inherited lifeway and whether or not they sustain, promote, and advance that lifeway,« Professor Maffie writes.[35] What matters to Tibetan Buddhist philosophers is not ultimately a rationally defined and expressed truth but rather a practice of directly perceiving »truth as it is,« Professor Thakchoe writes.[36] An alignment of speech with one's path in life, or of perception with reality, is evidently of value in these traditions.

In the case of ancient Chinese Confucian philosophy, if indeed there is no word corresponding to a concept of truth that is of interest to Western philosophers – and the import of this seems to be debatable[37] – we nevertheless have much to learn from this contrast in philo-

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[35] Maffie (2014b: 164). Maffie also cites Jane Hill's argument that contemporary Nahuatl speakers »feel that language consists, not in words with proper reference that matches reality, but in highly ritualized dialogues with proper usage *matched* to a social order that manifest an ideal of deference.« (Hill 1998: 82; my emphasis).

[36] Thakchoe (2014: 203). I suspect that in Tibetan philosophy this direct perception of the truth is ultimately non-dual, not properly expressed as a match between an act or perception and truth or reality as its object. Nevertheless, several formulations invoke the notion of a match or alignment. For example, »All conventional phenomena […] are also ›false‹ (or ›unreal‹) because their mode of existence *does not accord with* their mode of appearance« and »the way in which ultimate truth appears to its respective subject […] *accords with* the way in which it actually exists« (Thakchoe 2014: 190; my emphasis).

[37] I do not wish to take sides here, but I would like to mention A. C. Graham's apparent disagreement with Rosemont, whom Graham mentions with great respect. Graham argues that ancient Chinese language could of course be used to state everyday questions of fact (»a language without sentences in which it is impossible to affirm a fact would lack the communicative function without which it could not serve as a language«) but »neither Western nor Chinese philosophy is concerned primarily with factual issues.« »To say that Chinese philosophers display a ›lack of interest in questions of truth and falsity‹ amounts then to saying that like Western [philosophers] they are not primarily concerned with the factual, but unlike Western [philosophers] they do not use a word which assimilates other questions to the factual. That they would have no concept of Truth is to be taken for granted, but is trivial […] One explores Chinese philosophy by comparing and contrasting Western and Chinese concepts. Even when one fails to notice distinctions, they may be expected to emerge if one finds it profitable to push analysis further.« Graham seems to recognize what I called the common ground for identifying and contrasting notions of truth, namely, a kind of alignment or fit: »One begins to understand why in Chinese philosophy argumentation is conceived solely in terms of whether the name fits the object.« It seems to me that this fit falls under the broad notion of truth-telling. Graham (1989: 395, 396, 410).

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sophies. The relevant common ground for contrast, in that case, would be supplied by the broad notion of philosophy and the idea of language usage, if not by a notion of truth. The contrast between valuing statements that correctly convey information and valuing language that guides appropriate behavior or aligns us with a path for life, is a significant discovery that makes it possible for Western philosophers to begin to read East Asian and other non-Western texts as philosophical. The discovery of the very lack of a theory of truth in some traditions or cultures can be of great value in the practice of cross-cultural philosophy. It can reveal supposedly universal concerns to be rather parochial, as Maffie observes.

Similarly valuable is the discovery of concept clusters, in our case, the concepts with which *truth* is related. Insofar as we are »outsiders« to the cultures we study, we learn to recognize our own unnoticed assumptions if we see that a word that might be translated as »truth« belongs to a cluster that clearly differs from concepts that Western philosophies relate to truth. I would add only that clusters evolve just as individual concepts do. Since the late nineteenth century, for example, Japanese philosophers like Watsuji have been able to relate propositional, objective, or descriptive truth (真理, a modern word in Japanese) to broader notions of truth (真) and to truth that is personally embodied *(makoto)*. I wonder how the clusters around the concepts of 信, 誠, 真 have evolved in Chinese thought. Is it only ancient Confucian philosophy that lacks a concept of descriptive truth, with its corresponding cluster, in China? What about Mohism and Neo-Confucian thought? What about Chinese Buddhist notions, many of which do express enlightenment in the imagery of a path or way?[38] I would also

[38] Path imagery is often used to depict Buddhist enlightenment. Indeed, a common East Asian word for what we call »Buddhism« is 佛道, »the Way of the Buddha.« What we call »enlightenment« means expressing and realizing the way (道得) in the understanding of the Japanese Zen philosopher Dōgen (1200–1254). There is no space here to describe the complexity of Sino-Japanese Buddhist notions of truth, but we may note that »truth« is often an appropriate translation of the Buddhist meaning of 道理, roughly »the pattern of the Way.« One dictionary lists several other terms for »truth« in Chinese Buddhism:
眞理 truth, the true principle, the absolute apart from phenomena
眞妄 true and false, real and unreal
眞道 the Truth, the true way; reality
眞 true, authentic, eternal, unchanging
Soothill and Hodous (2003: 331–332).

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find it valuable to compare and contrast the way that concept clusters are evaluated, under the name of *conceptual schemes*, for example.[39]

Even where the concept of descriptive truth and its related cluster seem lacking in a tradition, that concept can be at work in the manner in which we pursue cross-cultural philosophy. The absence of a theory of descriptive truth in the non-Western texts we may read does not mean that we interpreters have no interest in descriptive accuracy. Western philosophy's interest in objectivity is not entirely alien to Rosemont's project of understanding philosophers of other traditions »on their own terms.« The objective measure here is given by the terms of the texts we read, along with their contexts and clusters. We try to align our understanding and our translations with such terms. We could say that this is a way of being true to the texts. If we cannot call a translation »false,« we can probably call some translations wrong, and can certainly differentiate between better and worse interpretations, more and less appropriate translations, a point on which Rosemont and Vattimo agree.[40] This seems to be a sign that we inevitably assume some sort of descriptive truth, a fit between our translations and the terms of the text, not only in cross-cultural philosophy, but in all manner of philosophical interpretation.

Let me return finally to Alcoff's remark that truth »remains the single most important philosophical norm by which we understand our discipline.« I have no problem agreeing that traditions like that of ancient Confucianism are truly philosophical even if no concept of propositional truth is to be found in them. And I do think it useful to distinguish such traditions from »Western philosophy.« Assuming for a moment a Western guise and expressing in the form of propositions some of the issues at play in this discussion, I could say I have found the following claims questionable:

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[39] Not only the content of the clusters, but their philosophical use too is a matter of debate. A. C. Graham (1989: 428) notes the potential in exploring »alien conceptual schemes« to see how one's own schemes look from the outside. Debates about conceptual schemes in Western analytic philosophy generally concern epistemological issues such as the possibility of an untranslatable language. Wilfrid Sellars makes an epistemological point, critiquing the »myth of the given,« when he states that »one can have the concept of green [for example] only by having a whole battery of concepts of which it is one element« (Sellars 1968: 147–148).

[40] Perhaps Vattimo (2011: 35) overstates the case when he writes, »the difference between true and false is always a difference between interpretations more acceptable and shared and those less so […].«

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– that the notion of truth in the Western tradition is limited to the concept of propositional truth;
– that Chinese texts evince no notion of descriptive truth;
– that notions we indisputably find in Chinese texts are unrelated to Western notions of truth;
– and that the concept of truth does not have value in the pursuit of cross-cultural philosophy.

In expressing the issues in this manner and wondering whether the claims are true or false, I may seem already to bind the issues to a notion of propositional truth. But more is involved in this pursuit of cross-cultural philosophy – something more valuable to me than the verification or falsification of claims. I value the way in which we are developing our views and our investigations. We are indeed practicing cross-cultural philosophy as a collaborative endeavor, writing in response to one another in a manner that I presume to be more than playing a game – in a manner that I think requires sincerity and attunement to one another. In the end, perhaps we must continue to ask ourselves: to what sort of truth do we commit ourselves in the practice of cross-cultural philosophy?

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Tibetan Reflections on the Value of Truth in Cross-Cultural Philosophy[1]

I Introduction

Professor Rosemont is skeptical of the value of cross-cultural philosophy when such scholarship stems from a focus on what he calls »cross-cultural similarities.«[2] His skepticism, with which I fully agree, arises from a philosophical method which often operates on the assumption that »truth« in cross-cultural philosophy must mean the kind that interests contemporary Western philosophers and then, somewhat problematically, asks: how such a concept of truth (or a close analogue thereof) is treated in any non-Western culture.[3] There would be no point in pursuing cross-cultural philosophy if all one sought in another philosophical tradition were the same old »similar« truth with which we are already very familiar within our own tradition. According to Rosemont the approach that specifically seeks »cross-cultural similarities« is highly dubious. It is motivated by the dogma that any concept or theory of truth in non-Western literature, »if it is to be useful philosophically, cannot be too dissimilar from *our own*« (my emphasis).[4]

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[1] I sincerely thank Professor Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach for inviting me to be a part of this interesting and rewarding philosophical debate. My thanks also go to my esteemed debate colleagues, Professor Rosemont, Professor Maffie and Professor Maraldo, for sharing with me their deep and insightful knowledge on this subject matter. I am particularly thankful to Professor Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach and Professor James Maffie for their assistance in editing my problematic Tibetan English into the current version.

[2] Rosemont, Jr. (2014: 152).

[3] »A contemporary scholar trained in the Anglo-American analytic tradition might, for example, be seeking conclusive arguments in favor of the »deflationary« theory of truth as against correspondence, coherence, semantic or pragmatist theories, and consequently might seek insight into the issue(s) by looking at how the concept of truth, or a close analogue thereof, was dealt with in one or more non-Western traditions« (*ibid.*: 151).

[4] (*Ibid.*: 154).

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This methodological problem, he argues, stems from the dogma of having found the Truth, objectively.[5]

Although Rosemont is critical of certain ways in which cross-cultural philosophy has been conducted in the past, he is not entirely *opposed to the value* of doing cross-cultural philosophy as long as its methodological scope and its scholarship are broader and more encompassing.

The *method* that drives cross-cultural philosophy has to be an *eagerness* to inquire, investigate, to learn from each other, to better understand and appreciate each other on »their own terms,« says Rosemont.[6] Our willingness to open our own philosophical and cultural presumptions to the scrutiny of others is also essential to doing cross-cultural philosophy well. Only when we are able to open ourselves fully to appreciating the philosophical values of whatever we may discover in cross-cultural enquiry, would we be ready to engage cross-culturally in our philosophical endeavors.

Another reason why cross-cultural philosophy should be carried out is that it offers us a good opportunity to develop insights into the distinctive features of each tradition. It allows us, using James Maffie's words, to stress »the differences separating Western and (at least some) non-Western philosophies.«[7] This is because »contrasts are,« in the words of John C. Maraldo »better able to expose unexamined assumptions, to advance self-examination on a cultural level, and to suggest alternatives.«[8]

Contrasts and similarities that we may discover along the way of doing cross-cultural enquiry should not, in my view, determine the goal and method of cross-cultural philosophy. The objective that drives the pursuit of cross-cultural philosophy is the advancement of philosophical inquiry cross-culturally and the promotion of learning from each other through philosophical exchanges, and thus the fostering of

[5] This approach, he says, objectifies the »other,« and tends to attend only to similarities by ignoring differences. For instance Matteo Ricci, a missionary to China, was able to find the concept of an Abrahamic God in Chinese texts, where non-Christian scholars almost surely could not (*ibid.*: 152).

[6] »I have found it much more useful to approach the philosophical and religious texts of other cultures on their terms rather than mine as much as possible« (Rosemont 2012: 2, 6).

[7] Maffie (2014b: 165).

[8] Maraldo (2014b: 181).

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dialogue and discussion with any tradition, irrespective of however different or similar they are culturally and philosophically.

II Truth in Tibetan Buddhist Philosophy

Truth is a central concept to all living Tibetan philosophical schools, in contrast with the Confucian and Mexica philosophies where there is no concept of truth.[9] The value of truth in Tibetan philosophy is, however, not only measured in terms of its theoretical significance but as an unfolding praxis with varying depths and scope.[10] Analogous to Rosemont's »praxis-guiding discourse« in Confucian philosophy and Maffie's »path-seeking« humane endeavors in Mexica philosophy, truth for Tibetan philosophy is to be *lived* and embodied: its realization is the ultimate philosophical goal. Comparable to Maffie's *ohtlatoca* (»following a path«), which embraces an »enactive, performative, regulative and pragmatic conception of language,«[11] truth in Tibetan philosophy is the path (the Way). Only walking the truth-path, it is argued, has the efficacy needed to attain the highest possible human good, which can set humans free from their existential suffering (since all suffering arises due to ignorance of truth). Thus truth is the only sound guide for practice aimed at progressively realizing ultimate freedom, *nirvāṇa*.

Again, like Rosemont's cluster of concepts (including freedom, rights, autonomy, individual, principle, choice, reason, liberty, etc.), in Tibetan philosophical literature the term »truth« *(bden pa / satya)* has many overlapping and multi-layered meanings.[12] Tibetan philosophical texts generally define *bden pa* as having the combination of two meanings: as statements (those that are »taken to be true« and those that are »actually true«) and as states of affairs or kinds of things (those that are »taken to be real« and those that are »real«). Epistemologically speaking, truth is taken to be something that is epistemically reliable, justified, and correct – something that warrants epistemic trust – the sort of truth that is empirically, scientifically, or legally verifiable. In Tibetan

[9] Maffie (2014b: 161).
[10] Thakchoe (2011).
[11] Maffie (2014b: 162).
[12] Maraldo also observes that Linda Martin Alcoff has truth as a concept-cluster where truth belongs to *»norm, context, engagement, efficacy, experience and the ordinary world«* (Maraldo 2014b: 170).

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phenomenology, truth has the sense of an *awakened* (awakening) experience – an experiential insight into the reality derived from direct perception and sustained experiential knowing. In soteriology, truth is the Path (or the Way); truth is the guide for practice; truth alone is attributed an efficacy to set humans free from suffering. In ethics, truth means sincerity, honesty, genuineness, originality, coordination, harmony, tranquility, etc. Working from the standpoint of metaphysics and ontology, Tibetan philosophers define truth as »reality« – the so-called reality of things as they are, the ultimate mode of being, a thing's fundamental nature.

All of these meanings of the term »truth« *(satya / bden pa)* are essentially not very different in their semantic range. Tibetan uses of the term »truth« often overlap with each other. The differences are mostly contextual. Even so, it is primarily the ontological and epistemological use of the term »truth« that is most directly relevant to the question of the value of truth in Tibetan philosophy for cross-cultural philosophy. Truth in Tibetan philosophy is not in any way equivalent to any of the Western philosophical conceptions where truth belongs primarily to reference, validity, proposition, denotation, connotation, etc. Tibetan philosophers are neither correspondence theorists nor are they strict coherentists. They are neither pragmatists nor realists, nor anti-realists, nor even deflationary theorists in the Western philosophical sense. Nor do they advance a conception of propositional truth. This notwithstanding, the Western and Tibetan traditions have many interesting points of intersection, with shared and unshared insights into many domains allowing for fruitful dialogue and exchange.[13]

III The Two Truths Debate in Tibetan Philosophy

Tibetan philosophers have always, following their Indian Buddhist counterparts, classified truth into two kinds: conventional truth and ultimate truth. The two truths are not only a core ontological doctrine as it is understood within the Tibetan Buddhist thought, but they are also constitutive of the central theory behind Tibetan Buddhist epistemology, ethics, phenomenology, and soteriology.

Conventional truth is defined as objects or things found by means

[13] See Garfield (2014).

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of correct ordinary cognitions (called »conventionally true cognitions«). These things (realities) exist conventionally and are established by the standards of commonsense or ordinary mundane knowledge.[14] Conventional truth is an object that is found by a cognitive process that perceives that which is ultimately unreal, false, and deceptive. All conventional phenomena (including those that we regard as »conventionally real«), according to Tibetan philosophy, are »false« (or »unreal«). Their mode of existence does not accord with their mode of appearance. Things deceptively and falsely appear to our ordinary cognitions to be real, while in actual fact, from a critical ultimate perspective, they are »unreal,« and »empty of essential reality.«

The term »ultimate« refers both to objects and to cognitions apprehending the objects. Therefore this term means objects and cognitions that are »ultimate.« When the term »ultimate« takes up a subjective meaning, it refers to a very specific ability of mental cognition (»direct perceptual awareness,« »mental equipoise,« and/or »reasoning faculty«) that is directed towards the ultimate nature of things. Ultimately true cognition is said to operate on the basis of *how things really are* (as opposed to how they appear in ordinary, conventional cognitions that are taken to be true). Ultimate cognition operates on the basis of the *ultimate mode* of things – what is known ultimately by ultimate knowledge, or what is known through ultimate logical investigation regarding the ultimate nature of things. Therefore this type of cognition is often described as »ultimately true cognition,« or »ultimate knowledge.« So cognition becomes ultimate because of the means adopted to ascertain whether a cognition can indeed be ultimate. When the term »ultimate« takes on its objective connotation, it comes to mean truth found by means of ultimately true cognition. So ultimate truth is defined as »an object found by ultimate knowledge or ultimately true cognition.«

Ultimate truth can also be defined as »a non-deceptive object found by the truth-perceiving cognition.« It is argued that the way in which ultimate truth appears to its respective cognition (ultimately true cognition) accords with the way in which it actually exists. Ultimate reality is therefore non-deceptive, unlike conventional truth,

[14] Maraldo's references to »communal« truth in Watsuji Tetsurō's (1889–1960) philosophy appear to be making a similar point (Maraldo 2014b: 172).

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which appears to its cognition deceptively and falsely, and is therefore a deceptive object.[15]

All Indian Buddhist schools – Vaibhāṣika (pan-realists), Sautrāntika (representationalists, logicians), Yogācāra (idealists, phenomenologists), Svātantrika Madhyamaka (autonomist middle-way philosophers) and Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka (consequentialist middle-way philosophers) – came up with very different theories of the two truths.[16] The majority of the classical Tibetan philosophers or four ma-

[15] This is not a type of correspondence theory, though. The object and cognition are not two independent entities corresponding to each other. A cognition, in this context, arises due to the force of an object (but not vice versa), for the object is regarded as one of the necessary conditions for the arising of cognition.

[16] The Vaibhāṣika (pan-realists) have argued that ultimate truth consists of intrinsically real, irreducible spatial units (e.g., atoms) and irreducible temporal units (e.g., instants of consciousness) of the five basic categories – color/shape, feeling, perception, volitional factors, consciousness. Conventional truth, on the other hand, consists of reducible spatial wholes (such as person, table, etc.) or temporal continua (stream of consciousness, etc.). Put simply, the conventional is composite; the ultimate is discrete. The Sautrāntika (representationalists) have argued that the two truths are in fact a division between unique particulars (*ultimate truth*) and universals (*conventional truth*) wherein the former are defined as dynamic, momentary, causally effective, and the objective domain of direct perception; the latter is conceptually constructed of universals. It is static, causally ineffective and the objective domain of the inference. The Yogācāra (idealists, phenomenologists) have maintained that all external objects are entirely unreal, and that only mental objects may be real. There are two forms of Madhyamaka (middle-way philosophy) schools – Svātantrika (autonomist) and Prāsaṅgika (consequentialist). The former has two sub-schools: the Sautrāntika-Svātantrika (representationalist-autonomist) and the Yogācāra-Svātantrika (idealist-autonomist). The Sautrāntika-Svātantrika Madhyamaka account of the two truths fuses the epistemological realism of the Sautrāntika with Madhyamaka's non-foundational ontology. The Madhyamaka supplies the ultimate truth, the Sautrāntika the conventional. The Sautrāntika-Svātantrika Madhyamaka argues that conventionally speaking, all phenomena are intrinsically real *(svabhāvata)*, for they are established as such by the non-analytical cognitions of ordinary beings. Ultimately, they argue that all phenomena are intrinsically unreal *(niḥsvabhāvataḥ)*, for they are established as empty of intrinsic reality from the perspective of exalted analytical cognition (ultimate cognition of enlightened beings). Thus this school argues that Madhyamaka must reject the intrinsic reality of things ultimately, since what is intrinsically unreal (empty) is itself ultimate reality. However, it asserts intrinsic reality of things conventionally, since intrinsic reality itself constitutes conventional reality.
The Yogācāra-Svātantrika Madhyamaka school, as its name suggests, fuses the epistemological idealism of the Yogācāra with Madhyamaka ontology. The Madhyamaka school supplies the ultimate truth, while the Yogācāra supplies the conventional. The Yogācāra account of the conventional truth is that only the *mind* is intrinsically and

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jor philosophical schools – Nyingma, Kagyü, Sakya, and Gelug – are self-confessed followers of the Prāsaṅgika Madhyamaka school of thought, for they argue that the philosophical position advanced here is more coherent and defensible compared with other Indian Buddhist schools. Tibetan philosophers agree that the two truths are undisputedly central to their system of Prāsaṅgika thought. The Tibetan schools and philosophers within the four schools disagreed fiercely amongst themselves on almost every important philosophical question concerning the two truths, however. They disagree on their definitions of the two truths, the relationship between them, their ontological statuses, the epistemic tools for accessing them, the problems concerning the limits of language and thought (as these relate to the notion of ultimate truth), the different epistemic and phenomenological pathways of realizing ultimate truth, and finally, the nature and possibility of knowledge of these two truths and the implications of such knowledge for the attainment of awakening.

Put another way, questions such as: »What is divided into the two truths?,« »How should the two truths be etymologically presented *(sgra bshad)*?,« »How are they defined *(mtshan nyid / nges tshig)*?,« »Why should truth be enumerated *(grangs nges)* into two, why not one?,« and »How are the two truths related: distinct or identical?« have become the standard paradigmatic focus of any discussion of these two truths. The debate amongst Tibetan philosophers stems in large part from the way in which they differently interpret and understand Candrakīrti's theory of the two truths and its philosophical implications.

The Gelug school, for example, argues for a harmonious relationship between the two truths, while the Sakya school rejects such harmony, insisting on the absolute character of ultimate truth and the rejection of conventional truth. The Gelug school contends that the accomplishment of the ultimate goal provides the most coherent epistemic access to the *climactic* unity between the two truths, and thus simultaneous knowledge of the two truths is reserved only for the fully awakened beings. In contrast, Sakya thinkers maintain that the accom-

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conventionally real. All objects external to it are conventionally unreal, because they have no intrinsic reality, they are rather mentally constructed pure fictions. The Madhyamaka account of ultimate truth is that analysis exposes even the mind as empty of ultimately intrinsic nature under ultimate analysis. Thus, although all that conventionally exists must exist as having conventionally intrinsic nature, these objects lack ultimate existence, for they are empty of an ultimately intrinsic nature.

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plishment of the ultimate goal leads to an ultimate breakdown of all connections between the two truths. Thus, the Sakya school holds that realization of the ultimate disunity between the two truths is a cognitive achievement reserved only for those who have reached the highest goal. For Gelug, Buddhas – those who achieved the highest goal – are conventional truths and dependently arisen phenomena, just like any other thing. For the Sakya school, however, whosoever achieves the highest goal is non-empirical, non-dual, and transcendent.

The Gelug school treats the two truths as mutually entailing. It argues that they share the same ontological status, and that they are both empty and dependently arisen phenomena. The same principle applies to the Gelug ontology of *saṁsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. Since both *saṁsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are dependently arisen and empty of essences, they have equal ontological status. Sakya ontology, on the other hand, treats the two truths as hierarchical and mutually contradictory. It argues that conventional truth and ultimate truth each have their own distinct and independent ontological status. The same distinction is applied in the way it treats *saṁsāra* and *nirvāṇa* ontologically. While conventional truth and *saṁsāra* are treated as dependently arisen and thus as ontologically conditioned *(saṁskṛta, 'dus byas)*, Sakya philosophers argue that ultimate truth and *nirvāṇa* are ontologically unconditioned *(asaṁskṛta, 'dus ma byas)* and transcendent.

The two kinds of knowledge, that of conventional truth and that of ultimate truth – that of *saṁsāra* and that of *nirvāṇa* – are, according to Gelug epistemology, complementary. They are yoked together and cannot be isolated from one another. Just as knowledge of conventional truth depends on that of ultimate truth, so too does knowledge of *saṁsāra* depend on the realization of *nirvāṇa*. One who directly knows conventional truth and *saṁsāra* as dependently arisen and empty, thus also knows ultimate truth and *nirvāṇa* as dependently arisen and empty. Thus, without knowing ultimate truth and *nirvāṇa* as dependently arisen and empty, it is not possible to know conventional truth and *saṁsāra* as dependently arisen and empty. In contrast, according to Sakya epistemology, knowledge of either of the two truths – of *saṁsāra* or *nirvāṇa* – is inconsistent with knowledge of the other. The knowledge of conventional truth and *saṁsāra* as dependently arisen is distinct from and autonomous with respect to that of ultimate truth and *nirvāṇa*. The knowledge of conventional truth and *saṁsāra* as dependently arisen is a mundane one based on knowing conventional

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truth and *saṁsāra* as ontologically conditioned, whereas knowledge of ultimate truth and *nirvāṇa* constitutes transcendent knowledge, since it is based on knowing ultimate truth and *nirvāṇa* as ontologically transcendent.[17]

As we can see with such intra-Tibetan philosophical debates concerning culture and language, Tibetan philosophical methods are by no means monolithic and homogeneous dealing with the two truths. Sophisticated and hairsplitting logical and dialectical methods of training in the monastic universities have produced academics and scholars with great debating skills and philosophical dexterity. Critical philosophical exchanges about the two truths between and amongst Tibetan scholars themselves have already produced highly successful intra-cultural philosophical discourse. The exchanges with the classical Brahmanical philosophical traditions have also enabled Tibetan philosophers to hone their cross-cultural philosophical skills, to enrich their methods, to sharpen their metaphysical and epistemological parameters, to gain new insights into the strength and vulnerabilities of their own positions as well as those of opponents, and to develop new strategies to address shortcomings and provide effective defense against the criticisms. Even so, I believe, Tibetan philosophers have much to learn from exchanges with other philosophical traditions (be it with Western philosophy, Chinese philosophy, African philosophy, etc.) and that they also have something to contribute to other traditions by way of engaging in cross-cultural inquiry.

IV The Value of the Two Truths to the Pursuit of Cross-Cultural Philosophy

In the remaining part of this paper, I show how and why the two-truth debate in Tibetan philosophy is valuable to the pursuit of cross-cultural philosophy (by »Tibetan,« I refer to the Gelug school, as its philosophy will be the focus of my analysis). I will argue that the two truths have

[17] In my book – which is a comparative analysis of the conceptions of the two truths by two of Tibet's most well-known philosophers: Tsongkhapa Lobsang Dragpa (Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa, 1357–1419), the founder of the Gelug school; and Gorampa Sönam Senge (Go rams pa Bsod nams seng ge, 1429–1489), one of the key Sakya philosophers – I have attempted to show how these dramatic differences follow from their differing hermeneutical approach toward the two truths (Thakchoe 2007).

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an ontological »openness« or »malleability« toward cross-cultural philosophy. There are several reasons for this. Perhaps the most important one is that the two truths are, for Tibetan philosophy, freestanding (in themselves); they are not tied down or hardwired in any privileged epistemology, language, culture and philosophy, beliefs, etc. The two truths are the natural processes and events of the world. Therefore they are, culturally unbound, linguistically unspecified, and philosophically *un*privileged.

For Tibetan philosophers ontology and philosophical analysis are deeply interlinked: where analysis ends, is precisely where dogmas and assumptions (such as intrinsic reality, substance, essence, self, soul, God, etc.) begin. According to Tibetan philosophy, the Buddhist realist schools (Theravāda, Vaibhāṣika, and Sautrāntika), employed analysis successfully against conceptual composites, but they are exhausted at the level of atoms and instants, their basic ontological units and ultimate reality. The idealist Yogācāra deployed analysis to dismantle the external world entirely (including the atoms of the realists). That analysis exhausts itself though at the level of non-dualistic consciousness (Yogācāra), whose resistance to analysis, according to this tradition, confirms its ultimacy. For the semi-realist Svātantrika, analysis is used to clear the ultimate domain of intrinsic reality entirely – reasoned analysis arrives at the ultimate truth of emptiness. But the conventional domain is spared analysis, lest it rob conventionality of the intrinsic reality that the Svātantrika believe to be essential to causality. For the Prāsaṅgika, analysis is deployed without exception, and there is nothing that can withstand it. Ultimately everything, seen analytically, is empty of intrinsic reality, including emptiness itself; as a matter of convention, everything, seen analytically, exists only relationally, including relations themselves. The Prāsaṅgika argue that analysis, by showing that things exist insubstantially and relationally, rather than robbing things of causality confirms it. Only things lacking intrinsic nature can contribute to causal interdependence, and analysis confirms that lack.

For this reason Tsongkhapa and his Gelug school defended a thoroughgoing Prāsaṅgika non-realism, or a kind of »global« non-realism, the emptiness of everything. They argue that the »ultimate truth is that nothing is real,« everything is unreal, false, and empty, both conventionally and ultimately. Thus everything is only relational, like plantain trees, water-bubbles, mirages in the desert, reflections of faces

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in the mirror, the reflection of the moon in crystal-clear water, magical illusions, etc. Just as all of these illusory phenomena are unreal and only exist due to the coming together of their respective causes and conditions, so-called real things and real persons are ultimately only unreal, impermanent, deceptive, empty of essence, and without self.

Both conventional and ultimate truths, the Gelug argue, are categorically empty of intrinsic nature. Only non-intrinsic truth is associated with causal efficiency. The non-realism of conventional truth is articulated through the equation of dependent arising and causal efficiency. Dependent arising is conventional truth because it arises from its causes and conditions and hence it is non-intrinsic, even conventionally. That which conventionally arises from causes and conditions interdependently, is causally efficient. The non-realism of ultimate truth is articulated through the equation of emptiness and causal efficacy. Emptiness is the ultimate truth because ultimate truth is ultimately unreal. It is ultimately unreal, for it is ultimately empty of any intrinsic nature. And whatever lacks intrinsic nature, ultimately arises dependently, and thus is causally efficient. Being empty of any intrinsic nature, emptiness is, therefore, causally efficient. This follows since whatever is empty of intrinsic nature is a relational and dependently arisen phenomenon, and whatever is relational is causally efficient.

V Tibetan Philosophy's Value in the Pursuit of Cross-Cultural Philosophy

At this point we may ask: how is the »global« non-realism of Tibetan philosophy valuable in the pursuit of cross-cultural philosophy? It is precisely this »global« non-realism, in my view, that leads Tibetan philosophers towards cross-cultural philosophy. The philosophical thought that every truth is unreal, »nothing is ultimately true« does not mean that there is *no truth*. It means truth is strictly *non-intrinsic*, *relational*, and thus interdependent in origin. Truth dependently arises from the collocation of causes and conditions; therefore it is open as it arises from cross-linguistic, cross-epistemic, and cross-cultural practices. This cross-culturally open truth lends itself easily to the cross-culturally open method of inquiry of which cross-cultural philosophy is only one kind.

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Following the stellar examples set by the Indian philosophers such as Nāgārjuna, Candrakīrti, etc. Tibetan philosophy self-reflexively subjects everything – from a seed to a Buddha – to rigorous interrogation. No truth whatsoever is protected from the blazes of philosophical investigation. Not only are the fundamental assumptions underlying metaphysics (ontology, causality, etc.), epistemology (cognitions, knowledge, etc.), ethics (karma, morality, etc.), and psychology (emotions, etc.) subjected to sustained interrogation, but the primacy of subjectivity (self, agency, personhood, Godhead) is also exposed to sustained analysis. Even so, the enterprise of cross-cultural philosophy (be it with Western or Eastern philosophical orientations) would benefit Tibetan philosophy in general. It would force Tibetan philosophers to step outside the confines of the presuppositions of Tibetan Buddhist culture and its philosophical parameters, and force them to contemplate fresh philosophical methods to advance their notion of two truths from new or fresh vantage points.[18]

Let us look at the etymology of the term *kun rdzob (saṁvṛti)* to assess how malleable the Tibetan concept of truth is to cross-cultural philosophy. Etymologically the term *kun rdzob (saṁvṛti)*, translated into English as »convention« (even »concealer«[19] in certain context), has come to have three meanings and each of them are significant in understanding Tibetan philosophy's temperament regarding cross-cultural philosophy:[20]

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[18] The two truths debate between the Geluk and Sakya, as I have discussed elsewhere, is a good case study that demonstrates the heterogeneity of Tibetan philosophy in its approach to truth. The ways in which each Tibetan school (or philosopher) has interpreted and approached the two truths depend largely on which Indian Buddhist philosopher or school have cross-culturally influenced the Tibetans counterparts. See Thakchoe (2007).

[19] Newland (1999: 77) consistently translates *samvṛtisatya (kun brdzob bden* pa) as *concealer-truth* and seems to treat *samvṛtisatya* and concealer truth as equivalent, assuming it to be the Gelug pa standard reading. I borrowed his term concealer-truth and use it in the context where *saṁvṛti* is specifically referred to as primal ignorance; however, I do not consider these two terms to be equivalent. Especially in Tsongkhapa's sense, *saṁvṛti* carries a much wider semantic range. All phenomenal objects can be described as *saṁvṛtisatya* but certainly not as concealer-truth, because phenomenal objects themselves do not conceal truth. Rather they are the truths. However, Newland's rendition is consistent with Gorampa's reading. For the latter, every *saṁvṛtisatya* amounts to concealing the truth. And phenomena themselves are not seen as truths. They are rather considered as total illusions, projected by ignorance.

[20] Tsongkhapa (1992: 402–403); Gorampa (1969: 377b), and Newland (1999: 77).

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The first sense of the Tibetan term *kun-rdzob (saṁvṛti)* means something that is *mutually interdependent (phan tshun brten pa, paraparasaṁbhavana)*. This should be viewed as a radical contrast with the last meaning of *kun-rdzob*, which equates it with ignorance. *Kun-rdzob* in this context is taken to refer to the mutually interdependent character of the two truths, both epistemically and ontologically, hence *kun-rdzob* is applied exhaustively to *all* phenomena including ultimate truth. What is at issue here does not merely concern the relation between phenomena and the apprehending cognitions, but rather it affects the core ontological status of *all* truths/realities.

With respect to conventional truth, mutual interdependence implies ontological insubstantiality, evanescence, and an absence of essence. In other words, being *mutually interdependent* means that the very existence of all conventional truths depend on their being relational and interdependent – »As all phenomena must arise through a network of their causes and conditions, they simply are empty of the self-defining nature.«[21]

With respect to ultimate truth, *mutual interdependence* refers to the ontological and epistemological interdependence of ultimate truth *(paramārthasatya, don dam bden pa)* in relation to conventional truth. Ultimate truth is entirely dependent on its conventional counterpart. The two are like subject and predicate, in that the latter cannot exist without the former and vice versa. In this sense ultimate truth can be included in the categories of *kun-rdzob* – not because it fulfills the defining criterion of what *kun-rdzob is*, but because it is ontologically and epistemologically interdependent from conventional truth.[22]

Ultimate truth could not be classified as *kun-rdzob* if it is to be given primacy or priority over conventional truth – whether ontological or epistemological. Since Tibetan philosophy accords ultimate truth *(paramārthasatya, don dam bden pa)* and conventional truth *(saṁvṛtisatya, kun rdzob bden pa)* equal status, neither can have precedence over the other. Ultimate truth is the ultimate nature, or ultimate mode, of conventional truth.[23] Since ultimate truth is not possible without a

[21] Tsongkhapa (1997: 205). See Geshe (1997: 138).

[22] Gorampa, while accepting that the second meaning of *kun-rdzob* does apply to empirical truth in both an ontological and epistemological sense, is adamant that it cannot apply to ultimate truth. For him, ultimate truth is ontologically transcendent and absolute – it cannot be *kun-rdzob* at any level.

[23] Geshe (1997: 141).

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characterized conventional reality, ultimate truth too must be a dependently arisen phenomenon. Indeed, ultimate truth is none other than the ultimate mode of being of conventional truth. If ultimate truth were not a dependently-arisen phenomenon, it would then be ontologically absolute and therefore essentially real. In that case, ultimate truth would be neither equivalent to an empty phenomenon nor categorizable as *kun-rdzob* – a mutually interdependent phenomenon. Thus this concept of mutually dependent truths, from a cross-cultural philosophical standpoint, is particularly interesting in comparison with philosophical systems that advance a type of absolutism or Vedāntic monism or non-dualism, or even Kantian transcendentalism, which sees phenomena and noumenon quite differently.[24]

The second meaning of *kun-rdzob* is *linguistic convention ('jig rten gyi tha snyad, lokavyavahāra)* or *terms (brda, saṁket, samay)*. According to Tibetan philosophy, this sense of *kun-rdzob*, takes into account the role of linguistic convention. Following Candrakīrti here it is argued that, as linguistic convention, *kun-rdzob* encompasses all sense faculties (the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and intellect), their six corresponding objects (form, sound, aroma, taste, tactility, and ideas), and the six consciousnesses (visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tangibility, mental consciousness) that arise from the contact between the six senses and the six objects.[25] In his *Treatise on the Essence of True Eloquence (Legs bshad snying po)* Tsongkhapa characterizes the philosophy of language in the Prāsaṅgika works of the Indian philosophers – Nāgārjuna, Buddhapālita and Candrakīrti – as being distinctive. The claim is being made that those in the Prāsaṅgika school posit all realities through the force of linguistic convention: language and ontology *(rnam gzhag)* are understood to be mutually embedded within each other, such that »realities *(yod pa)* are merely *(tsam)*

[24] Other Tibetan philosophers such as Gorampa, however, disagree with the Gelug exposition. He argues that conventional and ultimate truths are radically distinct – ultimate truth is not in any respect ontologically dependent or interdependent. Firstly, ultimate truth is not projected by primal ignorance, for it is the only non-deceptive truth. Secondly, ultimate truth has ontological *primacy* over empirical truth. It is, in other words, ontologically distinct and outranks conventional truth. Ultimate truth is ontologically *transcendent* and *absolute*. Hence, according to Gorampa (1969: 377c, 382b), ultimate truth cannot in any circumstance constitute a category of *kun-rdzob*. Modern Indian scholars such as T. R. V. Murti support this view (1955: 244–245).

[25] Tsongkhapa (1992: 403).

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names *(ming)*, terms *(brda)* and linguistic conventions *(tha snyad)*.«[26] Language, according to Gelug philosophy, is always meaningful, although it always lacks intrinsic meaning, for it does not have any intrinsically real meaning apart from what social conventions ascribe to it. The real linguistic meaning is nowhere to be found: it is neither in words nor in sentences, not even in its referent. However, since language is dependent in origin, there can be no language without its meaning, likewise there is no meaning without language. Gelug philosophy also argues that there is no such thing as an objectively and uniquely real referent. All referents are always and necessarily linguistic and therefore conceptually constructed. Any linguistic referent is already embedded in language, just as language is already embedded in ontology. Neither language nor ontology has priority over the other.[27]

Both *nirvāṇa* and ultimate truth are linguistic concepts in that they exist as merely names or concepts. Since saṃsāra is also a concept *(rtog pa)*, *nirvāṇa* too must be a concept *(rtog pa)*, for they both exist as mundane linguistic conventions *('jig rten gyi tha snyad)*. Since conventional truth is a concept, ultimate truth too must be a concept, for their existence mutually depends upon each other.

If reality consists simply of linguistic concepts, and if linguistic concepts are utterly empty of intrinsic nature, how could such a reality have any functional or causal efficacy in cross-cultural philosophy? Language is empty of intrinsic nature because it exists neither in its causes – taken collectively or separately – nor in its conditions, nor in the combination of both (causes and conditions), nor again is language anything apart from these causes and conditions. Since linguistic concepts, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, are nowhere to be found, language

[26] Tsongkhapa (1997: 201–202).

[27] The Gelug account of the Prāsaṅgika, therefore, disagrees fundamentally with the Dignāga-Dharmakīrtian idea that reality is uniquely *(svalakṣaṇa)* and intrinsically *(svabhāva)* given to language as its referent, and that language in and of itself is meaningless. Dignāga-Dharmakīrtian realistic nominalism (or conceptualism) operates on the presumption that either language has priority over ontology or ontology has priority over language. It claims that reality and language stand apart from each other independently and constitutively. The Gelug Prāsaṅgika argues that reality is fundamentally a linguistic entity, and it denies any extra-linguistic reality. Meanwhile, in Dignāga-Dharmakīrtian semantic theory, reality can never be a linguistic entity; it must be ineffable, extra-linguistic, and non-conceptual, whereas language is always divorced from reality, operating purely at the conceptual level.

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is empty of intrinsic nature. Even so, says Gelug philosophy, empty language is causally effective in doing cross-cultural philosophy, as it would establish the emptiness of the reified »non-empty« philosophical concepts in any tradition, because such concepts themselves are empty when it comes to intrinsic nature.

Empty language is causally effective in cross-cultural philosophy, since the nature of language is dependent in its origin, or relational. Empty words function because they originate dependently from causes and conditions. The causes from which the empty words dependently arise are the four elements – solidity, temperature, moisture, and motion. The conditions from which they dependently arise are intentional efforts to make utterances in the breast, the throat, the lips, the tongue, the roots of teeth, the palate, the nose, the head, etc. Thus, empty words come into existence through a symbiotic relation between the causes and the conditions. Since whatever exists performs some causal function, even empty words, in account of their existence, perform causal functions. This is similar to the causal efficacy of things like carts, pots, clothes, etc., which though empty of intrinsic reality because of being dependent in origin, are occupied with their respective functions, for example, carts for carrying wood, grass, and earth; pots for containing honey, water, and milk; and clothes for protection from cold, wind, and heat. Language functions and is causally effective in doing cross-cultural philosophy precisely on the ground that it is empty of any intrinsic character and therefore dependent in origin.

The third meaning of the Tibetan term *kun rdzob (saṃvṛti)* is nescience or ignorance *(mi shes pa, avidyā* or *ājñāna)* because it conceals *('gebs)*, and thereby *obstructs (sgrib par byed pa)* truths.[28] Truths reified by ignorance are strictly conceptual. Ontologically, such truths are, strictly speaking, non-existent. Despite the reifying agents themselves (ordinary beings) clinging to essences such as realities or truths (real selves, real entities, etc.), those essences do not constitute truths. As argued earlier, Gelug philosophers view everything as being devoid of ontological substance and essentially empty of any substantial mode of being. Gelug philosophy argues that, due to ignorance, even philo-

[28] Since the Sanskrit term *saṁvṛti* equivalent of the Tibetan term *kun rdzob* also applies to the obstruction *(sgrib pa)*, it is explained in these terms; this, however, does not mean to state that all *kun rdzob (saṁvṛti)* are obstructors. If this were true, then the Buddhist soteriological project would be a non-starter.

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sophers (like other ordinary persons) intuitively reify or superimpose *(sgro 'dogs pa)* onto phenomena and persons the notion of an essential mode of existence. This ignorance compels even philosophers regardless of pedigree to unconsciously impose conceptually static identities onto ever-transient things around them and to themselves as persons (grasping and clinging to themselves as enduring subjects or substances) and to confuse these identities with ultimate truths.

On this score then, ignorance prevents the truth from being directly perceived by anyone, cross-culturally, cross-linguistically. Thus ignorance is a *concealer (saṁvṛti, kun rdzob)* of truth for every philosopher, irrespective of background.[29] In this sense ignorance *obscures (rmongs par byed)* even so-called philosophical *consciousness*, insofar as it literally obstructs philosophers from seeing the truth (the emptiness of phenomena, or emptiness of persons).

Gelug philosophy argues that reified truths constructed through the power of ignorance are deeply entrenched in human psychology and intuitions, with human conventions taking their validity for granted and people not even questioning their underlying assumptions. Hence, while many philosophers, both Eastern and Western, have taken the truth of subjectivity (consciousness, self, personal identity, etc.) for granted, Tibetan philosophers (like their Indian Mādhyamika counterparts) have vigorously challenged such assumptions and critically exposed problems behind such theories. Only in recent years have Western philosophers seriously started interrogating the assumptions behind personal identity theories (this, if I am correct, may be a fruit of the productive cross-cultural philosophy encounters between Western and Buddhist philosophers).

Even though reified truths such as self, subjectivity, consciousness, etc., may come under sustained attack in the course of cross-cultural engagement, and even though such reified truths are increasingly recognized as philosophically indefensible, the deeper phenomenological or psychological problem of »Ego« continues on unabated. Our egotistic and self-centered intuitions (our desires, attachments to our *own* philosophical views, aversion towards *opposing* views, etc.) still operate within us unchallenged. Untouched even by the rigor of philosophical investigations exposing absurdities, such egotistical intuitions operate

[29] Tsongkhapa (1984: 85). Also see Tsongkhapa (1992: 403–4); Cabezón (1992: 361) offers a similar explanation.

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ceaselessly even though they are found to be logically unsustainable. The philosophical insights of non-self theory, though providing some intellectual relief from the fixation on a reified subjectivity, does very little, or nothing at all, to address »the phenomenological problem of ego,« the underlying presumptions fuelling all self-centered desires and selfish intuitions.

In my view, this is where the ultimate limit of all philosophical insights lies. I doubt that even so-called cross-cultural philosophy, however effective its method, will make any contribution to address this deeper problem. All past philosophers of all cultures seem to have failed to rise up above this dogma: ego-centric intuitions, selfish desires, and attachment to their own philosophical views. Even philosophers who have dismantled personal identity theories so elegantly (deflationary theorists, Buddhist reductionists, and so on) are no different from any other person when it comes to ego. This is where all philosophers of all cultures need to break from what I will call the »philosopher's arrogance« (the claim that philosophical insights can penetrate through all dogmas). As philosophers we need to own up to this methodological limit and clearly recognize that we reach the limit of what philosophical methods can offer.

Tibetan philosophers (following their Indian Buddhist counterparts) at least make this admission abundantly clear. For them, addressing the problems of egocentric intuitions lies beyond the scope of any philosophical project. Reason may conceptually demonstrate truth, but reason cannot reach truth. While reason may provide a method for philosophy, direct perception is the only way of comprehending truth as it is. Direct perception has the ability to reach, pierce through, and eradicate the underlying reifying tendencies of innate ignorance because it directly perceives all bodily and mental processes as essentially empty and selfless, and thus as a dependently-arisen series of momentary instants. Philosophy, on the other hand, being purely conceptual, leaves the facts of egocentric intuitions phenomenologically untouched, and so it cannot eliminate reifying tendencies. Absent elimination of this error, it is not possible to realize the selflessness of persons *(gang zag bdag med, pudgala-nairātmya)* or the selflessness of phenomena *(chos kyi bdag med, dharmanairātmya or dharmaśūnyatā)*. Yet, both are critical in order to deconstruct selfish intuitions.

The solution to the most fundamental presumption behind our ordinary intuitions, beliefs, and desires, according to Tibetan philoso-

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phy, must come from the phenomenological insights of direct perception *(lhag mthong, vipāśyana):* »deep phenomenological deconstruction« through perceptual awareness of the bodily and mental states as processes, rather than discrete, unified, and enduring units. It is argued that by perceptually deconstructing our psychophysical aggregates into fleeting moments, perceiving them as coreless and empty processes, the reifying tendencies of such egocentric desires, etc., are gradually eradicated. Thus, this type of praxis takes our critical intelligence far beyond the level of conceptual operation, working from within the realm of our body, as it were.

It is clear, then, that the concept of truth in Tibetan philosophy is open to cross-cultural philosophizing. Its ontology of emptiness and its philosophy of language surrounding the two truths do not hinder an engagement with cross-cultural methods. This conclusion follows from the points that I have made, except perhaps the last point (where I have indicated the limits inherent in any philosophical method and offered phenomenological deconstruction through direct perception and meditative reflection as an alternative method).

As long as the »value« of truth in both (or »all«) philosophical traditions in dialogue with Tibetan philosophy are given equal place in this exchange, considered entirely and unconditionally in their own terms, and cross-cultural philosophy is not compromised by any lopsided method (which assumes the superiority of one over the other/s), I firmly believe that the Tibetan philosophical tradition will always learn something useful by engaging with other philosophical traditions. It may even contribute something to other traditions in this dialogue.

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Reply: Truth as Truthfulness

Although in principle Western philosophers extol the virtues of dialogue – not least because their tradition begins with it – they have only infrequently employed it since Socrates died, engaging much more often in debate. This symposium has been a heartening exception for me, and augurs well for the future of a cross-cultural philosophy that is truly cross-cultural. Fellow symposiast John Maraldo put it well when he said we are *doing* cross-cultural philosophy – together (Maraldo 2014b: 185).

The four of us appear to share a similar orientation toward the non-Western texts we examine in our research and writing, namely, seeing contrasts as more illuminating overall than similarities, both with respect to learning about the other tradition and coming to see our own in a different light. Of course there will be many similarities across cultures; human beings are much too alike physiologically[1] to be altogether unintelligible to one another despite great differences in thought and behavior brought about by climate, geography, and culture. But at times we must work very hard to understand others, and thus it is almost surely better to focus on differences before seeking the near-familiar – the latter being far more deceptive if too quickly obtained.

Professors Thakchoe, Maffie, and Maraldo all note that even in the West, the concept of truth is not confined merely to propositional content, and I concur fully. In my initial paper there was not room to discuss at any length what might be said about the early Confucian sense of truth other than to note its absence in their writings with respect to propositions. My colleagues all say that in the traditions that they study there is a non-propositional idea of truth that links it to related

[1] I call these likenesses »homoversals,« which I define as »for all human beings, mentally and physically constituted as they are.« See Rosemont (1988).

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ideas (concepts) such as *sincerity, authenticity, engagement, experience, context*, and related terms that are reflected in a person's behavior as much as or more than in their speech, which my colleagues tend to use the same term to describe: *truthfulness*.

I found it very striking that in their elaboration of this and related terms all three of them invoked path-imagery, which is also pervasive in early Confucian writings. (The Master said: »If at dawn you learn of and tread the way [*dao*] you can face death at dusk« [4.8].)[2] »Way making,« as Roger Ames and David Hall succinctly put it,[3] is clearly inferable from John Maraldo's paper (especially n. 9, and his description of Watsuji Tetsuro's analysis of *cheng* 誠), and fully explicit in Professor Thakchoe's account of the Tibetan tradition (»walking the truth-path«) and Maffie's explication of *ohtlatoca* (»following a path«). *Dao* 道 is hands down the most pregnant philosophical term in the classical Chinese lexicon, and has been translated a variety of ways (appropriately at times), but its most basic sense is path, or way, or The Way. Path imagery thoroughly permeates the early Confucian texts, beginning with the *Analects*, particularly 8.7: »Scholar-apprentices cannot but be strong and resolved, for they bear a heavy charge and their way *(dao)* is long. Where they take *ren* (仁) as their charge, is it not a heavy one? And where their way ends only in death, is it not indeed long?«

Relatedly, it appears that the paths described by my colleagues are not so much learned or known discursively as actively trod (the use of verbs is significant, I believe). The Chinese graph *zhi* (知) seems to function in the same way for Kongzi. Routinely translated as »knowledge« in English, it is almost never about facts addressing how the world that is known is or came to be, but rather it concerns appropriate conduct and one's feelings for it, and thus Roger Ames and I have rendered it as »realize« whenever possible in our translations. First, »realize« is epistemologically as strong as »know« logically, because just as we can't know that today is Monday if it is in fact Wednesday, we can't realize it either; justified true belief equally characterizes both words. And it is appropriate for *zhi* in another way: if »to finalize« means to make final, then »to realize« is easily interpreted as to make real, and

[2] All quotes from the *Analects* are taken from Ames, and Rosemont, Jr. (1998).

[3] In their translation and commentary of *the Dao De Jin*, beginning with Line 1 of Chapter 1 (Ames, and Hall 2003: 77) and throughout the book.

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for Confucius, unless one makes real what one has learned, nothing has really been learned.[4] »Exemplary persons,« said the Master, »would be ashamed if their words outran their deeds« (14.27). And in a well-run state, normative words denoting roles will determine the actions of those who bear those roles: fathers will indeed act as fathers should, just as sons should, too, not to mention the rulers and ministers themselves (13.3). He also said »I am not sure anyone who does not make good on his word is viable as a person« (2.22). And when his student Zigong asked about exemplary persons the Master replied »They first accomplish what they are going to say, and only then say it« (2.13).

Thus we may correctly ascribe – in the sense of »truthfulness« employed by my fellow symposiasts – a concept of »truth« to the early Confucians, but it is not a *theory* of truth and it is not that from which philosophers of language and mind today are seeking theories. Rather must we look to the ordinary, and the moral, and the religious life – as my colleagues here have done – in our own culture to appreciate the Chinese on their own terms, and thus our own as well, but cast in a new (or very old) light. A medieval gentleman would pledge his honor to his bride-to-be, and she in turn would »plight her troth (truth)« to him. The Good Book tells us that »He who *does* the truth comes to the light« (John 3.21, italics added).[5] Fortunate people have »true friends.« And Vaclav Havel attempted to act always as the title of the book by and about him describes his life: *Living in Truth* (1990).

It is this sense of »true« as truthfulness that my fellow symposiasts have in mind when they mention descriptive uses of the term other than as a predicate for sentences. It is highly noteworthy that all four of the philosophical traditions sketched here appear to have much more in common with each other, with the Western past, and with the near-present than any of them have with the sense of truth dominant in Western philosophy today. Professor Maffie's quoting David Hall on the »parochial« nature of Western philosophy is entirely apt in this regard. While Hall may have been a tad strong in his remark, it is surely a healthy antidote to the universalism so definitive of the Western philosophical heritage overall, which has made it so difficult for so

[4] James Maffie hints intriguingly how differences between knowledge and beliefs might be examined cross-culturally in his remarks. My *A Reader's Companion to the Confucian Analects* has a longer account of *zhi* (Rosemont, Jr. 2012).

[5] All biblical quotations are from the *New Oxford Annotated Bible* (Coogan 2007).

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many for so long to take seriously the higher reaches of thought in other cultures.

The reason for this neglect is not solely arrogance or chauvinism, however (although both are surely contributory). The concept of propositional truth in philosophical contexts is closely linked to concepts of objectivity, the reality supposedly underlying appearances,[6] even the idea of God – all-knowing, acultural, eternal – who made us in his image. As quoted by Maraldo in his paper, Linda Alcoff expresses a basic insight on this score when she said »[Truth] remains the single most important philosophical norm by which we understand our discipline.« I can live easily without »true« and »false« while interpreting, translating and writing, using »better« or »worse« instead. Yet I don't believe it is just a linguistic bad habit that tempts me to say that when I write, I want what I write (or say) to be *true*. Maraldo, too, suggests pretty much the same thing on the closing page of his paper, where he lists four claims, and wishes to know their truth or falsity (Maraldo 2014b: 185). (For me, they are all false, as I hope I am making clear in my responses herein.) His point, however, is a very simple and straightforward one that of course applies to all of us at times – as should his account of why he isn't going to lose any sleep over the issue. Descriptive truth is not irrelevant to our daily lives, but we shouldn't let that concept of truth determine our reading of non-Western texts (and a number of older Western texts as well) unless we have reasons to be confident that the authors of those texts also saw the primary function of language as the communication of factual information about the external world.[7]

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[6] A most interesting way to appreciate the ubiquity of the reality/appearances distinction in Western philosophy – which shows yet again the potential value of cross-cultural intellectual investigations – comes from Nathan Sivin, the distinguished historian of Chinese sciences, medicine, and religion (Sivin 1977: 110): »Scientific thought began in China, as elsewhere, with attempts to comprehend how it is that although individual things are constantly changing, always coming to be and perishing, nature as a coherent order not only endures but remains conformable to itself. In the West the earliest such attempts identified the unchanging reality with some basic stuff out of which all the things around us, despite their apparent diversity, are formed. In China the earliest and in the long run the most influential scientific explanations were in terms of time. They made sense of the momentary event by fitting it into the cyclical rhythms of natural process.«

[7] However initially counterintuitive, Noam Chomsky has long argued, and at length, that communication is *not* the primary function of human languages; rather is it for the

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It may seem that by replacing the true/false dichotomy in my writing, translations and evaluations of philosophical views with better/worse I am embracing a fairly strong form of relativism. I do indeed believe there can be more than one good interpretation of a text, more than one good translation of it, and more than one acceptable moral code for leading a decent human life. Without such prefatory attitudes and beliefs it would be very difficult to do cross-cultural philosophy competently in my opinion. This however, makes me a pluralist, not a relativist.[8] For me there can be no *correct* interpretation (by whose criteria would it be evaluated?), but it doesn't follow that I can't distinguish better or worse interpretations, translations, or ways of life, and I don't think I am at all unusual in this regard, even with respect to my own culture. It would be extraordinarily difficult to make a case for reading Plato as an empiricist or St. Thomas Aquinas as an atheist no matter how strenuously we read their works. I can say Richmond Lattimore's translation of The *Odyssey* is very good, while believing Robert Fitzgerald's remains better.[9] My being a deontologist does not mean I cannot hold utilitarianism, or virtue or care ethics in high regard, and I can easily distinguish all four from the ethics of fascism. I can do all that and more without believing there is a be-all-and-end-all correct translation of a text, nor that there is a One True Morality I should be seeking to discover. Champions of both Mill and Kant have been arguing against (when not ignoring) each other for a century and a half now, but have made very few if any converts. If there is a universal moral code binding on everyone always, I have more confidence that it will be given to us by Vishnu in his next avatar rather than by philosophers debating each other monoculturally.

At the same time, I do not believe philosophers should shrink from struggling to ascertain *better* interpretations of the varying dimensions of the human condition or the writings of their predecessors (cross-culturally); to my mind – as a teacher no less than a practitioner – philosophers should, to put it starkly, be partisans. They should hold views which they can state with clarity, present reasons for holding

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expression of human thought. The arguments are technical, but to me at least are convincing. See Chomsky (1964: esp. 202–205), and Chomsky (1975: 56–73).

[8] The best book on these themes in recent years is David Wong's *Natural Moralities* (2009), which I commend heartily to all cross-cultural scholars.

[9] Lattimore (2007); Fitzgerald (1990).

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those views, take challenges to them seriously, modify them in light of significant counter-evidence and/or argument, and not shrink from normativity. If I am at all correct on this score, what functions might efforts at objectivity, neutrality, or impartiality add to this manner of doing philosophy – except enhance self-deception and proscribe prescriptions?

I appreciate very much John Maraldo's and Jim Maffie's employing my notion of concept-clusters for doing cross-cultural philosophy and translation, especially Maraldo's noting their importance methodologically for establishing a context for translation and/or interpretation. Moreover, they put their own concept-clusters to very good effect in their expositions, from which I learned much (especially in Maffie's case, for I must admit to having been abysmally ignorant of Azteca thought before reading his paper). Equally important, to my mind, is that the cluster Maraldo iterates on behalf of Alcoff – *norm*, *context*, *efficacy*, *experience*, *engagement*, *ordinary world* – meshes pretty well with much of what he says of Watsuji Tetsuro's work, and with Professor Thakchoe's account of truth in the Tibetan tradition, as well as with Professor Maffie's and mine for the Azteca and Confucian traditions respectively.

There are other fascinating commonalities I found in the three papers, not only with respect to form and method, but with their content, too, if I have read them aright.

First, for the three traditions adumbrated, »truth« as »truthfulness« seems to suggest the idea of »living in truth,« an integrated way of thinking, feeling and acting. That is to say, truth in the non-descriptive sense linked to truthfulness seems to be linked closely to *activities* of one kind or another, as suggested above, rather than to the idea of *enlightenment* – which is what we would tend to expect at first blush – especially from Buddhist Japan and Tibet, and even more so because of the similar semantic range of the two concepts. But if I have understood them correctly, I believe that they are all saying that a person (monk, nun, lay or atheist) could »live in truth« without having experienced enlightenment.

Moreover, it appears that we may (must?) live truth simply in our daily, ordinary lives, which would certainly be the Confucian view in terms of truth as truthfulness – authenticity, sincerity, etc. »Persons can enlarge the *Dao;* The *Dao* cannot enlarge persons« (15.29). Or again in 2.10: »The Master said ›Watch their actions, observe their

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motives, examine wherein they dwell content; won't you know what kind of person they are? Won't you know what kind of person they are?‹«

Again, if I am not reading too much into my colleagues' work (and I hope they will correct me if I have), it would be a most interesting endeavor to examine yet other traditions to see how frequently there is path imagery, or talk of following a way, linked neither to the sense of propositional truth, nor to the TRUTH as attendant on enlightenment, Buddhist or otherwise (Compare with Jesus: »I am the way, and the truth« [John 14.6].)

Equally if not even more interesting, is how the paths are to be trod. For Thakchoe's Tibetans, »walking the truth-path alone is most efficacious.« Maffie's Azteca seem to link the following the path with their cultural brethren; in Maraldo's account of them, Alcoff and Vattimo, in addition to Watsuji, link the path to community; and for Confucius, one walks the path first with one's family – dead as well as living – followed by community, culminating, with luck and much effort, with a religious sense of belonging to the human race, as John Donne said it so movingly: »Any man's death diminishes me, for I am involved in mankind. Therefore do not send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.«[10] This is a wholly admirable attitude and feeling to have and treasure, but is not come by easily, as seen where I quoted Kongzi earlier on scholar-apprentices. (8.7).

Finally, I believe it is important to note – encouraging my fellow symposiasts to comment – another methodological issue which I had not thought through before participating in this symposium: a fuller investigation of how and with whom one treads the way cross-culturally, and why, would almost surely have to be a collaborative venture, which is perhaps to be recommended for future work in cross-cultural philosophy more generally; a number of remarks that I have made herein are due to having several colleagues with similar concerns, but working with different traditions, sharing both with me at the same time, from all of which I have profited substantively. Perhaps the best way for solitary scholars to avoid the barrenness of seeking universal truth is to work with a number of others, attempting to reach consensus on better and worse readings of the materials with which they are

[10] Sermon XVII, on the front cover (Donne 1997).

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working, within and across cultures and philosophical divides, and over a wide range of issues.

And that's true.

–Henry Rosemont, Jr., Department of Religious Studies, Brown University, USA

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An Amazing Piece of Comparative Philosophy

Sophie Bosede Oluwole: *Socrates and Orunmila. Two Patron Saints of Classical Philosophy*, Lagos: Ark Publishers, 2014, 224 p.

With this book, the debate about African philosophy and the understanding of what African philosophy is about are raised to a new level. S. B. Oluwole has worked already for a long time to make clear what is specifically African in African philosophy. From a great number of publications I just mention her book: *Witchcraft, Reincarnation and the God-Head. Issues in African Philosophy* (Ikeja: Excel Publications, 1991). In this connection she has drawn special attention to the problem of *Philosophy and Oral Tradition* (Lagos: Ark Publishers, 1999). She uses frequently and is very familiar with the *Ifa Literary Corpus*, an extensive text of Yoruba oral tradition, of which big parts have been published in print and also translated into English by Wande Abimbola. The main chapters of this text can be found in the volume, edited by Abimbola: *Sixteen Great Poems of Ifa* (Paris: UNESCO, 1975).

In order to understand what is groundbreaking and new in the comparison of Socrates and Orunmila, one has to realize that Orunmila and the other figures of the *Ifa Literary Corpus* are not gods in the Western meaning of the word. They are not just mythological figures, as are the gods on Mount Olympus in the Greek tradition. More specifically it is wrong to speak of Orunmila as the »God of wisdom.« Oluwole teaches us: These figures are called *Orisa;* they are historical human beings who have been »revered only after death« and »deified« because of their special contribution to philosophy, political science, knowledge of agrarian production, building of cities, warfare, etc. (see p. XIII).

Oluwole's extensive research into Socrates and Orunmila shows that there are amazing similarities in their life and work. Both lived around 500 BCE as the sons of stone masons. Their faces look alike to a great extent. They had about ten or sixteen disciples to whom they preached virtue as the ideal of the good life. They heavily criticized those who claimed to possess absolute knowledge. They lived in centers of intellectual and social life, Athens in ancient Greece and Ile-Ife in Yorubaland respectively. Both left behind no written work (pp. 22–24).

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It is true for Socrates and Orunmila that we know about them from secondary sources. There is not an objective report about who they were and what they taught. Of course, we rely heavily on Plato in trying to find out who Socrates was. But Plato wrote his famous *Dialogues* about thirty years after the death of Socrates. And we have quite different information from Xenophon, Aristophanes, and Diogenes Laertius about the person and the teachings of Socrates. From these sources we come to a certain general picture. In this sense also Gernot Böhme speaks of *Der Typ Sokrates* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 1988). With regard to the person and teachings of Orunmila there are also quite different sources, which in part have a legendary character. Thus it remains unclear »who really was Socrates« as well as »Orunmila« (pp. 8–12 and 19–21).

Oluwole confronts »The Fictitious Socrates,« »The Corporate Socrates,« and »The Historical Socrates« with »The Mythical Orunmila,« »The Corporate Orunmila,« and »The Historical Orunmila.« Because there is also a fictitious picture of Socrates, especially in the work of Aristophanes, corresponding to the mythical picture of Orunmila in the Ifa corpus, both are comparable. A detailed comparison of the theoretical »views and ideas« of Socrates and Orunmila about »The Nature of Reality,« »The Nature of Truth and Wisdom,« »The Limits of Knowledge and Wisdom,« »The Good and the Bad,« »Political Rights,« »The Rights of Women« and other topics makes clear that here two philosophies of equal standard are under discussion. And it is obvious that both argue critically and reasonably. Their argumentation meets rigorous standards. They deny that absolute knowledge is possible. »For them, such wisdom belongs to God« (p. 57).

What is said about Orunmila and what Orunmila »is said to have said« proves that he developed a philosophy within traditional African thought, which is in no way less critical or rigorous than that of Socrates. Even the most advanced principles of »Particle Physics which contains algebra and mathematics« are already applied in the »scientific and mathematical system« of the structure of the *Ifa corpus* (p. 79).

From this point of view, Oluwole can not only reject European-Western positions, which deny the existence of critical and scientific philosophy in traditional Africa, but also the ideas of many African scholars, who do not give the full rank of rationality and scientific spirit to traditional African thinkers. She refers to Kwasi Wiredu, Kwame Gyekye, Gerald Joseph Wanjohi, Peter O. Bodunrin, and others. Most

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characteristically wrong is the view articulated by Léopold Sédar Senghor and the Negritude movement. When the latter contrast the superior position of the West in the field of rational thought with a superior position of Africa in the field of emotion, they imply that Africans are less rational (p. 75). J. A. I. Bewaji, who has been teaching at different Nigerian universities, has delivered a »Critical Analysis of the Philosophical Status of Yoruba Ifa Corpus.« This results, however, in complete »confusion.« Oluwole summarizes: Bewaji admits that this text-corpus »is not lacking in a high degree of ›abstract reasoning‹«, but at the same time he insists, »that it does not deal with ›abstract entities,‹ ›concepts,‹ and ›terms,‹ all of which are abstract reasoning« (p. 90).

In a final conclusion Oluwole clarifies how Socrates, the »Patron Saint« of classical Western philosophy, makes binary distinctions in the sense of »binary oppositions.« The binary distinctions of Orunmila, the »Patron Saint« of classical African philosophy, on the other hand, are »binary complementarity.«[1] The way of thought which is expressed in the idea of complementarity is identified as the specific contribution of African philosophy to world philosophy. That »the other« is the necessary condition for my own existence as a human being leads to the idea of universal brotherhood. The same conception can also be found in the term »*ubuntu*« as a ground-word of African philosophy. Mogobe Ramose from the University of South Africa has developed *African Philosophy Through Ubuntu* (Harare: Mond Books, 2002). Oluwole appropriates the »Bantu-sayings« to which Ramose refers as expressing the core of *ubuntu* and of binary complementarity. I quote here only Ramose's interpretation of the first of these sayings: »*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*. To be a human being is to affirm one's humanity by recognizing the humanity of others, and on that basis, establish humane relationship with them« (p. 157). It is necessary to reread Oluwole's and Ramose's books to understand better what is African in African philosophy.

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[1] The term »Patron Saint« instead of »Baba Ifa« for Orunmila and »Father of Greek Wisdom« for Socrates is chosen in accordance with the practice in the »early Christian Church« by which »prominent philosophers […] were later canonized as saints,« and more particularly with the suggestion of Erasmus to include »*Santa Socrates, Ora pro nobis* […] in the liturgy of the Catholic Church« (p. XIV).

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Red Wisdom: Highlighting Recent Writing in Native American Philosophy

Abstract
This paper surveys four seminal texts of Native American Philosophy from the last decade through the lens of Indigenous intellectual sovereignty. Indigenous intellectual sovereignty is articulated as a complementary dualism that positively negotiates the seeming conflict between the Indigenous intellectual and the connectedness of meaning and value in tribal sovereignty. This complementary dualism of individual and community is seen throughout the highlighted texts. Vine Deloria Jr. and Daniel Wildcat's *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*, for example, shows that Native concepts of power and place both unify and individuate. Power not only moves humans individually but also forms the connections and relations of the human community and natural environment. Place is not only individuating in its geographic specificity but also unifying in creating a relational entanglement of everything. Similar examples are highlighted in Anne Waters' edited *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, Viola Cordova's *How It Is*, and Thomas Norton-Smith's *The Dance of Person and Place*.

Keywords
intellectual sovereignty, assertion of tribal values, Native American philosophy, purposeful transformation of Native stories, Indigenous education.

Indigenous intellectuals are in, what Robert Allen Warrior calls a »struggle for sovereignty« (Warrior 1992: 18).[1] This sovereignty, he describes as »a way of life« which is »not a matter of defining a political

[1] R. A. Warrior, ›Intellectual Sovereignty and The Struggle for An American Indian Future,‹ *Wicazo Sa Review*, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1992, pp. 1–20.

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ideology. It is a decision, a decision we make in our minds, in our hearts, and in our bodies to be sovereign and to find out what that means in the process« *(ibid.)*. Jack Forbes views intellectual sovereignty as an aspect of self-determination, which includes »living a self-determined life which respects the rights of self-determination of all other living creatures« (Forbes 1998: 12).[2] This way of life emphasizes »the development of an attitude of profound respect for individuality and right to self-realization of all living creatures,« […] and to »not impose [our] will on other [people]« *(ibid.)*.

Intellectual sovereignty in practice, then, includes the capacity to speak one's voice without the forced assimilation of that voice to some dominant paradigm or dominant voice. But as Vine Deloria Jr. points out, the very fact that my voice exists as a voice in contrast to some dominant voice is itself a recognition of sovereignty. He writes, »[f]ew members of racial minority groups have realized that inherent in their peculiar experience on this continent is hidden the basic recognition of their power and sovereignty« (Deloria 1970: 115).[3] In the simple act of being targeted for assimilation into a dominant group, the capacity and distinctiveness of that group is recognized.

Deloria understands sovereignty and the recognition of sovereignty as existing primarily in the community and requiring constructive group action. »The responsibility that sovereignty creates,« in his view, »is oriented primarily toward the existence and continuance of the group« (*ibid.*: 123). In demanding sovereignty, minorities are taking the first steps in confronting the false consciousness of individualism in the United States. Tying sovereignty to individuals through intellectual sovereignty, Deloria worries, means that »Indians are not going to be responsive to Indian people, they are simply going to be isolated individuals playing with Indian symbols« (Deloria 1998: 28).[4] »Tribal societies,« he argues, »were great because […] [p]eople followed the clan and kinship responsibilities, took care of their relatives, and had a strong commitment to assisting the weak and helpless. Those

[2] J. D. Forbes, ›Intellectual Self-Determination and Sovereignty: Implications for Native Studies and for Native Intellectuals‹, *Wicazo Sa Review,* Vol. 13, No. 1, 1998, pp. 11–23.

[3] V. Deloria, Jr., *We Talk, You Listen: New Tribes, New Turf,* New York: Macmillan, 1970.

[4] V. Deloria, Jr., ›Intellectual Self-Determination and Sovereignty: Looking at the Windmills in Our Minds,‹ *Wicazo Sa Review,* Vol. 13, No. 1, 1998, pp. 25–31.

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virtues need to be at the center of our lives as actions and not somewhere in our minds as things we believe in but do not practice« (*ibid.*: 28).

Deloria's assertion of tribal values should not be confused with unchanging traditionalism. Tradition according to him must be created and recreated as a part of the life of a community as it struggles to exercise its sovereignty. The power of tradition, he claims, is not in its form but in its meaning and adaptability to new challenges. We must be careful, he points out, not to reify tradition and fail to understand the true power of it. »Truth,« he writes, »is in the ever changing experiences of the community. For the traditional Indian to fail to appreciate this aspect of his own heritage is the saddest of heresies. It means that the Indian has unwittingly fallen into the trap of western religion« (Deloria 1999: 42).[5]

The path of struggle for the Indigenous academic through intellectual sovereignty is then mired in faulty footfalls. It appears that one is always in danger of succumbing to the false consciousness of Western individualism, as Deloria describes it, but also in danger of reifying the concepts of culture and nation to the point of losing the individual critical lens that makes one an intellectual in the first place. What appears to be a tension between the individual and the group is in fact not a tension at all. This non-binary (non-mutually exclusive) dualistic intertwining (comparable to the Yin and Yang of Chinese philosophy) of the individual and collective, of the particular and general is part of the very nature of the universe and goes to the very heart of being human. The being or spirit of a human is both a kind of individual essence and a kind of universality. In the Lakota language, we see it in the terms »nagi« or »nagila« (spirit or little spirit) and »nagi tanka« (big spirit). Human beings have two sides: one is very small and very specific (our own individual spirit), while the other is very big and in a sense universal (the intertwining of our own spirit with the big spirit). Thus, what seems like a tension between the individual and the group, the particular and the general, is really just a feature of reality and of human beings in particular and so ought to be a feature of any Indigenous intellectual enterprise and not something such an enterprise should seek to avoid in the first place.

[5] V. Deloria, Jr., »Religion and Revolution Among American Indians,« in *idem*, *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America*, New York: Routledge, 1999 [1974].

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In Native American philosophy as well as in Native storytelling and ceremony, we are always working back and forth between those two sides, trying to find a balance for health, for harmony, or for meaning. Perhaps intellectual sovereignty could be thought of then as a way of *being yourself in the way that you know how*. This combines both the being of our spirit's human journey but also the teaching of our community and the respect, reciprocity, and kinship that Deloria worried would be absent from too individualistic of an intellectual enterprise. Native American philosophy then combines the original creative act of philosophy with the cultural teachings and stories as expressed in an Indigenous context. This provides Native philosophy with a cultural context through an Indigenous framework rather than through the often »otherizing« framework required in academic work on Indigenous peoples. In this way, Native philosophy also serves to exercise a larger constructive cultural sovereignty through the individual but beyond the individual as well.

Intellectual sovereignty, as articulated in this way, is expressed in the recently developed field of Native American philosophy in the Western philosophy academy. Intellectual sovereignty is not only a decolonizing methodology of Native American philosophers; it is a regulative ideal. Native American philosophy often uses the methodology of intellectual sovereignty in the manner of its thinking and presentation. As such, it operates with an attitude of respect for the self-determination of all other living creatures and seeks to develop, in Jack Forbes' words, »an attitude of profound respect for individuality and right to self-realization of all living creatures« (Forbes 1998: 12).

In addition to intellectual sovereignty, Native American philosophy operates around the following methodologies and principles of Native American philosophy:

1. Native American philosophy works with and tells stories.
2. Native American philosophy is original, innovative, creative, and active. Even basic human creation and creativity is on a continuum with creation and creativity on the most cosmic levels. Creation is nothing more than the manifestation of power, movement, and energy. Creation, whether from a Creator or human act of creation, follows the same form in all instances (Cajete 1999).[6]

[6] G. Cajete, *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*, Santa Fe: Clear Light, 1999.

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3. Native American philosophy shows but does not present arguments per se. It opens up a space for a reader/listener to find meaning and understanding but does not make or declare truth or meaning for them. (This is another way of putting the regulative ideal of intellectual sovereignty as described by Forbes).
4. Native American philosophy reads and speaks language, even the English language, in the manner of Indigenous languages: dynamic with multiple layers of meaning for every word. Action, process, and transformation shape the layers of meaning in any given word.
5. Native American philosophy understands thinking, even supposedly separate academic disciplines such as philosophy, as intertwined with broader cultural practices and narratives. Thus it does not focus solely on the words and arguments of specialized academics but examines just as much the so-called »common« narratives and practices. This thinking/practice hybrid is also used as a regulative ideal of Native American philosophy.
6. Native American philosophy focuses on meaning and understanding (more aspects of movement and transformation in an Indigenous context) rather than on truth or proof.
7. Native American philosophy focuses on all aspects of human understanding in the circle of the four directions (example of the four directions in relation to human beings: the heart, mind, body, and spirit), and views understanding as both a momentary aspect of this circle and a never-ending movement of the circle itself. Knowing and understanding are never-ending dialectics of the four directions dynamic.
8. Native American philosophy adapts stories and presentations to the listener. It purposefully transforms ideas into those that can best be understood and most easily related to by the listener.

In what follows I will highlight four important texts of Native American philosophy published between 2001 and 2010, starting with *Power and Place: Indian Education in America.* Deloria and Wildcat offer their 2001 *Power and Place* as a »declaration of American Indian intellectual sovereignty and self-determination« (Deloria, and Wildcat 2000: ii).[7] So instead of operating on the model of »sensitizing« educa-

[7] V. Deloria, Jr., and D. R. Wildcat, *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*, Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2001.

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tors and administrators to the »plight« and »special needs« of Indian students, Deloria and Wildcat recognize the so-called »problem« of Indian education as itself »an affirmation – a living testimony to the resilience of American Indian cultures« *(ibid.)*. On that basis, they envision a »truly American Indian« or indigenized education paradigm grounded in the concepts of power and place *(ibid.)*. Power is the »living energy that inhabits and/or composes the universe,« while place is the »relationship of things to each other.« Power is both individuating as well as unifying. As the authors observe, power both »moves us as human beings« and »inhabits or composes« »all of the connections or relations that form the immediate environment« (*ibid.:* 22–23). Place is more than geographic; it is the relational entanglement of all things that produces an epistemology of »intimate knowing relationships« (*ibid.:* 2).

The life-force energy or spirit that things contain and the relational intertwining of their existence »produce personality« (*ibid.:* 23). Knowing and being are thus intimately personal, not only for human beings but for all the things that human beings are in relation to and might have knowledge of. Personality, as a basic substratum of knowing, indicates an epistemology that is personal, moral, and particular. Indigenous education that is based on intimate, personal, and moral relationships creates knowledge that is grounded in »respect, not of orthodoxy,« »the completion of relationships,« and »appropriateness« (*ibid.:* 21–24). The authors finally claim that if we »carry the message« that the universe is »personal« and »spiritual« rather than »of matter that has accidentally produced personality« we are capable of producing personalized knowledge that is »more realistic« as well as sustainable (*ibid.:* 28).

In *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, the second of the important texts I will highlight, Anne Waters edits a landmark volume of essays on American Indian philosophy.[8] One unique feature of this collection is that the authors are American Indian and many have PhDs in philosophy. This achievement marks a significant point of transformation in the continual evolution of Native American intellectual sovereignty. The twenty-two essays cover a wide range of subtopics – American Indians and philosophy, epistemology and science,

[8] A. Waters (ed.), *American Indian Thought: Philosophical Essays*, Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

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math and logic, metaphysics and phenomenology, ethics and respect, social and political philosophy, and esthetics. This ambitious collection offers a distinctive examination of the »Indian thought-world,« where the goal of the collection is to articulate »a different way of looking at and being in the world.« Authors present this difference by contrasting Western philosophy, which is seen as abstract, anthropocentric, binary, dualistic, incomplete, and »I-centered« with Native philosophy, which is seen as holistic, contextualized, relational, personal, concrete, and »We-centered« (Waters 2004: xv). Vine Deloria, Jr. in the first essay, »Philosophy and Tribal Peoples,« raises important questions about the possible relationship between these »two worlds.« In line with the worries Deloria has raised previously, he is concerned with the manner by which »Indian thought« and »Indian identity« will be related. He ponders the fact that as »American Indians […] request entrance into this professional field, the vast majority will have virtually no experiences of the old traditional kind. The majority of them will begin in the same place as non-Indians wishing to write on American Indian philosophy. The difference will be in the degree to which Indians take their own traditions seriously and literally« (*ibid.:* 3–4).

The authors of *American Indian Thought* examine and complicate this relationship between Indian thought and Indian identity. The sometimes essentialist-seeming dichotomy between Western and Indian thought-worlds actually serves to enhance the power of this work by raising provocative questions for Western philosophers and students of philosophy as well as American Indians and students of Indigenous intellectual sovereignty. V. F. Cordova, for example, articulates the complexity of the interdependence of »I« and »We.« Basing morality in an »I« of false-consciousness individualism creates the necessity of externalizing morality in order to deter problematic individual human behavior; while basing morality in a dynamic »We« that understands the individual through a non-binary dualistic intertwining with the community internalizes proper modes of conduct in appropriate and respectful relationships (*ibid.:* 173–181).

In total, this collection creates, for the first time, a critical as well as comprehensive dialogue between Western and Indian philosophies. It transforms the classic relationship between the two and marks a turning point in Indigenous intellectual sovereignty by analyzing Western philosophy through the lens of a Native worldview.

Where Vine Deloria Jr. is considered the grandfather of Native

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American philosophy, Viola Cordova should be considered its grandmother. As recently as 1990, there had never been a Native American to receive a PhD in philosophy. Cordova became the first in the early nineties. I met her in the late nineties when I was a philosophy PhD student. She mentored and inspired my philosophical thinking through endless hours of conversation until her untimely passing in 2002.

In her way too short philosophical career, Cordova did not publish extensively or teach in one place for more than three years because she did not want to become »stale« and come to embrace the »arcane rules of academic life, publishing just to publish, teaching just to teach« (Moore et al. 2007: xiii). *How It Is*, the third important work of Native American philosophy I will highlight, is a posthumous monograph brilliantly stitched together by Kathleen Moore, et al. from Cordova's unpublished work.[9] Cordova organizes her thinking around three fundamental questions that any philosophy (Western, Native or otherwise) has to address: »1. What is the world? 2. What is a human being? 3. What is the role of a human being in the world?« (*ibid.:* 83) Regarding the world, she tackles issues of origins, the relationship of matter and spirit, time, and the role of language and culture in shaping human understanding of and being in the world. Human beings, she argues in a Native context, are deeply relational, where the individual and the group are essentially intertwined. The relational intertwining of human beings and human communities is also to the land, to place, and in a particular ecological niche. The nature of human beings and human communities then gives rise to particular moral responsibilities. »I am good,« she argues, »in order to maintain« the proper relationship with my community (*ibid.:* 184). »I must be mindful of what I do to my environment,« she further claims, »because I am dependent upon it« *(ibid.)*. In all, this seminal work of Native philosophy has a storytelling and poetic power that reaches well beyond traditional philosophical argumentation. In the book's Coda, Cordova writes, »[a]ll of the descriptions I have mentioned, of the Universe, of the Sacred, of human beings, have relevance in our daily lives.« Cordova's words serve not only to make us think but to help us find our path toward being better human beings, being better relatives« (*ibid.:* 231).

In *The Dance of Person and Place*, the fourth and most recent text

[9] K. D. Moore, J. Peters, T. Jolola, and A. Lacey (eds.), *How It is: the Native American Philosophy of V. F. Cordova*, Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 2007.

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of Native American philosophy I will highlight, Thomas Norton-Smith attempts to demonstrate the legitimacy of an American Indian world version.[10] Using resources from Nelson Goodman's constructivist philosophy, he argues that »Western and American Indian world versions make equally legitimate, actual worlds« (Norton-Smith 2010: 1). Norton-Smith borrows Goodman's view that »there is a plurality of internally consistent, equally privileged, well-made actual worlds constructed through the use of very special symbol systems – true or right-world versions« (*ibid.:* 23). A version is true, according to Goodman, »when it offends no unyielding beliefs and none of its own precepts. Among beliefs unyielding at a given time may be long-lived reflections of recent observation, and other convictions and prejudices ingrained with varying degrees of firmness« (*ibid.:* 33). Truth, in Goodman's sense, then is a kind of acceptability in terms of beliefs and precepts already given or what Goodman calls »ultimate acceptability« *(ibid.)*.

Goodman then acknowledges – without knowing or understanding – the cultural bias of his concept of truth through the manner in which ingrained convictions and prejudices form the backdrop for what is a well-made actual world. Goodman shows a lack of awareness of this bias when he uses a Native story as an example of how false world versions yield »ill-made,« »unmade,« or »impossible« worlds (*ibid.:* 43). Norton-Smith takes this aspect of Goodman's philosophy to task on many fronts. One of them is the concept of valid deduction, which is »among the most explicit and clear cut standards of rightness we have anywhere,« according to Goodman. Norton-Smith, in turn, points out that »valid deduction within classical two-valued semantics as a criterion for acceptability of a version biases Goodman's account against Native versions and worlds« (*ibid.:* 44). Trading on Anne Water's essay »Language Matters: Nondiscrete, Nonbinary Dualism« in *American Indian Thought*, Norton-Smith articulates the nonbinary, complementary dualistic logics of Indigenous thought. These logics are nonbinary in denying the case that »for any proposition *p*, either *p* is true or *not-p* is true, but not both,« and denying the case that »for any object *o* and property *p*, either *o* has *p* or *o* has *non-p*, but not both« and complementary in holding that »it may be the case that something is both *p*

[10] T. Norton-Smith, *The Dance of Person and Place: One Interpretation of American Indian Philosophy,* Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010.

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and *not-p* at the same time and in the same sense, without one excluding the other« *(ibid.)*.

Chapters 4 through 7 of *The Dance of Person and Place* articulate four additional aspects of Native world-ordering that must be accounted for in a larger sense of true world-versions and non-biased ultimate acceptability: relatedness, an expansive concept of persons, semantic potency of performance, and circularity. The first, relatedness as a world-ordering principle, frames knowing as a performance and the truth of a performance as »respectful success in achieving a goal« (*ibid.:* 64). This world version »constructs a moral universe that is interconnected and dynamic, a world in whose creation human beings participate through their thoughts, actions, and ceremonies« (*ibid.:* 75). Verification of knowing as performance occurs through the »direct experience« of respectful success (*ibid.:* 69). Verification on this account is »inclusive,« where Goodman's »Western method is exclusionary« *(ibid.)*. »[N]o experience – even the uniquely personal or mysteriously anomalous –,« says Norton-Smith, »is discarded in formulating [an American Indian] understanding of the world« *(ibid.)*. »[V]isions, dreams, intuitions, and other sorts of experiences that transcend the merely objective and replicable,« Norton-Smith points out, »can count as genuine evidence« in a Native world version *(ibid.)*.

The second Native world-ordering principle, an expansive concept of persons, is framed by the story of Coyote, Iktome (the Spider), and Iya (the Rock). In the story, Coyote gives Iya his thick woolen blanket only to steal it back after he realizes that he is cold without it. Iya chases Coyote down and rolls over the now flattened Coyote, giving the final words of the story »what is given is given« (*ibid.:* 82–83). Following Ross Poole's analysis of the Western history of the concept of personhood, which reaches the conclusion that personhood is not an essential feature of being human (Poole 1996)[11], Norton-Smith claims that in a Native world version, human beings are not essentially persons, but rather spirits in human form who can become persons »by virtue of their participation in social and moral relationships with other persons« (*ibid.:* 86). »[M]oral agency,« he claims, »is at the core of the Indian conception of personhood,« which makes Coyote, Iktome (the Spider), and Iya (the Rock) all persons in a Native world-version *(ibid.)*.

[11] R. Poole, ›On Being a Person,‹ *Australian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 74, No. 1, 1996, pp. 38–56.

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The third Native world-ordering principle, the semantic potency of performance, shows that beyond »Goodman's constructivist view that linguistic versions of the world […] make worlds by identifying, categorizing, and ordering sense experience, […] in American Indian traditions the performance of other sorts of unwritten symbols becomes the principal vehicle of meaning and world-constructing process« (*ibid.:* 97–98). Black Elk's sacred vision haunts him until he is able to perform that vision as a ceremony. As Black Elk states, »a man who has a vision is not able to use the power of it until after he has performed the vision on earth for the people to see« (*ibid.*: 99). »Symbols, like Black Elk's vision,« Norton-Smith claims, »are largely impotent until Black Elk performs with them in the ceremony« (*ibid.*: 116). The vision performance, like acts of prayer, storytelling, singing, dancing, naming ceremonies, and gifting ceremonies, categorize, order, and even transform, on Norton-Smith's articulation of Native world-ordering. Performance even creates identity in a Native world version as Creek medicine man John Proctor says »[i]f you come to the stomp ground for four years, take the medicines and dance the dances, then you are Creek« (*ibid.*: 94).

The final Native world-ordering principle of circularity frames Indian world versions in contrast to the linear ordering principle that frames Western ones. These different world ordering principles account for, on Norton-Smith's view, »the Western preoccupation with time, events, and history« against »the Native focus on space, place, and nature« (*ibid.*: 122). For example, Norton-Smith writes: »Indians consider their places to be of greatest significance, whereas Westerners find meaning in the progression of events over time« (*ibid.:* 120). This gives rise to the conflict between »the *sacred event* in Western religion and the *sacred place* in Indian religious traditions« (*ibid.:* 121). The manner in which a Native world version is constructed around space and time arises from the circular world-ordering framework. Circularity orders the temporal, spatial, communal, social, epistemic, and religious world of Indian people. Knowledge is created and maintained through repetition. Ceremonial power is created and maintained by repetition. Even sacred places, »where Native people are obligated to return again and again at specific times to perform ceremonies of gratitude and renewal for the good of human and non-human persons alike are ordered by temporal and spatial circularity« (*ibid.*: 138).

The Dance of Person and Place successfully demonstrates that

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Western and Native world versions are equal but it also unwittingly seems to show that a Native world version outstrips a Western one. Native world-ordering as articulated by Norton-Smith can account for a Western world version as well-made in a Goodmanian constructivism but a Western world version cannot account for a Native world version as well-made. Perhaps Norton-Smith merely understates the conclusion of his demonstration, but it appears more likely that his lack of commentary on the greater limitations of a Western world-ordering arise from his non-critical embracing of the linguistic constructivism of Goodman. Norton-Smith's insistence that there is no real world but only the worlds we construct through language and symbolic acts creates a dualistic binary between independently real and constructed or made worlds. It appears then that a Native world version ultimately outstrips the very nature of the linguistic and constructivist variety of world-making that Norton-Smith trades upon. To speak of a way that the world is, even in negative terms as not real but constructed, is to stand in conflict with the Native world version that Norton-Smith attempts to articulate. To speak of a mind or human independent world in contrast to a humanly made or constructed world is to force a dichotomy between humans and the world, between language and being that only functions in a Western world version and conflicts with the possible Native world version Norton-Smith is trying to articulate.

Unless we can understand Norton-Smith's linguistic constructivism in terms of circularity, relationality, nonbinary dualism, and so on, we would be forced to conclude that the content of this book outstrips and in some ways contrasts the form. This contrast can be instructive, however, in indicating that the very notion of a linguistic world-making process cannot account for the complexity and dynamicity of an American Indian world. For example, Norton-Smith describes the Lakota pipe used by Black Elk as a symbol that is »largely impotent until it is performed.« Norton-Smith articulates the power of performing the vision or of praying with the pipe, but the limitations of speaking of these performances as symbols undermines the meaning of their power (*ibid.*: 98). When I put the pipe bowl and stem together and begin to sing the pipe-filling song and place the sweetgrass smudged tobacco into the bowl, this is not a symbol. It does not represent; it creates. This creation literally opens a conduit of power or energy between the spirit world and material world. The same is the case of the performance of Black Elk's vision. In order to bring the power of Black

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Elk's vision from the invisible energy flowing all around and through us (that we call the spirit world) into the material world, it must be performed. It must be made manifest, transformed from the unmanifested vision into the manifested action. This performance, like connecting the bowl and stem of the pipe, opens a conduit of power between the spirit world (the unmanifested) and material world (the manifested). To limit the creative power of these performances to the concept of a symbol is to cripple our understanding of the Native world.

Overall, much of the criticisms of these four texts arise from misapprehension of the nature of the methodologies used. If one is looking for argument and proof as expected in a Western academic context, then one might well criticize storytelling and circularity. If one is looking for clear and literal explanation, one might then criticize metaphor and indirectness. Once the nature of the methodologies is known, it makes these criticisms seem out of place, however. It appears as nothing more that criticizing one for having a different approach. The ways that these criticisms of methodology rather than of content hide themselves in what seems like common sense content-criticism is illuminating. One such criticism of these works is that they essentialize and overgeneralize Native and Western thought. This criticism is quite common and seems like common sense. On reflection, it should seem clear that the concepts of essence in a metaphysical sense and generalization in an epistemological sense are quite meaningless in the context of the Native methodologies articulated. Simply put, there seems to be little meaning to the charge of essentialism or overgeneralization in (as only one small piece of the Native methodology) a nonbinary dualistic logic where what is true and what is false and what is specific and what is general (the human being and the community, for example) are dualistically intertwined and so searching for knowledge is finding meaning or balance between the two sides or »two-faces« of »truth« as Black Elk puts it (Niehardt 1932: 149).[12]

–Brian Yazzie Burkhart, California State University, Northridge, California, USA

[12] J. G. Niehardt, *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life Story of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux*, New York: William Morrow and Company, 1932.

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    A. Sen, ›Democracy as a Universal Value,‹ *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 10, No. 3, 1999, pp. 3–17.

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    H. Rosemont Jr., »Against Relativism,« in G. J. Larson, and E. Deutsch (eds.), *Interpreting across Boundaries: New Essays in Comparative Philosophy*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988, pp. 36–63.

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