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Globalization of the history of philosophy and the idea of a transformative phenomenology

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the 21st century, globalization has become a central theme in the humanities. The increasing globalization of discourses in the humanities can already be observed in the 20th century. Within philosophy, the globalization of the thematic framework has been promoted in particular by the World Congresses of Philosophy since 1900. Stimulated by these developments, histories of different philosophies have emerged worldwide in many different languages. In addition, global histories of philosophy have increasingly been written since the beginning of the 21st century. This paper concludes by presenting the approach of a transformative phenomenology as a way of dealing with this thematic diversity in philosophy today.

Keywords: History of philosophy; transformative phenomenology; globalization

Globalization processes are increasingly shedding new light not only on our present but also on our past. As a result, the humanities are under more pressure than ever to link their perspectives and research topics with the process of globalization. Moreover, there is a factual need to reassess and reconceptualize our past, present, and future in the context of globalization (Mersmann and Kippenberg 2016).

For more than 30 years, a critical re-assessment and reconceptualization of our past in the humanities, such as in history departments within the framework of ‘global history’, has progressively taken on distinctly new contours, giving rise to new narratives of world history as globally interconnected histories (Conrad 2016; Conrad and Osterhammel 2018). This new idea not only helps us to better understand past and present developments, but also points the way to a future marked by entangled and interwoven histories. In philosophy and its historiography there is still a considerable need for research and innovation in this respect, which has become even more urgent after the last World Congress of Philosophy in Beijing in August 2018, where English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, and Chinese were the official languages. From the perspective of the World Congresses of Philosophy, the intellectual

landscape has become increasingly globalized in the 20th century; yet the presentation of the history of philosophy has not been similarly renewed in accordance with these developments. Our task today is therefore to create a new conception of the history of philosophy that, at the same time, prepares future forms of philosophizing from a global perspective in an open discourse.

The following considerations on the globalization of the history of philosophy are divided into four steps. In the first step, the globalization of philosophical discourses in the context of the World Congresses of Philosophy since 1900 will be traced. In the second step, I will first reflect on the development of the historiography of philosophy in Europe since the 17th century, and then address the globalization of the historiography of philosophy in the 20th century. In the third step, I will present some global histories of philosophy in different languages, leading up to our present. In the fourth step, I will conclude by presenting a philosophical practice called 'Transformative Phenomenology'. This practice reveals ways to deal with the global orders of knowledge in philosophy and to develop new ways of thinking for the future.

Globalization of philosophy through the World Congresses of Philosophy since 1900

For a global expansion of the philosophical spectrum of topics in the 20th century, the World Congresses of Philosophy were of particular importance. The history of the 'International Congresses of Philosophy' (the title of the congresses until 1968) and of the 'World Congresses of Philosophy' (the title of the congresses since 1973) shows how the discourse of philosophy has slowly expanded beyond the European and North American regions – at first only hesitantly, but after the Second World War, more decisively. In 1900, the first *Congrès International de Philosophie* was held in Paris.¹ Supported by the development of an independent philosophy in North America since the second half of the 19th century (Kuklick 2007), the need arose to come into contact with philosophical traditions in other languages and to give this exchange its own forum. Initially, one moved exclusively within the framework of European and North American intellectual spaces, so the international range in the encounter was limited. But if one looks at the list of participating countries, the adjective 'international' was justified.² At the 4th International Congress of Philosophy in Bologna in 1911, non-European approaches were first included through lectures on comparative and Indian philosophy. The lecture on Indian philosophy was given by Prabhu Dutt Shastri, who had studied philosophy in Germany. At the 1926 International Congress in Boston, the Indian philosopher Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was joined by Genyoku Kuwaki from Japan, who delivered a lecture on contemporary philosophy in Japan. At the 8th International Congress in Prague in 1934, a philosopher from China – Feng Youlan – made an appearance for the first time. He is still well-known today for his work on the history of Chinese philosophy. At the 10th International Congress in

¹The lectures of the congress have been published in four volumes: Vol I - Philosophie generale et Metaphysique, Vol. II - Morale, Vol. III - Logique et Histoire des Sciences, Vol. IV - Histoire de la Philosophie. See *Congrès international de philosophie (1900-1903)*.

²For the Paris Congress, philosophers from the following countries were involved: France, Germany, England, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, USA, Netherlands, Italy, Russia, Sweden, Switzerland. Philosophers such as Bergson, Natorp, Simmel, and Russell played key roles in this congress.

Amsterdam in 1948, a section titled 'East and West/*L'Orient et l'Occident*' made its first appearance. Since 1948, the congresses have been held every five years in different places. This is due to the fact that in that year the FISP (*Fédération Internationale des Sociétés de Philosophie*/International Federation of Philosophical Societies) was founded and began its operation. Until today the congresses are initiated and organized by this federation. FISP is the umbrella organization of all philosophical societies worldwide. In 1963, the 13th International Congress was held for the first time in Latin America in Mexico City. The keynote lecture of Herbert W. Schneider in English points out the massive changes after the Second World War under the title 'Global Orientation':

The world-wide situation into which mankind has been thrown by revolution in communication systems, politics, and markets, and by the creation of many new international institutions and relations demands that those who seek to understand this new world should metaphore their categories into it and thus test the adequacy of their accustomed orientation concepts to guide them in making their analyses of this transformed human environment with its many cultures and its varied attempts at integration. (Larroyo and Curiel 1963: 195)

The signs of globalization were already becoming increasingly visible in the field of philosophy during this period. The 16th World Congress of Philosophy, held in Düsseldorf in 1978, introduced a special innovation and expansion (Diemer 1983). For the first time, a plenary lecture was delivered by a philosopher from Africa – 'The Philosophy in the Current Situation of Africa' by Tshiamalenga Ntumba from Kinshasa in Zaire.³ Ntumba had been elected to the Executive Committee of FISP in 1973, where he was able to successfully add his voice. With his appearance, a voice from Africa was included in the global conversation of philosophy alongside voices from India, China, Japan, the Islamic world, and South America. In 1983 at the 17th World Congress of Philosophy in Montréal, the feminist perspective joined the various traditions of philosophy. In the section 'Perspectives féministes sur l'histoire de la philosophie', for example, Christine Allen from Canada gave the lecture 'Women Philosophers before 1300'. These additions show that by 1983 at the latest, the World Congress in Montréal had largely established the range of topics that still dominate world congresses today. The last World Congress took place in 2018 in Beijing and it was thematically characterized by a high plurality of approaches. The same can be said about the next World Congress which will take place in Rom in August 2024. The history of the World Congresses alone shows how philosophy has become increasingly globalized at the international level in the 20th century.

However, the globalization of philosophy at an international level did not at the same time mean that the thematic framework and the canon of philosophy changed in the institutes of philosophy in Europe and North America. It is still the case that 'Philosophy is currently unquestionably the discipline that is most resistant to diversifying its intellectual scope, faculty, and curriculum' (Denecke 2021: 485). Only very few institutes of philosophy were interested in non-European philosophies in Europe or North America in the 20th century. For 'comparative philosophy', the philosophy

³The lecture was published in 1979 in German. See Ntumba (1979: 428-443).

department at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa (USA) should be emphasized, where the inclusion of Asian (Indian, Chinese, Japanese) philosophies has been institutionalized since the 1930s until today. A focus on 'intercultural philosophy' was developed at the University of Vienna since the early 1990s, although it seems to receive much less attention than analytic philosophy lately; 'post- and decolonial philosophy' has gradually been included in the departments of philosophy and sociology in the United States since the beginning of the 21st century (Arisaka 2022); and the universities in Leiden (Holland) and Hildesheim (Germany) have recently developed a special interest in comparative and intercultural philosophy.

Today in the discipline of philosophy we are at a threshold towards a new order of philosophical knowledge, which has long since ceased to be produced only in Europe and North America. In the 20th century, institutes of philosophy have sprung up at universities around the world, giving rise to a wide variety of new philosophical perspectives. This new development manifested itself in histories of Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, Confucian, African, Latin American philosophies, among others, in languages such as Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Arabic, Turkish, Persian, and so on. Through different histories of philosophy in different languages, the thematic field of philosophy has been considerably expanded – a topic I will discuss in the next section. This global development of the historiography of philosophy, however, went largely unnoticed in European and North American philosophy.

Histories of philosophy in a global perspective

To develop a historical consciousness as a history of one's own past means to appropriate one's own past under a certain perspective as a narrative. Through such a memory of one's own past, a historical self-understanding develops, which can become the starting point for a possible future. In European intellectual history, a particular wave of historicization can be observed since the 17th century, especially in Latin and German, affecting various fields of knowledge and also leading to a comprehensive historiography of philosophy in the 18th century. With the historicization of philosophy being an autonomous discipline since the 17th century, a reflection on the different historicizations of the history of philosophy also began. With an increasing number of histories of philosophy, it became increasingly clear that the history of philosophy can be written, told, and thought in very different ways. The reviews of the different historicizations can be understood as historicizing of the historicization, whereby the act of historicizing itself can be observed in a reflexive way. Alongside the historiography of philosophy as a specific field of research, the reflexive meta-discipline of the history of the historiography of philosophy was established in the 17th century, in the sense of a historicization of the histories of philosophy.⁴

Since 2019, team members of the project 'Histories of Philosophy in a Global Perspective' at the University of Hildesheim have been working on the global expansion of the historiography of the history of philosophy.⁵ The project has set

⁴The first historiography of the history of philosophy dates back to 1659 with Johannes Jonsius (1624–1659). An overview of the historiography of the history of philosophy in Europe is provided by Lucien Braun (1973) and Santinello et al. (1993–2015).

⁵The project is funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) for five years (2019–2024). Further information can be found at <https://www.uni-hildesheim.de/en/histories-of-philosophy/>.

the goal of first sifting through the historiographies of philosophy within and outside Europe in as many different languages as possible – currently 30 – in order to develop a new methodological basis for a global perspective on the historiography of philosophy. The bibliographic collections are categorized according to different languages and not according to national or religious boundaries.⁶ In each language, the collection of the histories of philosophy creates its own order of the thematic framework and of the canon of philosophy itself. The languages are thereby interpreted as discursive spaces in which different philosophies have been developed and are still developing. For example, in Turkish, histories of Ottoman or Turkish philosophy dominate, whereas in Spanish, very different histories of philosophy have been written, informed by the various national contexts of Latin America. In Chinese, Korean, and Japanese, extensive histories of European philosophy are found, but also many histories of Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Buddhist, and Confucian philosophies, among others. Most of these histories of philosophy have been written since the beginning of the 20th century and have greatly expanded the range of philosophy within the various languages. Through these collections, it is clear that the field of philosophy has advanced in many different languages since antiquity.

By using a global perspective to examine the written historiographies of philosophy in the different languages that they were produced, it can be observed that the discipline of the historiography of the history of philosophy is developing in a hitherto unforeseen way. The bibliographical collections in each of the languages alone raise considerable methodological questions. Since not only materials specifically on the history of European philosophy are collected, but all monographs that either contain the word ‘history of philosophy’ in the title or, in a broader sense, regard themselves as a history of ‘philosophical thought’, distinctions are introduced on the basis of the material that generate an ‘order’ of the formation of knowledge in the history of philosophy in German, English, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, Turkish, Spanish, Italian, Polish, Arabic, and so on. The distinctions introduced in the process must be critically reflected upon in the context of each language, as we believe that no ‘order of knowledge’ (in Foucault’s sense) is given by nature, but that it brings to the material distinctions which render certain things visible and other things invisible, thereby producing different advantages and disadvantages. In reflecting on these distinctions in the individual languages, such problems are critically discussed in order to explore possibilities for a global historiography of philosophy.

For some traditional European languages of philosophy in which histories of philosophy were written, we can discern another development in connection with colonialism since the beginning of European expansion. Take, for example, English: although the United States, Canada, and Australia are primarily English-speaking, traces of conflicts with indigenous peoples before colonization still smolders in the background today. In countries like India and in African countries like Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, and Zambia, where English remains an official language, indigenous languages are often marginalized or displaced. Similar things can be said about Spanish and Portuguese – languages that have become dominant in countries in Central and

⁶For a detailed account of the results of the project up to this point, see *Polylog: Zeitschrift für interkulturelles Philosophieren*, 46 (Dec 2021), dedicated to this project. The publication is in German.

South America. French continues to hold an important position in Canada, as well as in countries in Africa such as Mali, Niger, Congo, and Guinea, and also in various Arabic-speaking countries such as Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria. Political changes notwithstanding, the fact remains that European languages have spread to many parts of the world with European expansion, and there are still major cultural and political entanglements and embedded structural dominations worldwide today due to the colonial realities they endured (Elberfeld 2021).

The colonial imposition of languages also leads to the fact that many scholars from Africa, Latin America, and other areas of the world published books in the colonial languages, for example, books on histories of African and Latin American philosophy. English has become a cultural and philosophical standard in which very different traditions of thought unfolded.⁷ Since the 2000s, this development has led to a remarkable initiative by the American Philosophical Association (APA), the largest philosophical society in the United States. Since 2001, newsletters⁸ on Asian and Asian American Philosophers and Philosophies, on Feminism and Philosophy, on Hispanic/Latino Issues in Philosophy, on Native American and Indigenous Philosophy, on LGBTQ Issues in Philosophy, on Philosophy and the Black Experience, and on Teaching Philosophy have been published separately on the APA homepage. These newsletters are now complemented by an extensive 'Resources on Diversity and Inclusiveness' page and a 'Diversity and Inclusiveness Syllabus Collection'. These collections of materials, amazing from a European perspective, are an expression of a demographic as well as philosophical diversity that is far more common in the US than in Europe. The fact that the largest philosophical society in the US has taken concrete steps over the past 20 years to discuss the issue of global diversity in the discipline and in curricula in order to promote such changes have not left philosophical departments unscathed, but have led to a significant shift and broadening of curricula and research perspectives (Arisaka 2022).

At the same time, however, the developments mentioned so far draw attention back to the various natural languages in many areas of the world. In the meantime, especially in Africa and Central and South America, intensive efforts have been exerted in order to rethink and reevaluate the question of the diversity of languages in political and academic contexts (Marten 2016; Coronel-Molina and McCarty 2016; Wolff 2010). In my view, the various languages will continue to play a central role in the development of philosophy in the 21st century, which is quite contrary to the widespread view that all discourse will soon shift to English. The high productivity in academic philosophy since the beginning of the 20th century in, for example, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean marks only the tip of an iceberg in the increasing importance of different languages for philosophy. This is also made particularly clear by the various global histories of philosophy that have emerged since the 20th century, which I will discuss in the next section.

⁷This is a development that was already critically discussed 30 years ago in literary studies, which is now taking place in the discipline of philosophy (See Ashcroft et al. 1989).

⁸The newsletters became 'APA Studies' in 2022. See <https://www.apaonline.org/page/APAStudies>.

Global histories of philosophy

In order to systematically explore the possible areas of the history of philosophy, the project ‘Histories of Philosophy in a Global Perspective’ has also collected global histories of philosophy. Titles such as *Global History of Philosophy*, *Weltgeschichte der Philosophie*, *World Philosophy*, *World Philosophies*, or *Histoire mondiale de la philosophie* reveal attempts that have been made after 1945 until recently to – more or less – systematically extend the historiography of philosophy to the global context. Instances of such attempts have increased significantly in the last 20 years. In the following, I will present selected examples from our project’s extensive collection, and will highlight a few publications in German, French, English, Russian, Italian, and Japanese.⁹

There are currently 13 globally oriented histories of philosophy available in German. A remarkable attempt was made already at the beginning of the 20th century, when Wilhelm Wundt edited a volume in 1909 under the title *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie* (General History of Philosophy), which represented a philosophical spectrum previously nonexistent. The volume includes the following essays: Wilhelm Wundt, ‘Philosophy of Primitive Peoples’; Hermann Oldenberg, ‘Indian Philosophy’; Wilhelm Grube, ‘Chinese Philosophy’; Tetsujiro Inouye, ‘Japanese Philosophy’; Hans von Arnim, ‘European Philosophy of Antiquity’; Clemens Baeumker, ‘Patristic Philosophy’ and ‘Christian Philosophy of the Middle Ages’; Ignaz Goldziher, ‘Islamic and Jewish Philosophy of the Middle Ages’; and Wilhelm Windelband, ‘Modern Philosophy’.

Several things are noteworthy: Wundt’s essay includes anthropological literature of the time under the title ‘primitive peoples’. Previously called ‘barbarians’ in 18th century Europe, these peoples and cultures came to be called ‘primitives’ in European anthropological literature and philosophy since the 1871 publication of Edward B. Taylor’s book, *Primitive Culture*, in which a cultural development scheme was presented. This pejorative designation still has an impact on the perceptions and images of non-European philosophies in histories of philosophy. It is therefore necessary to further critically explore various pejorative designations in the context of a global historiography of philosophy. Moreover, the facts that descriptions of Indian philosophy in the volume was written by a famous Indologist and Chinese philosophy by a Sinologist show that at that time in Europe, non-European historiography of philosophy was relegated to philologists. Although in the following decades, histories of Indian or Chinese philosophy, for example, were repeatedly published by Indologists and Sinologists, they were not acknowledged in professional philosophy in Europe. Another new aspect of the volume was the essay on Japanese philosophy. For the first time, a Japanese scholar, who had previously studied philosophy in Germany, presented the development of philosophy in his country himself. It can be assumed that through the World Congresses of Philosophy since 1900, a new epoch of increasingly interconnected conversations in philosophy had begun. Something similar can also be said about the essay on Islamic and Jewish philosophies. Both topics were presented by the famous Jewish Orientalist Ignaz Goldziher, who is also considered one of the founders of modern Islamic studies in Europe. Goldziher had broad access to Hebrew and Arabic sources

⁹For the complete list, see <https://www.uni-hildesheim.de/en/histories-of-philosophy/histories-of-philosophy/>.

of philosophy. The issue of the compilation and selection of topics itself was not further elaborated on in the volume – presumably due to the limited number of scholars equipped to do so in a global context.

For more recent periods, a further global view on philosophy in German should be mentioned. In 2004, Elmar Holenstein presented a completely new attempt, compared to all other works, to thematize global-historical connections in philosophy. In his *Philosophie-Atlas. Orte und Wege des Denkens* (Philosophy Atlas: Places and Ways of Thinking), Holenstein points to the geographical dimension of the development of philosophical ideas and schools. In doing so, he uses maps that trace places where philosophical ideas or schools emerged and networks through which they developed, as well as the paths that these concepts have taken in their reception and impact history. Holenstein's atlas also provides textual interpretations, but it does not offer an account of the history of philosophy. Rather, his contribution lies in visually highlighting that the history of philosophy can in no way be limited to Europe alone. The maps repeatedly reveal a rich network of interconnections that opens up a space of imagination – a good starting point for future histories of philosophy.

In French, two attempts at a globally oriented history of philosophy are found. The *Encyclopédie Philosophique Universelle*, edited by André Jacob and published in Paris from 1989 to 1998 on behalf of UNESCO, is of particular importance since it sets a completely new framework for the global historiography of philosophy. It is structured in four parts: 1. *L'Univers Philosophique*; 2. *Les Notions Philosophique - Dictionnaire* (two volumes); 3. *Les Œuvres Philosophique - Dictionnaire* (two volumes); and 4. *Le Discours Philosophique*. The first part introduces the field of philosophy in a very broad framework, whereby philosophy is treated from an intercultural perspective. The second part is a philosophical glossary that is divided into three sections: 1. *Philosophie Occidentale*; 2. *Pensées Asiatiques (Inde, Chine, Japon)*; and 3. *Conceptualisation des Sociétés Traditionnelles*. This conception offers a new approach to addressing philosophical terms in different cultural contexts on a linguistic level. The distinction between occidental, Asian, and 'traditional' contexts is admittedly problematic, as it suggests a hierarchy, and would therefore need to be reconsidered. The third part is a philosophical dictionary of works that is structured as follows: 1. *Philosophie Occidentale (Antiquité, Moyen Age - Renaissance, Age Classique, Modernité, Essor des sciences humaines, Pensée contemporaine)*; 2. *Pensées Asiatique (Inde, Chine, Japon, Co-rée)*; and 3. *Conceptualisation des Sociétés Traditionnelles (Afrique, Amérique, Asie du Sud-Est, Europe, Océanie)*. The encyclopedia offered an overview of such a wealth of philosophical works from various traditions of the world that was unprecedented at that time. The part about Asia alone offered information that had not yet been found in any other western dictionary at that time. The fourth part deals with the discourse of philosophy in general and from an intercultural perspective. Starting with the analysis of different languages and their significance for the philosophical discourse, a detailed thematization of the most diverse national philosophies follows. In further sections the problem of translation and the questions of comparative philosophy are discussed. This is followed by analyses of the importance of textuality from an intercultural perspective. In a broad attempt, the encyclopedia provides a reorientation of the entire philosophical discourse in an intercultural and global perspective. What is particularly remarkable is the high methodological awareness through which the various levels of discourse are carried out in detailed differentiation beyond the narrow centrisms. In many respects, this encyclopedia is still exceptional and provides

foundations for a variety of reflections on the reconceptualization of a global historiography of philosophy. Unfortunately, this encyclopedia has not had much effect in philosophy since it was first published.

There are currently 21 globally oriented histories of philosophy in English, the largest number compared to any other language. In the last 20 years one can even speak of a boom in the writing of global histories of philosophy. From the numerous publications, I would like to present only a selection here.

John C. Plott made the first attempt to write a *Global History of Philosophy (1963-1989)* in English. Five volumes are available as part of this attempt covering: 1. the Axial Age (1963); 2. the Han-Hellenistic-Bactrian Period (1979); 3. the Patristic-Sūtra Period (1980); 4. the Period of Scholasticism, Part I (1984); and 5. the Period of Scholasticism, Part II (1989). As the titles of the individual volumes suggest, Plott endeavored to devise his own periodization scheme, which, however, he did not develop until the second volume, that is, more than ten years after the first. If in the first volume he still adheres to the designation 'axial time' proposed by Karl Jaspers, 16 years later he finally breaks new ground for the designation of the various periods. With this proposal Plott has introduced some stimulating new considerations. On the one hand, this proposal can raise the question of alternative periodization systems, and on the other hand, it raises the question of whether it is really necessary and possible to be able to design such a system for all philosophical developments in a global perspective. Recent drafts for a global history of philosophy show that autochthonous periodization systems are applied in different languages and that currently no single periodization system for a global history of philosophy has prevailed.

Ninian Smart, a British scholar of Religious Studies, published the book *World Philosophies* in 1998. His presentation of the global history of philosophy is divided regionally and covers almost the entire world under geographical designations; only Australia and Polynesia do not receive a separate presentation. In addition to the regional divisions, the discussion is also historically differentiated, so that modern developments are also included. The table of contents divides the topics as follows: 1. the history of the world and our philosophical inheritance; 2. South Asian philosophies; 3. Chinese philosophies; 4. Korean philosophies; 5. Japanese philosophies; 6. philosophies of Greece, Rome and the Near East; 7. Islamic philosophies; 8. Jewish philosophies; 9. Europe; 10. North America; 11. Latin America; 12. modern Islam; 13. modern South and South-east Asia; 14. China, Korea and Japan in modern times; 15. African philosophies; and 16. concluding reflections.¹⁰

In addition, for the English language, I would like to refer to the digital project of Peter Adamson (LMU Munich), who has been continuously working on various fields of the history of philosophy in hundreds of podcasts under the title *History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps* since 2010.¹¹ The project, which initially aimed at presenting only the history of European philosophy without any gaps, is now taking on increasingly global features. The podcast series on African philosophy, for example, is impressive and groundbreaking.

¹⁰Nowadays a number of world philosophy books include 'indigenous thought'. This field of research was not yet taken into consideration by Smart.

¹¹See Adamson 'History of Philosophy Without Any Gaps', <https://historyofphilosophy.net/>.

Six globally oriented histories of philosophy are currently available in Italian. Among these publications, the contribution by Virgilio Melchiorre (2014) is particularly noteworthy. Melchiorre first treats occidental and analytic philosophy. This is followed by additional chapters on Russian, Islamic, Jewish, Chinese, Latin American, African, Indian, and Japanese philosophy. Each geographical area is presented by different authors from antiquity to the present. With this work, new ways of thinking are also shown in Italian language.

In Japanese, 18 attempts at a global history of philosophy have been published since the beginning of the 20th century. The most recent attempt to write a comprehensive history of philosophy in a global perspective is from 2020.¹² In 8 volumes, a group of Japanese philosophers attempts to restructure and represent the field of ‘World Philosophy’, as they call it. While they include a wide range of philosophies, the emphasis is on the presentation of European and Asian traditions of thought. The description of African and Latin American philosophy seems to be the weakest. These areas still seem to be very far removed from the Japanese discourse.

As in many other accounts, a geographical centering is evident in all examples mentioned above – a centering which leads to an exclusion of certain areas from the view. One result of our investigations is that tendencies toward different centrism are obvious in various histories of philosophy in different regions of the world, and that this phenomenon can be observed not only in Europe. It is evident from our research that publications on the history of philosophy pay special attention to philosophical traditions developed in the corresponding language of publication. For a possible global history of philosophy in the future, therefore, the particular hermeneutic horizon from which this history is written should be philosophically reflected upon. Presumably, such a globally oriented history of philosophy, which can do more justice to our contemporary global developments, can only be realized in an intercultural cooperation.

Philosophizing in a globalized world - transformative phenomenology

The reorganization of philosophical knowledge in global histories of philosophy poses special methodological problems not only for writing histories of philosophy, but also for philosophizing as a rigorous practice of thinking (Wimmer 2015; Elberfeld 2017). No single person is able to know and understand all existing traditions and languages and thus is able to include them in one unified approach to philosophy. Thus, the question arises, how then can philosophizing in the framework of a globalized order of philosophical knowledge still be done in a fruitful way? A first step in facing this new situation is to acknowledge the finitude of one’s own philosophical standpoint. The second step is to feature the intercultural polylogue at the center of one’s own thinking (Wimmer 2007). In order to be able to do both methodically, I developed a method several years ago which I call ‘Transformative Phenomenology’.

The term Transformative Phenomenology was developed in the context of my phenomenological encounter with the East Asian world by analyzing the Philosophy of time in Buddhism (see Elberfeld 2004, 2005, 2017). Transformative Phenomenology is based on European and East Asian ways of thinking so that the phenomenological

¹²See Itō K et al. (2020).

analysis of the phenomenon of time in Buddhist philosophy itself becomes a transformative exercise in experiencing, thinking, and speaking. In accordance with this tenor, the phenomenological analysis in which the phenomena generate a reflexive perception is often followed by new ways of speaking and thinking, which in turn leads to a new openness within the phenomena. The phenomena themselves become ways of a transformative practice, so that the phenomenological method is in absolutely no way determined by a supertemporal goal or a claim of eternal validity of any kind. Transformative Phenomenology takes the radically temporal, cultural, and embodied practice as the basis and the starting point of experiencing and thinking. Different phenomena are ways of practices which enfold their life within the phenomenological practice. These practices show a clear profile and a precise meaning in their enactive dynamic, without ever arriving at any imagined 'end'.

A central cultural foundation of the practice of Transformative Phenomenology lies in the language in which it is carried out. For this reason, languages play a crucial role as a medium of Transformative Phenomenology, so that phenomenology itself undergoes a linguistic turn following Wilhelm von Humboldt. According to Humboldt, language is not only understood as 'energeia', but it is also the structural variety of different languages that is of great relevance to philosophical thinking. Humboldt defines languages as different sorts of media, in which humans produce a worldview within the world of sensuous experiences. This language-bound worldview is mostly unthematized. Only in a linguistic reflection upon languages as such can one experience how much language constantly shapes our perception of reality. Transformative Phenomenology does not aim at a language-transcendent point of view, but uses a specific language as a medium and a tool of self-transformation. Various linguistic structures, vocabulary, and grammatical forms of a single language offer a rich variety for the transformative phenomenological practice. In this sense, individuals can perform phenomenological analysis in different languages. The more languages an individual person knows, the more fruitful the analyses can become.

Phenomenological practice in this sense is nothing other than an embodied and language-bound practice of an ongoing transformation of the research perspectives and of philosophy itself. Through a continuing dialogue with myself, with others, with nature, and with objects, the experience of my life and my time can be individually realized, manifesting itself as a trace of a historical time. Thus, self-transformation is never a solipsistic process, but always takes place amidst the world and its living situations, so that the criterion of its success is the opening of new realities in individual as well as in social reality. Transformative Phenomenology is a practice, which leads to the renewal and change of reality and the relation between myself and the world. Moreover, it expresses different meanings of the term 'practice'.

Apart from the linguistic usage as a rather specific form of practice, body-based transformative practices of different philosophical ways in Asia are of central importance here. Without committing to certain religious experiences, Transformative Phenomenology as practice relates to both cultural-social and individual levels. Transformative Phenomenology combines different methods of phenomenology, which are not limited to the approach of Husserl alone, but include more recent philosophical practices in different traditions as meditation and aesthetical practices. In contrast to a widespread academic practice of philosophy which only tries to clarify meanings or aims for absolute certainty in one linguistic context, Transformative

Phenomenology is decidedly an interculturally oriented endeavor, which is set to explore one's own conditions of thinking and experiencing based on an awareness of linguistic and cultural differences. Since Transformative Phenomenology is a practice of philosophy in a radical sense, the practice can begin in every situation and in every language, thus it is not bound to academic discourses. It is not restricted to any specific vocabulary, and terms and notions can be explored in a new light by exercising the practice.

Transformative Phenomenology can be summarized as follows:

1. Transformative Phenomenology does not pursue an ultimate scientific goal, which finalizes its project. Thereby the direction in which the transformation evolves is unforeseen. The phenomena cannot be clarified within a stable transcendental structure, but it can rather broaden and deepen the practice of the ever-evolving interrelation of myself and the world.
2. Transformative Phenomenology negates the separation of theory and practice. Not only is language understood to be a practice in a radical sense, but philosophy as a whole is considered a practice which is based in an intercultural attitude. In this way philosophy aligns with the efforts of arranging life-situations in the world in a critical and dialogical manner.
3. Transformative Phenomenology is a way of thinking in which phenomena are not pure objects to a philosophical analysis; on the contrary, the one who starts the practice of engaging with a phenomenon is already situated in the midst of the phenomenon itself. On the one hand, phenomena transform those who describe the experience of the phenomena; on the other hand, the phenomena will be renewed and transformed by the description and reflection. Phenomena are not objective 'things', but they unfold as situations and media in the sense of a transformational process.
4. Transformative Phenomenology takes place neither actively nor passively, but as a process and becoming in the 'middle voice' (Elberfeld 2011, 2020). While the German and English languages distinguish the mode of verbs only according to active and passive voice, in some other languages there is the possibility of understanding an event in the grammatical form of the 'middle voice'. This remains often unnoticed because it does not exist in many languages. In the form of the middle voice subject and object are equally active and passive, or they are deeply interrelated moments of a self-evolving process, which leads us away from the usual dichotomy of activity and passivity.¹³
5. Transformative Phenomenology works as a present-oriented transformation of historical and cultural traditions by re-tracing them in the present. Such a

¹³As an example, I would like to quote a text by Japanese philosopher Keiji Nishitani: 'In the original place that brings about what is called sensibility, that is to say, in the locale of appearing wherein sensibility in its pure simplicity first originates just as it is, there is no distinction between the "something" that senses and the "something" that is sensed. The activity of seeing is immediately one with the being visible [*mieru to iu koto*] of the thing, and the activity of hearing is immediately one with the being audible [*kikoeru to iu koto*] of the sound. When it is said that subject and object are undivided, or that thing and ego forget one another, this refers to this place. We say, "the sea is visible" or "the bell is audible". In these cases, "... visible [*ga mieru*]" is something other than either "to see [*wo miru*]" the sea, or the sea "is seen [*ga mirareru*]". Rather, [it] expresses both sides inseparably as one' (Elberfeld 2020: 676).

transformational process can be started in every tradition and in every language. In examining and analyzing through the different historical and intercultural perspectives, a phenomenological path can emerge that allows access to phenomena like ‘time’, ‘language’, ‘the good life’, ‘sensuality’, ‘art’, etc., in an intercultural perspective and in an innovative manner, without being able to conclude the investigation of the phenomena in a final destination. Transformative Phenomenology does not seek to understand cultures ‘as they are’ but to apply the concept of culture as transformational ways of evolving perspectives, and thereby opening up the possibility of life as a continuous practice of interculturality in global perspectives.

6. Transformative phenomenology does not attempt to resolve resistances in favor of uniform world views, but rather understands them as challenges for phenomenological work. Resistance can also develop into a conflict that cannot be resolved from any single position. The overall goal of phenomenological work is not a life that is as clarified, unified, and static as possible, but rather the exploratory approach to the processes of change, entanglement, and friction in individual and social life is at the center of attention. All phenomena – beyond the distinction between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ and beyond the hope that everything could become better through philosophy – can become the medium of phenomenological work without being able to foresee in advance where the phenomenological paths will lead.
7. Transformative phenomenology actively addresses the zones of foreignness, individual and social taboos, and the marginalized as a whole. This is a necessary consequence in order to be able to develop philosophizing in a globalized world. For without dealing with the diverse power structures that not only determine contemporary philosophizing in Europe and North America, the canonical orders of knowledge can neither be researched nor critically questioned. To this end, provocative questions are just as important as unconventional methods and exercises. Those who push the boundaries of their own knowledge systems in this way often become marginalized themselves. This is where transformative phenomenology itself begins to become ‘political’.

It is in this sense that the methodology of Transformative Phenomenology is an integral part of our attempts at producing new historiographies of philosophy in an intercultural, decolonial, and global perspective. As noted earlier, our task today is indeed to create a new conception of the history of philosophy for innovative, future forms of philosophizing from a global perspective in an open discourse.

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