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.

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,

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).

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

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.

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

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).

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

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).

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

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).

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.

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).

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).

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).

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)

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.

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).

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

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).

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

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).

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).

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).

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).

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).

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).

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-

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[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.

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«

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).

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).

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.«

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).

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-

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).

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

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-

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

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-

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

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).

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-

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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