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with the support of Niels Weidtmann

Philosophy of Interculturality

Fakultät für
**Kultur- und
Sozialwissen-
schaften**

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Identität – Differenz, Selbstheit – Fremdheit. Interkulturelle und globale Herausforderungen. Philosophische Annäherungen, ed. by G. Stenger/N. Weidtmann, „Studien zur Interkulturellen Philosophie“, Nordhausen 2014 (in press).

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„Phänomenologie als interkulturelle Herausforderung. Europäisches und ostasiatisches Denken im Zwiegespräch“, in: S. Stoller/G. Unterthurner (eds.), *Ent-*

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- „Fruchtbare Differenz’ – Dimensionen der Fremderfahrung“, in: S. Bartmann/O. Immel (eds.), *Das Vertraute und das Fremde. Differenzerfahrung und Fremdverstehen im Interkulturalitätsdiskurs*, Bielefeld 2012, pp. 135-156.
- „Interkulturalität und Intermundaneität“ (Japanese translation), preprint of the closing chapter by G. Stenger, *Philosophie der Interkulturalität*, Freiburg/München 2006, pp. 1009-1028, in: *Gendai-shiso/revue de la pensée d'aujourd'hui*, 5, 2011, vol. 38-7, Tokio 2011, pp. 68-85.
- „Gerechtigkeit unter der Maßgabe interkulturellen Denkens“, in: O. Neumaier/C. Sedmak/M. Zichy (eds.), *Philosophische Perspektiven. Beiträge zum VII. Internationalen Kongress der Österreichischen Gesellschaft für Philosophie* (Sektion: Justice – Gerechtigkeit), Frankfurt/Lancaster 2005, 112-117.
- „Fruchtbare Differenz’ als Leitfaden interkultureller Erfahrung – im Ausgang von Heidegger und Gadamer“, in: H. Vetter/M. Flatscher (eds.), *Hermeneutische Phänomenologie – phänomenologische Hermeneutik*, Frankfurt/M./Berlin/New York et al. 2005, pp. 190-209.
- „Zur Begegnung von ‚Ich’ und ‚Selbst’. Eine ethisch-phänomenologische Skizze“, in: R. Elberfeld i.a. (eds.), *Komparative Ethik*, Köln 2002, pp. 41-62.
- „Übersetzen übersetzen. Zur Phänomenologie des Übersetzens“, in: J. Renn/J. Straub, S. Shimada (eds.), *Übersetzung als Medium des Kulturverstehens und sozialer Integration*, Frankfurt/M. 2002, pp. 93-122.
- „Phänomenologische Methode und Interkulturelle Philosophie“, in: N. Schneider/R.A. Mall et al. (eds.), *Einheit und Vielfalt. Das Verstehen der Kulturen, Studien zur interkulturellen Philosophie*, vol. 9, Amsterdam/Atlanta 1998, pp. 167-182.
- „Interkulturelle Kommunikation. Diskussion – Dialog – Gespräch“, in: N. Schneider et al. (ed.), *Philosophie aus interkultureller Sicht, Studien zur interkulturellen Philosophie*, vol. 7, Amsterdam/Atlanta 1997, pp. 289-315.
- „Hermeneutik der Welt – Hermetik der Welten“ (German and Korean.), in: *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Journal of Korea Society for Hermeneutics), Korea 1997, 255-316.
- „Intercultural Thinking – A Question of Dimension and Dimensions“, in: G. D’Souza (ed.), *Interculturality of Philosophy and Religion*, Bangalore (India) 1996, pp. 58-72.
- „Interkulturelles Denken – Eine neue Herausforderung für die Philosophie“. Ein Diskussionsbericht, part I, in: *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, vol.103/half-vol. 1, 1996, pp. 91-103; part II, *ibid.*, vol.103/half-vol. 2, 1996, pp. 323-338.

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- „Postkoloniale Identitätssuche. Die innerkulturellen Krisen und der interkulturelle Dialog“, in: C. Hamann/C. Sieber (eds.), *Zur Aktualität des Postkolonialen*, Hildesheim 2002, pp. 109-124.
- „Der gemeinsame Weg der Kulturen zu größerer Wahrheit. Eine Einführung in das Denken von Kwasi Wiredu“, in: *Polylog. Zeitschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren*. Vol. 2, Wien 1998, pp. 6-11.

Chapter I: Introduction to the Question and Method

Unit 1: Introduction

1. Posing of the Question and Research Task

The Notion of
“Philosophy”

“Philosophy” is not a homogenous concept. With every philosophical conception the debate over what philosophy is and what she is all about is revived. And still, in the course of its history, basic features have emerged, establishing themselves as possible horizons and paths of thought to which one can take recourse and upon which one can rely with good reason. Even if philosophical thought has branched out into various disciplines with certain areas of inquiry, if schools have formed that in turn are rooted in certain traditions, and even if these often have nothing at all to say to each other, they all agree that philosophy reaches from the Greeks through the Christian and Arabian Middle Ages, through modernity to the present day. Regardless of what intellectual innovations and revolutions take place, the basis of categories and basic concepts has remained more or less steadfast. Philosophy is of Western, European, occidental origin and at the same time is considered universal, naming the foundation and fundamental prerequisite for human self-understanding and -communication. This consciousness remains upheld, with few exceptions, until the end of the 20th century, but is becoming ever more questionable, crumbling more and more with the onset of new challenges. On the one hand, universal validity, formal structure and the claim to truth are indispensable; on the other, their cultural belongingness, which support the content structure and contextually bound relativisation, cannot be ignored. The question, then, is how these two viewpoints stand to one another, whether they can be traced back to one another, whether and how they condition each other or whether they be not mutually exclusive.

Conflict between
the “Philosophies of
the Cultures”

Now this interwovenness takes on a quite special topicality under intercultural auspices: other, i.e. non-European cultures not only have their own philosophies, but with these claims are made that call the hegemony of Western thought critically into question. Connected herewith are not only philosophical and academic discourses on the relevancy and significance of each of the philosophies, e.g. wherein their variabilities and invariances consist, but therein can also be found signs of the other fully different understandings of life and existence, the entirely differently oriented modes of experience and horizons of thought. This hitherto more or less distinctly apparent difference between the great cultural circles – one need only consider the Asian, European, Arabic-Muslim and African cultures – holds an obvious trigger for conflict between the cultures that practically compels them for the sake of their own self-communication to a confrontation with each other culture. More closely considered, this critical confrontation presents itself as a conflict between the “philosophies of the cultures”. Yet what can then lay claim to validity, when each set of fundamental *philosophical* principles is in question?

With this diagnosis coincides a further interwovenness, namely that between theory and practice, which at once seems paradoxical: even if there is more interest in the scientific research of foreign cultures and other life-worlds than ever before in human history, a glance at the political reality appears to show the opposite. Throughout the world bitter wars are waged that stubbornly resist any rational comprehension, but that, in their social, religious, and ethnic connotations, refer back to their cultural background. If these bellicose conflicts are not simply to be dismissed as hegemonial, territorial and power-political practices of subjugation, although these certainly describe at least one aspect, one must allow the question from whence this hatred and this violence come. What leads men at the beginning of the 21st century to murder and wipe out members of other peoples, nations, religions and cultures for reasons of their belonging to the same? Simple explanations that the others be enemies and terrorists who lack elementary prerequisites of human cohabitation, being less advanced in human development, increase this hatred more than they promote a more peaceful future. Now an answer must be found to these incisive, paradoxical dilemmas, and it appears to me that this can only prove possible by philosophical means. Politics can only ever be an application of already presupposed structures of thought and experience, and hence can at best react to states and situations that are by no means decided or clarified in their foundations. For the sake of philosophical obligations and responsibilities, we cannot duck this task today, for, after all, basic philosophical research has always stood under the primacy of reason's self-clarification from the very beginning, and thus that of the self-illumination of real human existence. But philosophy would be too abbreviated, in a sense, if her concern were understood as a direct instance of application or as the mere formation of theories; according to her fundamental intentions, she has always contained more. By confronting certain entanglements, self-contradictions, dead ends or even mere insufficiencies or mere limitations with recourse to the history of her genesis and long development, she has been able to draft new models that promised orientation for the near future: orientation for philosophy herself with respect to her own foundations, as well as orientation vis-à-vis factual givens, i.e. reality.

Interwovenness
between Theory and
Practice

Interculturally motivated thought will therefore always have to move in the field of tension between of theory and practice, and in no case will be able to avoid opening philosophy beyond her encasement of theoretical drafts, constructs and exegeses. This thought, like the Greek of his own day, but also like the Indian and Chinese thinkers from time immemorial is concerned with the unseparatedness and the reciprocal insemination of life and thought, experience and reflection. Only *therein* do the cultures experience themselves as addressed, as taken seriously in their own right, and acknowledged as equal partners.

Intercultural
Thought in the Field
of Tension between
Theory and Practice

“Intercultural philosophy” cannot be classified according to the scheme familiar to us through such appellations as “analytical”, “hermeneutical”, “dialectical philosophy” and so forth. With her rather a “philosophy of interculturality” comes forth, which at once, as an “interculturality of philosophy” not only relativizes the Occidentally oriented notion of philosophy, but seeks to understand philosophy

“Intercultural
Philosophy”

and culturality from out of their mutually fertilizing occurrence of constitution.

Challenge of
Intercultural
Thought

Both these aspects, the transcendence of traditional, continentally marked notions of philosophy, and the attentiveness to the constitutive conditioning structures and general processes of each connex of philosophy and culture, join in the actual challenge of intercultural thought: how is it possible to confront the difference and plurality of cultures in such a way that these are neither razed, or “overcome”, nor founded upon an absolute difference that yields cultural enclaves and self-absolutizations? In positive terms: is there a “dialogue of cultural worlds” in which their difference is experienced as a challenge fruitful for all parties concerned, in which only from out of the encounter is the real “world character” of these worlds discovered and promoted? Have not the great world cultures precisely by providing, each in its own way, their own, incomparable fundamental possibilities for the whole of humanity, therefore the right, to receive undivided support? And this not before the background of folkloric self-portrayal, or even socio-cultural hybrids, but for reasons of their energetic contribution, which they make, or undertake to make for all humanity and thus also for a greater and more developed humanum? Can all this seriously be dispensed with, or is an increased consciousness of this constellation and the mutual working out of the culture worlds *qua* “worlds” not also the condition for a sensible and auspicious confrontation of such manifestations as xenophobia, hatred of foreigners, immigration- and integration problems? Cultural assimilation remains just as ineffective, unrealistic and, in consequence, inhumane as the ideas of multi-cultural societies. Both lack the insight into the positivity and fruitfulness of that formative power that is released when someone is addressed with respect to his “world” and taken seriously in this world.

Interculturality as a
New Challenge of
Reason

Now such an understanding of philosophy as an interculturally grounded philosophy indeed treads new ground insofar as the new focus is on methodical-systematical expansions and deepenings, as well as a turn towards other cultural horizons and worlds. This double task of cultural-contextual analyses and universally laid groundwork will prove unavoidable in the near future for *philosophical* reasons. But both sides must be drawn from each other and profile themselves with one another. One cannot have the one without the other. Should one do this all the same, it would reveal nothing less than the lack of intercultural consciousness. It is no mere coincidence that precisely at that point at which these two poles drift apart and become independent – and this image is confirmed all too well by the present practice of philosophy and the individual sciences –, intercultural thought is not recognized in its necessity. One is doing either philosophy or cultural and social science. The results and clarifications yielded by the one side are irrelevant for the other, and so each side accuses the other of incompetency. Yet the intercultural discourse is not being held, and interculturality as a new challenge of reason itself remains just as unrecognized as the restrictions connected with it.