On the Theory and Practice of Intercultural Philosophy

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In the following I will discuss the structure, the topic and the tasks of intercultural philosophy which I would like to name a “science of peace”. It is subject to the polyhistorical dialogue and as a matter of principle declines feudal structures of communication. Two contradictory points of view are introduced in the context of the debate on the origin of philosophy: whereas the one tendency thinks of philosophy as “exclusively” Greek-European and regards the rise of other sciences only connected to that the other tendency holds the opinion that philosophy is anyhow (“per se”) intercultural and therefore not “only” Greek, but “also” Greek. I plead for a theoretical and practical process of decentralization and differentiation which amounts to conceive an “intercultural historiography of philosophy”. Hereby the intercultural philosophy does not present a new discipline besides the traditional philosophy; it rather aims at being its corrective and its elaboration. Accordingly, the analysis of social, political and communicative phenomena presents a central domain of the intercultural philosophy. It gives the formulations of questions and problems priority over philosophical traditions and aims at combining different thinking traditions each of them with their “own” formulations of questions and possible solutions as “equal” parts of discourse in order to start a polyhistorical dialogue at the same eye level.

Introduction

Intercultural philosophy, as a science of peace, is a thought-provoking occupation with both theoretical practical aspects based on dialogic principles and built on a foundation of empirical hermeneutic methods. Intercultural philosophy turns an eye outwards in all directions in the process of considering and constructing inner objectives. It attempts to facilitate a common level of respect between representatives of various worldviews, cultures, religions, philosophies and scientific conceptions. Furthermore, it strives to enable a mutually beneficial dialogue between these representatives
without the violence of a particular structure. It is about a new culture of philosophising.

Several questions that are inseparable from this new culture arise naturally: What obstacles may hinder a peaceful meeting and constructive exchange between cultures, systems of thought, and scientific concepts, and how are they constituted? On what do these obstacles depend? Who constructs or has constructed them and to what purpose? How may they be recognized and possibly overcome? With these questions, intercultural philosophy grants the issue at hand precedence over philosophical tradition; it is best understood as an unending process not centred on obtaining a specific result in the consciousness of a permanently “positionlessness of philosophy”.

This forces the realisation that philosophers are, willingly or unwillingly, fused to the values and self-conceptions of their homelands; philosophies are influenced by the zeitgeist, and the place of their conception, but nonetheless, the act of philosophy has been, is, and will continue to be possible anywhere and at any time.

It is a historically influential and powerfully present prejudice that only the Greek-European tradition has cleared the way for ‘philosophy’ and ‘science’, responsible for lending the human intellect a critical and rational dimension. This perspective, however, means one “thinks Greek, even if [one] does not realize it” (Jaqueline de Romilly). This connection between the birth of philosophy and science and Greece conjures images of a Chinese proverb of a well-dwelling frog whose view of the world is reified and made absolute. This is traditional philosophy.

The foundations of European philosophy and science undeniably reach back to Greek tradition, which adopted many elements of other non-European traditions. However, to allow this culture a leading position over other traditions represents a one-sided view that assumes an exclusively European standpoint universalized and indoctrinated through dominance in power. The interpretation of philosophy as essentialist, or the will to proclaim its relevance only under certain conditions, contradicts the core of philosophic reflection itself. For this reason, Ninian Smart uses “‘philosophies’ in the

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1 Power is a central issue in any form of intercultural orientation which cannot adequately be discussed within the context of this paper.
plural [...] because a number of Western philosophers use the singular only to refer to a particular kind of Western philosophy.”

**Questioning the Home of Philosophy**

In view of this basic tenet, there no more exists a pure philosophy of the Own than a pure philosophy of the Other, as philosophy wanders numerous routes and carries various names. Therefore the regulative unity of a “philosophia perennis” is compatible with the variety of its concrete cultural forms. It is the “philosophia perennis, which produces a commonality through which even those furthest from one another are connected – the Chinese with the countries of the Occident, the philosophers of 2500 years ago with those of the present.” Thus, everything is connected with everything else: this philosophy does not take the form of a systematic stock of knowledge that holds validity for all and can necessarily be understood. Regardless of the context, one who believes that “philosophic truth simply exists and needs but to be learned will never come by philosophy.”

The basic concept of philosophy assumes the idea of philosophia perennis. Acceptance of this premise is the key to universal, peace-oriented communication, dependant on a dialogic conceptualisation of a world history of philosophy. The construction and perception of history play an intrinsic role in the formation of personal, cultural and social identity. Likewise, every historical process is a factor of philosophia perennis, around which “all philosophies revolve yet which none possesses; in which every truly philosophising person shares and yet which cannot form a space of thought universally valid and singularly true.” This means that the philosophia perennis holds no prejudices, gives favour to no place, has no tradition, and speaks no native language. Philosophy is the “way in which one

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becomes aware of the existence of the world and of the Self, and the manner in which, with this awareness, one lives simultaneously in both. Philosophy is as old as mankind.”

Let the following story serve as an example: an East-Indian, a Chinese, a Greek and an Arab were caught up in an argument over what kind of dessert should accompany their cheese. The East-Indian wanted to buy angur, while the Chinese pútáo; the Greek insisted they purchase stafil, whereas the Arab refused to be without inab. Because the four could not understand each other, they went to a translator who spoke all four languages. They asked the translator to buy angur, pútáo, stafil, and inab. When the translator returned each was satisfied, for they had all received their wish: a bunch of grapes. Clearly, they now realized that grapes bear a different name in each of the four languages.

When the four consider the concept of philosophy, they likewise arrive at four different expressions for it, though these nevertheless share a common core meaning. In many cases, reliance on translation becomes inevitable when working in a universal historical manner, since no one speaks every language in which contributions to philosophy have been or are being made. Philosophical thinking always precedes the concept of philosophy itself: it is not [only] possible, for example, to “speak of mathematics where a technical term has been coined for it.”

Controversies in Antiquity
There is a long tradition – tracing back to ‘European antiquity’ – surrounding the question of the birthplace of philosophy. The Syrian satirist Lucian (c.120-180 CE) considers the origin, content, and concept of philosophy in his dialogue The Runaways. Lucian emphasises non-European philosophies in this work, placing the birthplace of philosophy in Persia and India.

Jupiter, Mars, Hercules, Philosophy, Orpheus, the runaway slaves and their masters as well as a married couple all find their voice here. Lucian allows Philosophy to speak for herself: “My first flight was not directed towards Greece. I thought it best to begin with the hardest part of my task, which I took to be the instruction

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9  Jaspers, Weltgeschichte der Philosophie, p. 105.
10  Translator’s addition.
of the barbarians. With the Greeks I anticipated no difficulty; I had supposed that they would accept my yoke without hesitation. First, then, I went to the Indians, the mightiest nation upon earth. I had little trouble in persuading them to descend from their elephants and follow me. The Brahmins, who dwell between Oxydracae and the country of the Nechrei, are mine to a man: they live according to my laws, and are respected by all their neighbours; and the manner of their death is truly wonderful.”12 In a later visit to the Greeks, Philosophy is “received [...] without enthusiasm”13 except among seven men, whom she is able to win as “companions and disciples”. This is because the Sophists have flourished there, “men who had but little of my spirit, yet were not wholly alien to me. [...] They clung not entirely to ignorance, but theirs was not the steady eye that could meet the gaze of Philosophy; and if at moments my semblance flashed phantom-like across their dulled vision, they held that in that dim shadow they had seen all that was to be seen.”14

In contrast, the Greek historian Diogenes Laertius (c.200-300 CE) implicitly criticises Lucian, shifting the origin of philosophy to the Greeks. He wrote the Life and Opinions of Famous Philosophers, a well intact work in which many of the philosophers of antiquity are represented. The first volume of Diogenes discusses the content and origin of the concept of ‘philosophy’, claiming that its development did not begin, as some claimed, in India or Persia. While the Persians had their magicians, the Babylonians and Assyrians their Chaldeans, and the Indians their Gymnosophists, it is ignorant, he explains, to “impute to the barbarians the merits of the Greeks, from whom not only all philosophy, but even the whole human race in reality originated.”15

New Directions: The 17th and 18th Centuries

Immanuel Kant divided philosophy into a School concept and a World concept, and sees the latter – *in sensu cosmico* – as the science of the “highest maxims of the use of our reason.” His moral philosophy and the fundamental categories laid out in his essay “Perpetual Peace” treat the human as a whole, but are proposed out of a certain tradition which, in many ways, reifies itself. Kant attributes a “lesser talent” to non-European peoples and his anthropological writings seem to claim that ‘oriental nations will never improve themselves’. Other works suggest that the “European alone has found the secret of decorating with so many flowers the sensual charm of a mighty inclination and of interlacing it with so much morality [...]. The inhabitant of the Orient is of a very false taste in this respect [...] since he has no concept of the morally beautiful.”

Kant’s own Categorical Imperative proves diametric in contrast, calling upon people to behave as if the maxims of their actions might become generally binding, yet viewing the “perfection” of humankind as achieved only in the “temperate zone” which is Europe.

In contrast to the later prevailing spirit of the 18th and 19th centuries, where Western colonial rulers strove towards unity and “total knowledge”, the late 17th century saw the spread of imminent criticism of this school of thought. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), Christian Wolff (1679-1754), Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1775-1854) and Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) are among those who sought out new directions.

Leibniz was convinced that insights of the Chinese could be adopted and employed to great gain in European ethics and politics. The Chinese concept of reason seemed to Leibniz very similar to the

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European concept.21 Wolff, too, worked with Chinese philosophy and found it to be of significance. He treated it neither “neutraly” nor “historically removed, but rather attempted to work with the basic ideas from the classic works using his own criteria, arranging and assessing them and making them fertile for his own considerations.”22

Schelling diverges from the assumption that philosophy exists only in Germany and not in the rest of the world. He points out the variety of mindsets that exist, explaining that “the truly general philosophy... [cannot] be the property of a single nation” and that “as long as any philosophy does not exceed the confines of a single people, it can be confidently assumed that it is not the true one, though it may be on the path to becoming so.”23 The Indian-Buddhist view of life and the world played an important role in the philosophy of Schopenhauer, who became interested in Eastern world views at a young age. His work The World as Will and Representation begins with a statement of truth taken from Buddhism: “The world is my representation”.24 This idea is, in comparison with later generations, quite visionary indeed.

**Centrism in the 19th and early 20th Centuries**

Jochen Hörisch criticises an expansive Eurocentrism, remarking that central Europe has been striving “since the 19th century toward the eradication of every kind of pluralism. [...] Out of the many perspectives is made one perspective, out of the many histories one (world) history, out of the many truths, one truth, out of the many ideas (and letters) one idea. Monotheism triumphs in the European 19th century on non-religious terrain.”25

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24 Although Schopenhauer takes Indian philosophy seriously, his image of Indian metaphysics, ethics and religion must be critically discussed. See R. A. Mall, „Wie indisch ist das Indienbild Schopenhauers?“, in: *Schopenhauer-Jahrbuch*. Vol 76. Würzburg 1955, pp. 151-172.
A good example for this triumph is Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), who places the tertium comparationis exclusively in the Greco-European philosophical tradition. For Hegel, historical thinking, or even historical awareness is a monopoly of the West. Regarding Africa, he comments: “for us, Africa is faceless and un receptive, still in the clutches of a natural Spirit just needing to be brought to the threshold of world history.”

According to Hegel, the nature of an African is as impossible to understand as the soul of a dog.

Hegel, in keeping with the teleological theory of history, accuses Chinese philosophers of a “lack of imagination”, while Indians seem to have too much; the theocratic Monarchy of the ancient Persians is at least granted a place between the Asian and the Western worlds. In Egypt, he claims, philosophy wanders a few steps further, an internal development towards the free life it lives among the Greeks. With the Greeks, Hegel posits, philosophical thought truly begins, if only in an infantile state: “Among the Greeks we may feel at once at home, since we are at the very foundation of thought.”

For Hegel, “real philosophy [begins] in the Occident. The freedom of self-awareness blossoms in the West, while natural awareness wilts and the spirit is plowed under. Contrary to the Orient, the individual all but disappears; it is as if light in the West becomes the lightening of thought which strikes itself and creates thereby its own world.”

In the euphoria of the so-called successes in the age of colonialism and missionarism, and dependant on the inner logic of his system, Hegel goes so far as to state: “With the entrance of Christian principles, the world has become ripe for philosophy. The Earth, which Europeans know is round, has been traversed by our ships; what we have not yet subjugated is either destined still to be conquered or else not worth the effort.”

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) also assume the purity of European philosophy and science. Husserl sees “something unique” about Europe, “which all other human groups perceive about us as that which, beyond the perspective of usefulness, motivates them, despite an unbroken will to philosophic self-preservation, to Europeanize themselves [...]. I suppose we feel (and in all vagueness there is good reason for this feeling) that an entelechy has been born into our European humanity which pervades the changing European character and lends the sense of an eternal guiding light to the development of an ideal form of life and being.”

Heidegger embraces this attitude and expounds: “For this reason, they [Europeans] are capable today of lending a particular influence all over the world to the history of mankind.” Heidegger’s view of the Greeks becomes questionable in light of the following report: “On a spring day in 1962 the tourist Martin Heidegger stands at a railing on the cruise ship Yugoslavia, looking at the coast of the island of Korfu [...]. But the philosopher is disappointed by what he sees: it does not correspond in any way with the description he has read in the sixth book of Homer’s Odyssey [...]. For a moment he doubts the authenticity of his impressions, seeing as ‘Goethe experienced for the first time in Sicily true closeness to the Greeks’. But then he decides not disembark after all.”

Alfred Holzbrecher sees in Heidegger’s refusal the „fear of the foreign and of the risk of learning“ and “having to question the coherence of a picture so well influenced by classical literature. It is the fear of having to admit to himself that the deception preceded the disappointment – the fear that our images of reality could prove to be constructed fictions that pull reality beyond the reach of our

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conception.” Holzbrecher also reminds us of a dialogue between Heidegger and a Japanese philosopher, whom he calls and treats as ‘Responder’ and ‘Thinker’, while Heidegger himself is the questioning ‘Philosopher’ who looks down upon his interlocutor. Heidegger’s views demonstrate how an intracultural problem becomes an intercultural one. On the one hand, Heidegger claims that “the West and Europe, and only these, are, in the innermost course of their history, originally ‘philosophical’”; at the same time he considers the “rescue or the destruction of Europe” and pledges to “save the European peoples from the Asians.”

Representatives of intercultural philosophy are unanimous that a poly-historical dialogue between various philosophical traditions becomes nonsensical when viewed in theoretical steps: “Europe is only one part of the world – even in terms of thought and intellect it is but a portion of the whole. A dialogue-oriented intercultural philosophy assumes that a priori universalism has been overcome, allowing Europe to remain European and Non-Europe to remain non-European.”

An Attempt at Balance
In the 20th century, it was Max Scheler (1874-1928), Helmuth Plessner (1892-1985) and Karl Jaspers (1883-1928) who, at various phases, attempted to supplant historical prejudices. While Scheler

speaks of an ‘age of balance’, Plessner places Europe’s success in abstaining from reifying its own system of values and categories. Here, Jaspers assumes an open form of philosophy.

**Karl Jaspers**

Jaspers, whose early works followed a Eurocentric philosophy, gradually came to the realization that “the idea of an approaching worldwide philosophy”\(^{40}\) was inevitable. According to Jaspers, people might converge and exchange ideas based on the variety of their origins.\(^{41}\) Jaspers’ is an existential philosophy that strives to awaken an awareness of the experience of humanness itself through universal communication. Philosophy is “everywhere that people become intellectually aware of their own existence.”\(^{42}\) Jaspers, in whose Philosophy of Thought the individual and the society are inseparably connected, calls for the practical involvement of common philosophy as a whole. The consequence of an ordered unification of philosophy, he posits, is a centristic approach that disallows the possibility of an open, comprehensive dialogue between philosophies, cultures, and religions while yet acknowledging their individual natures. Philosophy always seeks “to realize a universality, to preserve human receptiveness, and to emphasize simplicity, increasing its potency and highlighting its unfathomable nature all through the work of an individual.”\(^{43}\) This philosophy instinctively and constantly looks to expand its horizons: “The act of philosophy itself must instil order and structure according to a universal historical framework.”\(^{44}\)

From 1937 onward, Jaspers began to represent an implicitly intercultural philosophy. His central concern was to implement a pre-

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41 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), who often behaved and thought from a cosmopolitan standpoint, is a classic example of this philosophy in Europe. The ‘West-eastern Divan’ of 1819 expresses this positioning well. In it, Goethe wrote: ‘He who knows himself and others/ Here will also see/That the East and West, like brothers,/ Parted ne’er shall be’. (Translation by Edward Alfred Bowring, 2004.) The English colonial poet Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) claims in one famous ballad, however, that “East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet”.
viously suppressed communication among the various philosophical traditions. Jaspers, however, denies his dues for the *philosophia perennis* concept, explaining that a philosopher cannot work “on the basis of an authority granted him by an external power. He does so of his own responsibility before an authority that he has chosen himself, insofar as he finds it already exists in the philosophy of millennia.”45 For Jaspers it there is ‘no way around the world’, only ‘through the world’. Likewise there is no way ‘around history’, only ‘through history’. The idea of a history of philosophy attempts to target that “eternal philosophy which historically creates its organs, clothing and tools as an internally coherent life, yet does not thrive with them.”46 Jaspers was the first to devise the open concept of a ‘world history of philosophy’ that reached beyond the philosophical issues of the West. This offers us a passable path to a new intercultural historiography of philosophy that seems to make the communication between philosophies possible. A dialogic philosophy means for Jaspers constantly “working on the requisites that enable universal communication.”47

Jaspers’ philosophy, in contrast to science, which first takes an object to be examined and inquired as to its general properties, occupies itself with the ‘borderline situations’ through which the individual may experience him or herself as a uniquely independent being. A human being develops his or her own existence through communication with other human beings. This process of communication is endless – an expression of the historic nature of existence. Out of this open system Jaspers comes to the realization that we are moving “through the setting sun of European philosophy and through twilight of our time” toward the “sunrise of a world philosophy.”48

**Centric Behaviours in the Present**

In the 1970s Joachim Schickel conducted a broadcast series entitled ‘Philosophy in Germany’. It included a number of interviews with

philosophers, in particular Günther Patzig (1926-) and Carl Friedrich von Weizäcker (1912-2007), in which they were asked about the importance of non-European thought. According to Patzig, philosophy is “only conceivable as Western philosophy.” Patzig’s answer makes “Schickel’s question redundant in the same way as if someone responded to Kant’s question, ‘how are synthetic judgements possible a priori’ with the answer ‘they don’t even exist.’”

Weizäcker, too, ties his standard of comparison exclusively to the European tradition: “I think it is fair to say that I have yet to encounter philosophy as it has developed here and in Greece – it is a Greek invention – at all in East Asia and only in rudimentary form in India [...]. Their ideas, insofar as I have been able to assimilate them, seem to me the thoughts of very intelligent people who have interpreted what they have experienced, but it is not really philosophy in the sense of the word the way I learned it.” Schickel labels such judgements ‘Euro-centric’ or even ‘Euro-chauvinist’ and refutes the claim of an ‘unbridgeable gap’ between cultures and philosophies.

Pervading the Western world is the idea that it not only understands other nations better than they understand themselves (a mother-child discourse), but in fact that it knows what is good, better, or even best for them (the father-knows-best approach to a discourse of pity), and others’ needs are commonly assumed, although these have never been explicitly expressed (a romanticised discourse).

This represents an obstacle to dialogue that accompanies power, and has its roots in expansionist and Euro-centric European attitude. “We need a new foreign policy of culture,” challenges Wolf Lepenies. “Instead of teaching foreign societies, we need to be willing to learn from them.” He speaks of the “end of the intellectual ideology of arrogance” that many “European schools of thought” share. The colonialism of yesterday still weighs heavily on the shoulders of international relationships in the present; today’s democracy is an excuse that legitimizes wars and feudalist communication structures.

50 Mall, Philosophie im Vergleich der Kulturen, p. 163.
Interculturality is an orientation of thought and action that stems from the idea of unity in diversity – with this is meant the protection of one’s own cultural differences and the acceptance of those of other cultures. Cultures, in an intercultural context, are not balls that bang and bounce against one another but rather the threads of a fabric interwoven together, each with its own individual colour. They are free patterns of action and can demonstrate both commonalities and illuminating differences; the emphasis here is set on that which is shared, that which connects.

Interculturality considers the idea of purity in culture, religion, philosophy or scientific concepts to be fictional. It begins instead with the closeness of cultural tendencies, which inherently dictate the tertium comparationis in all areas of science for all comparisons and communications. Theories and teachings, in whose name much violence has been done, are based on this principle. Examples of these violent acts include colonialism, imperialism, expansionism, and the modern-day attempt to force democracy.

The real deficit in many comparative studies is, as we have seen, that they set the standard of comparison in a particular tradition. Quite often, the familiar is sought in the unfamiliar; one’s own cultural behaviours are put into hypostasis as a measuring stick – reified and compared at will with behaviours of foreign cultures. Any form of comparison that lacks intercultural orientation in theory and practice is categorically worthless.

Interculturality as the basis of intercultural communication presumes fourfold hermeneutics: how I consider myself, how I understand the Other, how the Other sees itself, and how the Other understands me. This kind of analogue hermeneutics proves not only a strict, essentialist structural identity theory, but also a radical incommensurability. Analogue hermeneutics connects the inevitable cultural ties between hermeneutics and universality. If we are truly

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54 See Mall, Philosophie im Vergleich der Kulturen, p. 1.
interested in an effective and result-oriented process of communication, then we must remain aware that disrespect of the Other in this process leads to competition against one another, which breaks down communication.

An additional task for interculturality is to encourage a change of paradigms and to expand perspectives in thought and in the autonomic reason of the individual: “Every attempt to overcome the destructive divide between peoples with organisational methods is doomed to failure in the end, if no greater transformation takes place in the depths of human existence than at the political or economic level.” Without establishing moral maxims, this cannot be achieved.

In transforming the paradigm, intracultural and intercultural structural depth, respectively, gain new meanings. While the former supplies important aspects demonstrating how the observable elements of each structure can be understood, the latter contains elements of all cultures, ensuring that dialogic understanding between cultures can find solid footing. The desire to understand and to be understood belong together in a dialogue. Expansionist Europe sought then and seeks still only to be understood. This is the source of a structural violence that exists in both theoretical and practical forms.

**Structures and Tasks**

Intercultural philosophy as a science of peace is not only applied and interdisciplinary, but also conflict-oriented. Conflicts often occur as expressions of non-reconciliation, but also as new forms of interaction between partners or contributions to discourses that previously had no contact, as well as lending strength to inner cohesion.

Intercultural philosophy is not a branch of traditional philosophy, but rather a correction and extension of the same. It is not about “attaining recognition for intercultural philosophy as a greater or smaller specialization of philosophy. The philosophical contribution to a renegotiation of the relationship between cultures is decisive for the status of philosophy today. This contribution concerns one of the main issues of our time – upon whose solution the possibility of a humane and dignified life greatly depends. It is for

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this reason that philosophy must either become intercultural, or else become nothing more than an academic preoccupation void of societal relevance.\textsuperscript{59}

Besides the call for intercultural communication, one of the central tasks of intercultural philosophy is the practical preoccupation with the collective intellectual culture of humanity. As such, it must discard \textit{a priori} and dogmatic claims and positions that ignore empiricism. The open perspective within the framework of intercultural philosophy seems especially able to contribute to the understanding and explanation of current political, ethnic and religious conflicts, and to offer possible solutions that take into consideration the entire palette of available research. Of particular importance is thereby the research on tolerance and communication, since relationships between cultures can only be peacefully cultivated if the dialogues between them are established and carried out on the basis of mutual tolerance.\textsuperscript{60}

This open approach requires primarily the recognition of equality for all voices as the necessary basis for a dialogue of tolerance. However, whether or not this condition is fulfilled can only be established within the dialogue itself. Intercultural orientation aims to pave the way for a ‘communicative Reason’ that precipitates into intercultural, inter-religious, inter-ideologic, inter-scientific and inter-political discourses. This begins with the presumption that there is more than just one technocratic (and often armed) Reason at whose mercy the people of a globalized world feel themselves increasingly directly and completely abandoned.

Intercultural philosophy adopts this intercultural Reason. The universality of philosophic, sociologic or ethnologic rationality exists in human aspirations to argue views, realizations and values. Culturally specific rationality is revealed concretely in the style of reasoning and showing evidence. Jaspers takes this a step further by equating Reason with a ‘borderless will to communicate’ and assuming that the priority is communication rather than consensus – a truth of both \textit{intra-} and \textit{interculturality}. According to this line of argumentation, a European empiricist must feel closer to a Chinese empiricist than a European rationalist.


Intercultural philosophy is based on the fact that other peoples also possess Reason and rationality. The answer to the oft-posed question ‘what’s the good of intercultural philosophy’ is found here. Accordingly, one of the tasks of intercultural philosophy is to question and relativize the self-erected claim of the universality of views from reductive philosophy in terms of the history of ideas, philosophy and development. In so doing, a dialogue may be conducted as equals between traditions of thought.

Intercultural philosophy rejects those reified and dogmatised philosophies and intellectual opinions, whether European or non-European. Mutatis mutandis is equally valid for the sciences, religion, and culture et cetera.

Intercultural philosophy approaches history as world history and the history of philosophy as world history of philosophy. The basic demands of intercultural philosophy are the decolonialization of concepts in the Humanities, which have historically been constructed in stages,61 and the secularization of European-western philosophy, which interacts on an internal level dialogically, yet conservatively and monologically on an external level. This one-dimensionality has hardly ever sought the foreign within itself, but rather its own self in the foreign, which necessarily has led to the exoticization of the foreign.

**Intercultural Philosophy and the Writing of History**

The history of philosophy is an integral part of philosophy in comparing cultures. As intercultural orientation, philosophy rejects a philosophical apartheid. Western historians have “long since been proud of their [...] ‘objectivity’”,62 according to Kwasi Wiredu. Their “subjectivity”, however, must constantly be considered, if we are to see through the tendency to represent historical events as an “area of intersubjectivity”.63 The content of the interpreted writing of history must be examined, as it is often “led by blank optimism”64 and does not heed the notion that “the history of philosophy [must] be universal.”65

The “world history of philosophy” is “only discernable in the entire capacity of humanity.” 66 The communicative nature of this universal awareness of history lies in the possibility for people to come into contact with and exhibit understanding for one another through the diversity of their origins. Therefore, the limits of our historical view are contained in our “understanding of the old philosophy.”67

Progress and development are not consistent traits of a specific historical philosophy. An interdisciplinary and intercultural comparative analysis of the logic, structure and function of historical awareness would indicate that the discussion of the singularity of, for example, historical European Thought is construed without sound knowledge of other historiographical traditions.68 Therefore, self-denial is for historians and philosophers the pre-requisite to the writing of a philosophical history, since no one can claim to know all the works of every philosopher and all the languages in which have been philosophized.

The philosophical writing of history cannot follow a fixed system or pattern. It is a communication illuminated by origins of manifold forms. It is possible to judge everything in existence as true or false, desirable or dispensable; however it is also possible to suspend all judgements, to view everything without criticism, and without adopting it as fact.69 A critical interpretation “can only remain true where a fear of historically great things remains unwavering. One does not need to categorize and discard the Other from one’s own pre-established standpoint [...], but rather to enter into the Other oneself, to reach the limits of discord in its immanent movement of thought.”70

Intercultural philosophy rejects the one-sided periodization of the history of philosophy. Its separation into categories of Antiquity, the Middle Ages, Newage, and Contemporary, and the evaluation of all philosophical traditions according to this same framework makes little sense in the intercultural context of the world history of philosophy, as it makes the entire development of philosophy in-

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70 Ibid.
separable from one particular place. There are different periods, which hardly find mention in European historiography, in all philosophical traditions.71 For this reason, it is not only important to set new emphasis in the history of philosophy, but also to create a new understanding and a new image of history in a new historiography.

A structural reflection on the history of science shows a comparative meaning and limitation of Thought on the one hand, and discusses empirical relationships on the other hand, which can be very different when comparing cultures. The consequence of this reflection is the revelation of yet hidden aspects of history, with an aim to bringing them into the ordinary consciousness. An objective reproduction depends upon the strength with which our own thoughts and reflections develop. This requires us to make available for re-evaluation the source of a view already written into the history of philosophy.

Seen from this perspective, neither philosophy nor the history of philosophy is finalized, but rather temporary and unending. We can, then, only “consider the reader” and not “the authors”,72 which is essentially why “conclusions in world history [...] must be constantly revised.”73 If these measures are ignored in the writing of history, there can be a winner and a loser only in theoretical terms: “That a champion has won carries the consequence that the championed not only loses his space to live, but also his voice.”74

Conclusion

While most philosophers of their time, in accordance with the diversities of colonial politics and philosophy, believed in the Europeanization of the world, Jaspers, as a pioneer of intercultural philosophy, makes it clear that philosophy is ever-present, even when it does not carry a name.75 Ways of thinking that consider themselves of immeasurable greatness, of universal quality, or even sacrosanct, inflict violence. In the absolute immanence with which humans desire to measure all things, thereby denying transcendence, Jaspers sees

72 Jaspers, Weltgeschichte der Philosophie, p. 175.
75 See Jaspers, Philosophie und die Welt, p. 9.
and rejects an anthropocentric perception. Likewise, he rejects a prescribed unity of philosophy, and with it the dissolution of the plural.

According to Jaspers, humankind has but an idea of philosophy. What it calls philosophy is based on “very many forms of philosophy”, just as it “calls a great number of different people philosophers.” It must be assumed, then, that it is impossible to define “philosophy and philosophers” exactly, though there is a range within which thinking is understood as philosophical.

Intercultural philosophy fulfils a double function. As a science of peace it also performs an informative, enlightening purpose: the emancipation of humankind from its conscious or unconscious lack of reflection about other peoples, cultures, religions, philosophies and scientific conceptions.

Intercultural philosophical efforts, however, remain ineffective if a structural asymmetry in power exists, where an argument made by the centre of power is seen to be the only one of validity, creating a powerless periphery. A poly-historical dialogue between various traditions can only come to fruition where the conditions of power symmetry are met. Intercultural philosophy is a science of peace based on a new culture of philosophy that seeks to transform historical and contemporary monologues into dialogue.

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76 See Jaspers, Der philosophische Glaube, p. 106.