REIHE INTERKULTURELLE PHILOSOPHIE

Anke Graneß / Edwin Etieyibo /
Franz Gmainer-Pranzl (eds.)

African Philosophy in an Intercultural Perspective

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J.B. METZLER

Reihe Interkulturelle Philosophie

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Seit ihren Anfängen in den 1980er Jahren zielen Ansätze interkulturellen Philosophierens in unserer globalisierten Welt darauf ab, philosophische Fragen und Probleme unter Einbeziehung und gleichberechtigter Teilnahme von Denktraditionen aus allen Weltregionen zu reflektieren. Im Zuge einer Kritik an der hegemonialen Stellung der euroamerikanischen Philosophie sowie durch die Etablierung eigener Methoden, Konzepte und Modelle hat sich die Interkulturelle Philosophie mittlerweile als ein globales Paradigma des Philosophierens etabliert. Als solches ist sie nicht nur dem Anspruch epistemischer Gerechtigkeit für bislang weitgehend aus dem philosophischen Diskurs ausgeschlossene Denkansätze verpflichtet, sie fördert darüber hinaus eine wechselseitig instruktive Klärungsarbeit und zugleich Korrekturoffenheit, vor allem im Hinblick auf den Gebrauch der Begriffe und der Kontexte des Verstehens. Das Aufmerken auf asymmetrische Strukturen hat denn auch differenztheoretische Ansätze zur Geltung gebracht, die auf ein vieldimensioniertes „Zwischen" zulaufen, welches der Interkulturellen Philosophie ihre spezifische Benennung verleiht. Aufgrund dieser Sachverhalte ist die Interkulturelle Philosophie in der Lage, Debatten zu den Grundfragen der Philosophie inhaltlich zu befruchten und neu zu akzentuieren. Die Reihe *Interkulturelle Philosophie*, die im Auftrag der *Gesellschaft für Interkulturelle Philosophie (GIP)* herausgegeben wird, trägt diesen Entwicklungen Rechnung und bietet eine Plattform für einschlägige aktuelle Forschungsbeiträge. Interkulturalität wird dabei nicht nur als ein thematisch bestimmtes philosophisches Forschungsgebiet verstanden, sondern als eine methodische Zugangsweise, der in allen Teilbereichen der Philosophie – von der theoretischen Philosophie über die praktische Philosophie bis hin zur Ästhetik und Kulturphilosophie – Beachtung zu schenken ist. Dabei berücksichtigt die Reihe auch Ansätze aus den angrenzenden Bereichen der transkulturellen Philosophie, der komparativen Philosophie, der cross-cultural philosophy und der postkolonialen Theoriebildung.

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Anke Graneß · Edwin Etieyibo ·
Franz Gmainer-Pranzl
Editors

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J.B. METZLER

Editors
Anke Graneß
Institut für Philosophie
Universität Hildesheim
Hildesheim, Germany

Edwin Etieyibo
Philosophy
University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg, South Africa

Franz Gmainer-Pranzl
Zentrum Theologie Interkulturell
und Studium der Religionen
Universität Salzburg
Salzburg, Austria

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Futhermore, we would like to take this opportunity to show our gratitude to the sponsors of the conference: the Austrian Research Foundation (ÖFG), the Vienna Institute for Science and Art (IWK) and its director Dr. Thomas Hübel, as well as the 'Global African Diaspora Studies Research Platform' (GADS) of the University of Vienna and Professor Adams Bodomo.

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Our greatest thanks, of course, go to all the participants of the 23rd ISAPS conference for their constructive discussions, and to the contributors to this volume for their outstanding philosophical work.

And last but not least, we would like to take the opportunity to remember our friend and colleague Sirkku Hellsten (1962–2018), Professor of Philosophy at the University of Dar es Salaam, Senior Researcher at the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala, and devoted editor of the *Journal of Global Ethics*, who joined our conference in Vienna and enriched it with her lecture 'Debates on Global Justice: Can There Be Reconciliation between African and Non-African Philosophy*?*' Sirkku left this world a few months after our conference. We will miss her wisdom and inspiring commitment to philosophy.

Introduction

This volume is the result of the 23rd annual conference of the International Society for African Philosophy and Studies (ISAPS), which took place—for the first time in its history—in Austria, at the University of Vienna on 10 and 11 July 2017. ISAPS was founded in 1995. It is an association of scholars from many fields and countries in the world who are interested in the substantive study of global and local African concerns and issues. Members bring training in philosophy, anthropology, the arts, economics, history, law, management, political science, psychology, sociology, and history, as well as other related areas, to the study of African issues.

Since one of the main areas of teaching and research at the Department of Philosophy at the University of Vienna is Intercultural Philosophy, the conference focused on the topic 'African Philosophy in an Intercultural Perspective'. Intercultural philosophy emerged during the 1980s and 1990s in German-speaking countries (following, among other philosophical approaches, Gadamerian hermeneutics and Derridean deconstruction, as well as Foucauldian archeology of knowledge) out of the perception of the one-sidedness of previous philosophical work, which was based solely on the European heritage, and at the same time out of scholarly curiosity about philosophical traditions in other regions of the world. In Vienna, this kind of approach was successfully established by Professor Franz M. Wimmer at the end of the 1980s.

But despite the efforts of philosophers working on inter-, trans- or cross-cultural philosophy during the last three decades or so Jay Garfield and Bryan van Norden, had to state in their 2016 *New York Times* article, 'If Philosophy Won't Diversify, Let's Call It What It Really Is', that 'philosophy as a discipline has a serious diversity problem, with women and minorities underrepresented at all levels among students and faculty'. Up to the present day, philosophy departments have defended an American- and Eurocentric paradigm of philosophy and have not incorporated non-Western traditions and texts into their curricula, a situation that is 'hard to justify morally, politically, epistemically or as good educational and research training practice' (ibid.). Disappointed by an apparently unchangeable situation in the practice of academic philosophy today, the authors conclude that those departments at universities and colleges that ignore the need for greater diversity ought to be called what they really are, namely, 'Departments of European and American Philosophy'.

Intercultural philosophy continues to work against such ignorance and marginalization. An 'intercultural perspective' takes seriously the fact that culturally, socio-economically, politically, and historically different contexts might lead to very different questions and problems—but also to different answers to the same questions. Such a perspective is characterized by a sincere effort to recognize the equality of theoretical contributions from different regions and traditions of the world and to integrate them into an open discourse on various theoretical issues. It goes beyond a comparative juxtaposition, where the Other is taken as an exotic or nice addition to the 'true' theory or simply a source of raw data. An intercultural perspective presupposes that regardless of the asymmetries of power in the world and in the academy, every tradition or school of thought is equally entitled to introduce ideas, concepts, and questions, which are accepted on the basis of the strength of the argument provided. From this it follows that all positions should remain open to change. Moreover, it means that philosophers (everywhere, i.e. also in the 'West') need then be aware of their respective contextuality or 'thinking from a place' (Janz 2012, p. 22). Thus, the goal of an intercultural approach to philosophy is twofold: firstly, to develop some consciousness about one's own contextuality, that is, about the cultural, linguistic, religious determination of philosophy in its respective historical contexts, and secondly, to transcend one's regional approach to philosophy.

While European philosophy in its hegemonic trends is characterized above all by a claim to universal validity and often lacks awareness of its own contextual anchoring, the philosophical discourse in Africa in the twentieth century was for many decades an intensive reflection on its own contextuality (Africa, African ways of thinking) and its own identity as African philosophy, and it not only lacked a claim to universality but also an interest in other philosophical traditions—apart from the European-Western one, which served as a counterpart for an alternative draft of a philosophy which is truly 'African' (that is the opposite of all that European philosophy represents). But contemporary African philosophy since the twentieth century in particular is inherently intercultural. Or as the Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu expressed it: 'Interculturalism […] is currently almost an involuntary aspect of African academic philosophising. The question is: does it penetrate philosophical thinking in other cultures in anything like the way it does African philosophical thinking?' (Wiredu 1998, p. 152).

However, not only after colonization but already in the centuries before, Africa has presented itself as a particularly beautiful example of the interweaving of philosophical traditions (see, among other things, the overlaps between Arabic-Islamic philosophy and other autochthonous philosophical traditions in sub-Saharan Africa, or the overlap of different traditions of thought and philosophy in Ethiopia).

At the 2017 conference, an attempt was made to examine African philosophy in its historical and current entanglements with other philosophical traditions, to discuss the potentials and problems of such an interrelation, and at the same time

to address power structures inherent both in the concept of 'cultural difference' as well as in such a project as intercultural philosophy. Central to the debates and also to the present volume are questions such as: What is the intercultural dimension of philosophy in Africa? What role does an interculturally oriented approach to philosophy play in today's discourses in Africa? How may the tension between philosophy as deeply rooted in specific historical and cultural contexts and its search for universally acceptable (ethical) rules or explanations of the perception of the world be grasped? Where are the connecting dots between philosophy in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Arabia, Europe, and North America, yesterday and today? What is the potential of an intercultural approach to philosophy? What are the pitfalls?

Today, the need for an intercultural perspective in philosophy becomes more urgent, not least because 'In very practical terms, all such societies have become more entangled with one another through the movement of capital, goods, and human beings,' as the Nigerian philosopher Josephat Obi Oguejiofor notes in his contribution in this volume (Oguejiofor pp. 3–14). He adds: 'As globalization unites human beings rooted in different contexts and backgrounds, intercultural philosophy, which takes into account the existence and impact of other cultures, must take precedence among philosophical approaches.' (pp. 3–14) However, one of the burning questions of an intercultural approach to philosophy is how to make intercultural communication and exchange in philosophy possible without either reiterating the global asymmetries in the academy (which are economic, political, and other asymmetries between the nations) or upholding an essentializing nativism or relativism.

The present volume shows various aspects of the entanglement of intercultural philosophy and the philosophies of the African continent—and their range of topics which include intercultural approaches by African philosophers like Kwasi Wiredu and Léopold Sédar Senghor, parallels between traditional African ethics and Confucianism, the highly topical questions of decolonization of the universities in Africa, and feminist issues such as those negotiated in Muslim countries like Egypt. Here it becomes obvious that the topics do not adhere to the academic division of the continent into northern and southern Africa or to geographical boundaries, but rather transcend them and thus break artificial boundaries and put them into question. This is also an essential aspect of an intercultural approach to philosophy: not only does it critique such artificially created subject boundaries as 'European philosophy' or 'African philosophy', but it also, as in the present work, makes it clear that philosophy never adhered to such narrow boundaries, but has always tried to transcend them.

Such a view 'across the border' is crucial, especially for philosophy and philosophers in Europe and North America. The ISAPS conference in Vienna and this volume add to this discourse and show contributions from Africa to intercultural philosophy. By doing this, the conference and volume reiterate the importance of an open, (self-) critical and reciprocal polylog of all philosophical traditions.

The Contributions

This volume is divided into three main sections. The **First Section** is entitled **'Intercultural Discourses and Engagements'**. In the first contribution in the book, 'Léopold Sédar Senghor, African Philosophy and the Challenge of Interculturalism' by **Josephat Obi Oguejiofor** (Nigeria), the focus is on the close entanglement of intercultural philosophy and African philosophy. He argues that Senghor's philosophy is eminently intercultural. In doing so, he demonstrates that interculturality is not a new approach in African philosophy; a number of the great twentieth-century African philosophers, like Senghor, have always taken an intercultural approach to philosophy. According to Oguejiofor, interculturality is deeply anchored in Senghor's concept of a 'Civilization of the Universal', which describes a synthesis of the contributions of all the cultures of the earth, a kind of *mètissage* of all world cultures, which urgently needs to be developed, given that each civilization has cultivated only fragments of the total human reality. Oguejiofor's contribution can therefore be said to be presenting Senghor as an early but neglected precursor of intercultural philosophy whose concept of 'Civilization of the Universal' should serve as a model for philosophizing today.

In her essay, '*Bantu Philosophy* and the Problem of Religion in Intercultural Philosophy Today', **Angela Roothaan** (The Netherlands) explores what Placide Tempels' philosophical treatment of religion may have to offer to intercultural philosophy 'after the hermeneutic and deconstructive turn', as she calls it. In doing so, she proposes a deconstructive reading of his book *Bantu Philosophy*, that is not focused on its much-debated (re)construction of an African philosophy of 'vital force', but rather on its marginal and largely overlooked final chapter, 'Bantu Philosophy and our Mission to Philosophize', where Temples criticizes a conversion procedure which made Africans 'adopt only the outer shell of European religious forms, whereas the spiritual content of their indigenous traditions was lost without a replacement' (pp. 15–32). To counter this trend, Tempels calls for the study of the spiritually rich ontology present in traditional Bantu cultures. However, in her critical approach to intercultural philosophy, Roothaan raises the question as to whether the optimism inherent in the idea of a straightforward dialogue between different cultures—out of interest and curiosity—is not naive. She also asks if Tempels should be studied as an 'innocent' intercultural philosopher or if he has the *epistemological* right to focus on a dialogue, despite the cruelties of colonialism in the Congo, where he worked as a missionary. The questions Roothaan raises are relevant to intercultural philosophy today as well. Too rarely do we ask ourselves about power asymmetries (epistemological, historical, economic, etc.) between partners in our philosophical debates. This is particularly relevant given that the good will of philosophers of the intercultural school to change the dominant tradition of doing philosophy does not exist in a power-free context.

The contribution of **Edwin Etieyibo** (Canada, Nigeria and South Africa), 'Piety and Conduct: The Case of Confucianism and African Philosophy' is one that provides a practical example of some comparative approaches to philosophy. In this essay, he describes a common feature or theme in Confucianism and

African philosophy, which is filial piety. Etieyibo argues that in both worldviews, a filial child's conduct is pious, or he/she displays or exhibits the virtue of piety if he or she acts appropriately towards his or her parents. 'Acting appropriately' is described as obedience, service, or support for one's parents and a reverential attitude towards them. Etieyibo discusses how these elements of filial piety are presented in a number of key Confucian texts such as the *Analects of Confucius* and the *Xiaojing (The Classic of Filial Piety)* and in some oral sources, namely, African proverbs. Moreover, he explores similarities and differences in both worldviews and raises some issues about whether respect for elders should be absolute. In particular, he addresses the issue of how to engage with leaders who are taken to be elders but who may not have behaved well in the public (political) sphere.

Renate Schepen's (The Netherlands) article, 'Layers of Heinz Kimmerle's Intercultural Philosophy' focuses on the German-Dutch philosopher Heinz Kimmerle, who is one of the pioneers of intercultural philosophical approach in the German-speaking world. In this essay, she highlights three main directions of his research (Hegel, Gadamer, and Derrida) which led him, in the end, to the project of an intercultural philosophy. Moreover, Schepen refers to people who influenced his thinking who may not be recognized as such in the current academic discourse, including female African philosophers and artists. By arguing that Kimmerle establishes an important method for intercultural philosophy, that is highly relevant for living together in a globalized world, Schepen illustrates the relevance of his work today.

In 'From Local to Global: Rethinking the Dynamics of African Philosophy from an Intercultural Perspective' **Pius M. Mosima** (Cameroon) presents the controversy that split African philosophers in their search for the nature and identity of an African philosophy during the second half of the twentieth century. He argues that even though ethnophilosophy acknowledges difference, it should not enmesh itself in difference. Intercultural philosophy, he notes, reminds philosophers not to be trapped in a narrow conception of African identity. Mosima suggests that ethnophilosophy should not be discarded, but should be seen as a basis for an intercultural epistemology. It should complement other globally available philosophical traditions. Moreover, he argues that philosophers should also focus on the practical side of philosophy, that is, on practical knowledge which can help people solve the dilemmas of individual and collective life in the context of intercultural encounters. Here he underlines as a good example the case of the Dutch anthropologist and philosopher Wim van Binsbergen who became a *sangoma,* a diviner-priest in the tradition of the Nguni-speaking peoples, and thus combined theory with a very specific practice of philosophizing.

All the contributions in **Section II, 'Theory and Practice: South Africa'** are concerned with problems arising from the context of South Africa after the end of Apartheid, particularly the issue of the decolonisation of the universities and the concept of Ubuntu—both issues closely connected to practical problems the young nation faces. In his essay, 'The Revolutionary Impetus', **Pedro Tabensky** (South Africa) explores what revolutions do to and require of those who aim to bring

about a just order. His criticism focuses on a revolutionary stance that accepts violence and victims for the sake of a 'greater goal'. Tabensky argues that 'the primary locus of concern should be concrete, actual, living human beings, because it is only in this way that a 'calculated revolution' can be avoided and we can avoid seeing people as waves of force, an undifferentiated mass that can be deployed at will in order to rewrite history in accordance with the designs of arrogant architects (who inevitably draw their ink from countless corpses)' (pp. 87–100). Thus, solidarity rather than univocality (where thinking is replaced with collective unbending certainties) is what healthy social rebellions require. Tabensky warns that there is a price to pay if one chooses the path of revolutionary violence to bring about the aims of justice, and that, if one does choose the path, one form of injustice will tend to be replaced by another.

Kevin Behrens (South Africa) in his 'Reflections on a Decolonized Philosophy Curriculum for South Africa in the Light of the #FeesMustFall Movement' underlines the urgent necessity to decolonize philosophy as a discipline in South Africa. Besides an inner philosophical need (such as epistemic justice), statistics alone shows the injustice in philosophy departments in South Africa, be it with regard to the asymmetries in the students, faculty, and staff (white people predominate everywhere), or be it with regard to the theories that are taught (here, too, mostly theories of white men from Europe fill the curriculum).

Kai Horsthemke (Germany) in his contribution, '#FactsMustFall'?—African Philosophy in a Post-truth World' also touches on issues relating to revolutionary movements, namely, the '#RhodesMustFall' and' #FeesMustFall' movements at South African universities. His paper centres on the question of how African philosophy might position itself in the 'post-truth', 'post-factual' world, particularly with regard to current decolonization discourses. Thus, he asks: does decolonization of the mind or of the curriculum also mean the decolonization of, inter alia, truth, facts, and rationality? After a critical discussion of Kwasi Wiredu's concept of 'truth as opinion', Horsthemke refers to Wiredu's distinction between truthfulness and truth in the cognitive sense, which Wiredu bases on a linguistic analysis of his mother tongue Twi. Horsthemke argues that exactly this distinction, out of which follows a distinction between untruth in the sense of error and untruth in the sense of lying or intentional misrepresentation 'is all that is required to undermine the putative force of a post-truth, post-truthful orientation' (pp. 115–129) and can be illustrated by the work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Mechthild Nagel (Germany and USA) devotes her essay, 'Towards a Ludic Ubuntu Ethic', to a concept that has led to a central debate in philosophy in South Africa today, namely, the concept of Ubuntu. Nagel uses the concept to argue for an alternative punishment regime to the Western one, which is centred on incarceration. Nagel argues that the 'Western' punishment system is underlaid with a logic of revenge that is unable to restore peace and harmony among conflicting parties. In contrast, Nagel suggests a *ludic Ubuntu ethical model* 'which outlines five levels of justice, whereby the lowest level is the rule of law centred on retribution and the abstract rights-bearing subject, while the highest levels evolve around Indigenous harm-reduction philosophies of restorative and transformative justice' (pp. 131–144).

Section III, 'Philosophical Challenges in Africa Today' is devoted to such philosophical issues as gender justice, the problems of climate change, decolonization, and, especially, the intersection of all three of these concerns, which is important because the present environmental crisis can only be solved in connection with gender justice and the decolonization of the mind, particularly if decolonization involves including formerly neglected or oppressed traditions as women's knowledge, indigenous thought, and oral traditions in our current debates. In her contribution, 'Against Silencing: Redefining Women's Voices in Islam with Reference to the Life and Works of Aisha Abd Al Rahman (Bint Al Shati)', **Hadeer Abo El Nagah** (Egypt and Saudi Arabia) turns our attention to the discussion of the Islamic view on women. The Quran, as the foundational book of Islamic doctrine, is generally held responsible for biases against women and for gender injustices. However, Abo El Nagah argues that discrimination goes against the principles of equality in Islam. As an example of an early representative of Islamic feminism who criticized patriarchal interpretations of the Quran, Abo El Nagah presents the life and works of the Egyptian writer Aisha Abd Al Rahman (1913–1998), known as Bint Al Shati. With reference to Bint Al Shati's autobiography, Abo El Nagah explores the role played by education as an enabling agent in creating Abd Al Rahman's identity and distinctive voice as the first woman exegete of the Quran.

The contribution of **Workineh Kelbessa** (Ethiopia) is entitled, 'Water Ethics'. He draws our attention to a neglected area in discussions about environmental ethics, namely, water ethics, which should have a place in water governance. Moreover, Kelbessa argues that local people should be involved in the design and implementation of water management programmes, since different communities in the developing world have their own water management systems that are effective and environmentally friendly. Accroding to him, many indigenous knowledge systems consider the importance of water for ecosystems and non-human species, an aspect generally absent in 'Western' concepts.

Like Kelbessa, **Otto Dennis** (Nigeria) also discusses environmental issues. In his essay, 'African Environmental Intuitionism and the Obligation to Posterity,' he emphasizes the importance of recognizing indigenous African knowledge as part of the solution of contemporary problems and challenges. He focuses on intergenerational justice in relation to environmental issues—a highly topical subject in view of the worldwide 'Fridays for Future Movement' today. Dennis attempts to show that intergenerational obligations as well as environmental concerns are constituent parts of traditional African ethics, which therefore could serve as a model for the world. However, Dennis' contribution is also an example of an ethnophilosophical approach which cannot escape a kind of racial thinking: 'But in a strict sense where a philosophy that meaningfully describes a people's way of life is concerned, Africans include only the black peoples of the continent. It is the Negroes that the description 'African' is properly so accorded.' (pp. 181–190) It must be asked not only whether philosophy (rather than anthropology, sociology, or another of the social sciences) is a discipline whose task is to describe a people's way of life, let alone one that attributes African identity only to people

who have a certain skin colour, but also whether we should continue to think along racial lines at all. And even though Dennis states that 'Ethical intuitionism … is not exclusively African.' (pp. 181–190), the question remains, what is the function of such definitions as the one above in a discussion of ethics?

It has to be clearly stated here, that thinking along racial lines presents itself as the opposite of intercultural philosophy—and a way of thinking that has to be overcome in the process of decolonizing the mind. Moreover, as Joseph Agbakoba warns, such a nativist or 'centrist' attitude 'runs the risk of engaging not only in romanticism but also in undue scholarly protectionism, which might become so excessive as to lead to a deliberate preference for falsity, fallacy and muddle, in order to achieve rhetorical success (in preference to veridical success in the form of truth and verisimilitude)…' (Agbakoba 2016, p. v)

The volume concludes with an essay by **Pascah Mungwini** (Zimbabwe and South Africa), 'Philosophy in the Post-imperialist Age: Towards the Conversation of Humankind', on the future of philosophy. Mungwini argues that the future of philosophy lies in genuine commitment to the cultivation of intercultural insights and perspectives. Starting off with a critique of the history of philosophy as a Eurocentric self-reinforcing practice, he offers a discussion of the future of philosophy. In addition, Mungwini reminds us that one aspect of Africa's colonial heritage is that colonialism carved the continent into regional linguistic blocks, which created the need to cultivate an intra-African philosophical dialogue. But beside all the problems that colonialism has caused for Africa, Mungwini also sees notable advantages of the colonial experience for the African situation today. For example, the imposition of foreign languages has helped to place foreign philosophies within the reach of most Africans, and, thus, Africans are already used to working and thinking in more than one context and more than one language; they are used to dealing with traditions of thought emanating from outside their own culture. This is a clear advantage on the international stage. Africans are already 'true intercultural intellectuals', as Mungwini asserts.

So, while the contributions in this volume are not representative and do not exhaust all that has to be said or can be said about intercultural philosophy or the relationship between African philosophy and other philosophical traditions, it, in our view, constitutes a valuable addition to the field and the debates in intercultural philosophy. It is our hope that readers will enjoy engaging with this volume and that they will see it as opening up the space for further and more robust discussions of intercultural philosophy, particularly about the value of intercultural philosophy in our world.

Hildesheim — Anke Graneß
Johannesburg — Edwin Etieyibo
Salzburg — Franz-Gmainer Pranzl
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Greeting from ISAPS President

The theme of the 23rd ISAPS conference, *African Philosophy in an Intercultural Perspective*, remains very timely and appropriate, thanks to the local organizers, and I am very pleased that the papers from the conference are now published as a book. I am pleased because Africans and indeed, Africanists all over the world are looking for better ways of understanding and positively mobilizing the post-independence African experience. The anti-colonial nationalism which swept through Africa leading to the independence of many African states generated oppositional scholarship based on identitarian concerns and Afrocentrism broadly. This served Africa well up to the time of independence but it has since slipped into some counter-developmental nativism which reached the depths of negativity in such places as Mugabe's Zimbabwe. It showed clearly that the logic of nationalism, let alone nativism, cannot be pursued to its logical end by independent African states. The post-independence needs of Africa certainly forbids this because these needs are centered on positive freedom and the concern for development. And, to address these needs, African states need to engage and collaborate with themselves and the international community. African nationalism fought what Franz Fanon called 'the Black Problem', as it affected Africa, this is the problem of racism against Black Africans, which manifested in Africa as colonial racism (Fanon 1986, pp. 83–108). This type of racism tended to transmogrify the African person in a racially subhuman or inferior construct from which there is no escape regardless of personal achievements and merit–a kind of caste system from which there was no escape. Africans from different parts of the world joined the fight against this type of denigration of the African personhood on the platform of Pan-Africanism among others.

Then came the achievement of independence, which was a major objective of the anti-colonial movement. With this, African states ceased to be legal, political and administrative dependencies; the African state was free to chart the course of its own development. This was a remarkable accomplishment in the process of solving the Black Problem, from which Fanon hardly saw an escape–Fanon was only partially right in this, given the success of anti-colonial movement in Africa (ibid.). Independence offered an escape for continental Africans (Africans on the continent and her islands), but not an escape for the Africans in diaspora. The import of this legal and political independence and the partial solution it offers to the black problem is huge; this can be seen in a symbolic sense in the fact that it

enabled the great Pan-Africanist W.E.D. du Bois to take Ghanaian citizenship in a symbolic gesture against the USA and to spend his last years in Ghana, away from the Black Problem.

Today, hardly any post-independence African can say that he/she has experienced racism and the denigration of the African person in their home countries, except perhaps for people in the peculiar situation of South Africa. Racism is something continental Africans experience indirectly through texts and other sources; and, thus, something understood intellectually, as Fanon would say. However, when we leave our homes and travel to other parts of the world, we experience racism directly. Sadly, however, very sadly, what may be described as a "neo Black Problem" has emerged since the independence. This is the challenge of development, the inability of virtually all African states to advance along the lines of positive freedom and development. Instead, we see counter development in many places and it is forcing her citizens to escape Africa via migration to the very homes of the Black Problem, the very places of discrimination and dehumanization. The African continent, if it is to be the true home of African freedom and advancement, must successfully address the developmentarian concern, must achieve positive freedom and development, must solve the neo Black Problem. However, the intellectual orientation that assisted in the partial solution of the Black Problem is not adequate for providing a solution for the neo Black Problem. Africa needs an approach that is mindful of the gems of knowledge in traditional Africa and seeks to fuse these gems of knowledge with other forms of knowledge from global sources. This is the task of intercultural philosophy for Africa. However, of course, this may not be what intercultural philosophy means for people from other parts of the world.

As I pointed out elsewhere, the idea of intercultural philosophy is still vague, largely because there is still little agreement on what it means and implies, though many philosophers from diverse backgrounds are enthusiastic about it (Agbakoba 2019, p. 9).[1] This can be explained, in part, by the fact that intercultural philosophy is endorsed by philosophers from diverse backgrounds, orientations and regions of the world that consequently have diverse and variegated notions of what intercultural philosophy is or should be. However, William Sweet articulates a common ground for intercultural philosophy: 'intercultural philosophy insists that we take diversity of and in philosophical discourses seriously, and it recognizes that most cultures and traditions hold that they are home to "philosophy," even if it is understood in ways that are quite different from one another' (Sweet 2014, p. 3). However, to recognize that philosophy has a home in other cultures and traditions and to take this seriously can be done in a number of ways, some of which may not be of interest to philosophers who espouse intercultural philosophy. A consensus in this regard appears to be that, though intercultural philosophy deploys a good deal of comparative philosophical studies, it is not the same as comparative philosophy; rather, it goes beyond comparisons and comparative

[1]What follows below includes excerpts from this book.

studies (Sweet 2014, pp. 1–3). Sweet thinks that for many scholars engaged in intercultural philosophy, it involves the search for a platform for 'comprehensive mutuality, reciprocity and equality' (ibid., 2). Intercultural philosophy for Claudia Bickmann requires that this search be expressed in the philosophical quest as 'a way of thought as well as a way of life' (Bickmann n.d.).

Africans have been long since exposed to intercultural philosophy in the loose sense of being imbued with philosophies other than one's indigenous philosophy (initially, Western philosophy but increasingly Asian philosophies, Islamic philosophy, etc.) under conditions of mutual respect mentioned by Sweet. Actually, the African generally had to fight for the respect and study of his/her indigenous philosophy on account of its denigration and exclusion from the philosophy curriculums and the curriculums of cultural studies in Africa. So, the African, studying in Africa, is exposed to what some have called global philosophy at an early stage and he/she undergoes this fairly intense study of other philosophies (particularly Western Philosophy and at least one of the languages of its expression, notably English or French) alongside some reasonably good exposure to his/her indigenous language, culture and philosophy by both formal and informal means. So, the major challenges for the African goes beyond recognizing and respecting other philosophies because he/she is already schooled to do so; it dwells on re-envisioning, re-articulating and reconstructing African thought in the light of philosophical information from diverse global sources, in order, in part at least, to be able to adequately understand and solve her complex post-independence problems.

Africans, however, are not all agreed on the nature of the neo Black Problem and what an intercultural approach to understanding and solving it might be; as well as what an African intercultural perspective might be generally. Broadly speaking, there are four perspectives on this matter. There are those who think that the African perspective on intercultural philosophy should base on nativist and Afro-centrist grounds. For these scholars the struggle is to preserve the authenticity and essence of African indigenous knowledge; so, intercultural exposures are basically for the clarification and refinement of the indigenous knowledge system and ideas. They should not contribute to the loss of its essence or integrity. Interestingly, whereas a good many Africans express their commitment to intercultural philosophy along these lines, one of the best representatives of this view theoretically and practically is the Dutch social anthropologist and intercultural philosopher, Wim van Binsbergen, who became a practicing Sangoma (diviner) in Botswana.[2] But, is there anything African in the essentialist sense sought by scholars in this category? Is Africa not a home of hybridity?

For some others, intercultural philosophy for the African is to be located in post-colonialism and its identitarian concerns. In this regard, intercultural

[2]Wim van Binsbergen, Emeritus Professor of the Foundations of Intercultural Philosophy at Erasmus University Rotterdam, became initiated into the Sangoma (diviners) Society of Southern Africa in Botswana in 1990. He recounts the initiation experience in 'Becoming a Sangoma' in *Journal of Religion in Africa* 1991.

philosophy focuses on the location and dethronement of coloniality, which broadly speaking is the cultural hegemonic power of the West (the metropolis or center of hegemonic power in one form or the other) with its dimensions of political and economic domination that succeeded colonization. This is the path taken by scholars such as Dorothy Olu-Jacob (2014, pp. 107–120). However, it should be emphasized that the post-colonial perspective centers on addressing the Black Problem, not the neo Black Problem, and it does so by focusing on the supposed abusive Western Other, seeking to deconstruct and neutralize it and in the process contributing to the positive moral transformation of the Western other, as Noam Chomsky and others have indicated.[3] Yet even if this neutralization is achieved and the abusive other develops even better moral standards, they shall by no means bring about the solution of the neo Black Problem, which depends on the knowledge of self, philosophical reflexivity (substantive, methodic self-criticism and reappraisal) and the consequent possibilities of auto-transcendence.

Yet another orientation is the Afro-constructivist approach, in which intercultural philosophy is seen in terms of the possibility of broadening and deepening the epistemic vision of the scholar, through the achievement of a fusion of the horizons of at least two systems of thought from different cultures–one of which would usually, but not necessarily, be the scholar's primary source of personal identity. This fusion also implies discovery in the Popperian sense–which here means the sense in which new explanations, theories and facts are established by the fusion of African and diverse global philosophical resources. The emphasis here is on synthesizing ideas out of diverse cultures and in so doing transcending or subsuming the original ideas; in this regard, the synthesis may be dialectically involving the negation and subsumption of a thesis or it may be otherwise fusional, if one may borrow the linguistic use of the term. Jerry Chukwuokolo, one of the young African scholars who has taken up this orientation, describes it in an interesting Hegelian way: he sees pre-colonial Africa as the African thesis, colonization and the West's adventure in Africa as the anti-thesis; and intercultural philosophy as the pursuit of a synthesis of the cultures of Africa and the West (Chukwuokolo 2013, pp. 29–40). On a more personal note, the Afro-constructivist intercultural approach has been my orientation to philosophy, especially as regards to Africa, for close to two decades–expressed at times implicitly and at other times explicitly. This approach is the post-dependence approach, and it could be contrasted with the post-colonial approach. The post-dependence approach acknowledges the cardinality of the cessation of forms of dependence with the achievement of independence by African states and the necessity of using this elbow-room of freedom effectively to make the right choices for the accomplishment of positive freedom and development. For this purpose, the continental African needs to focus on the self, not on the other, on philosophical reflexivity

[3]See Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, (paperback) preliminary page and book cover. And see Gerber 2018; the author sees the issues as challenging white people to move to higher moral grounds and better interracial social interactions.

and the accomplishment of auto transcendence, not on preoccupation with the deconstruction of the other, on the neo Black Problem, rather than the Black Problem, because the solution of the former will lead to a faster and better solution of the latter. This however does not imply that Africans in the Diaspora should do the same, because their immediate existential problem is the Black Problem.

There is also a fourth possibility for the African with indigenous and global philosophical heritages. This involves engaging in philosophy without any effort to incorporate African ideas and with minimal reference to such ideas. This approach is barely intercultural; it can be said to be intercultural on the grounds that since Africans who work or may work with this perspective are people imbued with African languages, culture and philosophy, these would somehow rub off on their thinking and it could do so more if they are biological Africans living in Africa–so that it can be claimed that biologically and geographically their works are intercultural. This last possibility can be said to be intercultural in words only or in some minimalist and rather inconsequential sense.

Regardless of the approach to African intercultural philosophy that a person might favor, one must recognize that Africa today is a home of hybrids; Africa is what I have referred to as a *hybridarium*–a place where hybrids of different types arise and are competing with one another for dominance because no hybrid has as yet succeeded in becoming the dominant culture. This hybridity penetrates to the most basic or essential of traditions.

African scholars are challenged to achieve hybridity in the sense of heterosis (the form of hybrid which is more vigorous than it parent stocks) and it would appear that the most viable instrument for this is intercultural philosophy, because it is a major platform for the sort of fusional scholarship that is at the bottom of heterosis. Fusional scholarship and the quest for heterosis engender certain veridic and epistemological demands. One must be both respectful and accurate (that is truthful) with one's cultural products and resources as well as those of other cultures, in order to avoid undue polemical diversions and in order to achieve viable fusions of horizons and heterosis–which necessarily are based on factual adequacy, comprehensiveness, clarity and coherence. However, this dimension of intercultural philosophy pertains not only to the African interested in heterosis, but to all those engaged or interested in intercultural philosophy regardless of their background, provenance and projections; in this, intercultural philosophy brings together all those interested in enlarging their visions and understanding, including, especially, a view to culturally enriching themselves in a broad sense. This volume promises such enrichment.

Professor Joseph C. A. Agbakoba
University of Nigeria
ISAPS, President

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