COMMENT AND DISCUSSION

# Ethnophilosophy, Comparative Philosophy, Pragmatism: Toward a Philosophy of Ethnoscapes

**Thorsten Botz-Bornstein**
Associate Researcher EHESS Paris

In this essay I would like to reflect on the place of philosophy within a "globalized" world and reconsider its status as a phenomenon that is potentially linked to a "local" culture. Whenever we question the authority of "general" truths and we look for ways of integrating "local discourses" into the overall construction called "global philosophy," we come across the old idea of "ethnophilosophy." Far from suggesting ethnophilosophy as a model for the philosophy of the future, I intend to rethink certain themes of ethnophilosophy and contrast them with disciplines such as "comparative philosophy" and pragmatism. I will sketch an approach that I believe to be appropriate for the development of philosophy in times of globalization.

One of the negative undertones of the term "globalization" is that it is seen as a uniformizing and flattening power that eliminates existing cultural differences. On the other hand, there is an important side effect of globalization represented by those movements acting against it, stressing the importance of "localization" or "regionalization." Ethnophilosophy, in spite of its outdated origin and its potential dangers, remains interesting as an intellectual model as long as it is not formulated in a radical fashion. *When* it is formulated in a radical fashion it has to face the reproach of relativism and of enclosing itself in a cultural sphere that it declares to be inaccessible to others.

## *Ethnophilosophy: A Renaissance?*

Ethnophilosophy was developed in Africa in the 1960s, although its origin can be traced back to a book on Bantu philosophy by the Belgian missionary Placide Tempels. In this book, published in 1946, Tempels tried to conclude with the view that primitive peoples have neither ontology nor logic and are unable to recognize the nature of being or even of reality as such. Tempels was looking for an ontology colored by "local" cultural components but also by language,[1] and he made a serious attempt to build a philosophical system based on Bantu thought.

What followed were endless controversies about the nature of African philosophy that made of "ethnophilosophy" a stream of thought much richer than its name might allow one to suppose. A part of its stimulating power can perhaps be traced to the ambiguity of Tempels' approach: on the one hand it could easily be dismissed as paternalism or the attempt to force African philosophy into the straightjacket of European concepts, while on the other hand the expressed desire to give "ethnic"

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philosophy a new role within the international hierarchy of the philosophies was immensely attractive. Be that as it may, Tempels' book became the real manifest of "ethnophilosophy."

Another point at issue that spurned internal ethnophilosophical discussions was the question whether African philosophy is advanced by an entire people (that is, by a collective) or by individual philosophers. This question (which does not arise in Tempels' book) was first taken up by the Beninese philosopher Paulin Hountondji,[2] who claimed that ethnophilosophy is no philosophy at all because it remains indifferent toward individually critical, that is, typically *philosophical,* approaches. Related debates touch upon fundamental questions concerning the meaning of "collective thinking" or the nature of philosophy as such.[3]

However subtle the points may be that emerge from these discussions, for the outside observer ethnophilosophy appears to be a kind of anthropology (whose premises it continues to share) with an incorporated interest in metaphysical questions. Its opposite is "conventional" Western philosophy, which persistently explores truth with the help of a single, individual *mind,* aiming at the crystallization of a truth relevant for everybody. What matters for ethnophilosophy is the truth brought forward by a certain way of life of a group of people that can be found on the "inside" of a culture and that can exist independently of any considerations of those things that exist on the outside. Ethnophilosophy is radical in the sense that it not only aims to reestablish, through its opposition to the all-intruding "international" philosophy, its own philosophy within the borders of a certain *nation;* going much further than many of today's opponents of globalization would dare to go, ethnophilosophy thinks of philosophy as taking place within the borders of a certain ethnic group.

In spite of the intensive critical evaluation and transformation that ethnophilosophy has suffered in Africa since the 1960s, it has never attracted much attention from those who have no academic link with the specific domain of "African philosophy." It seems, however, that through recent confrontations with the theme of "globalization," the idea of "ethnophilosophy" has started expanding its field of influence. In 1997, Fidelis Okafor published an article in *Philosophy East and West* with the slightly curious title "In Defense of Afro-Japanese Ethnophilosophy."[4] Okafor reevaluates qualities like "folkness" and "communal mind" as characteristics of a philosophy that takes a people's *Weltanschauung* as simultaneously a point of departure and an objective. He puts forward "the reasoning or thinking that underlie the existential outlook, the patterns of life, belief system, aesthetic and moral values, [and] customary laws and practices of a particular people" as primary constituents of philosophy. While Hountondji, who dominated the discourse on this subject for such a long time, employed the term "ethnophilosophy" negatively, Okafor insists on its positive connotations. "Folkness" becomes, for Okafor, a subject of interest for "non-Western" philosophies that are "devoid of universal ideas of Western philosophy" (Okafor, p. 366). Okafor quotes Graham Parkes, who claimed that "a feature of this [i.e., the Japanese] tradition that makes it quite different from its Western counterparts is that philosophy did not develop as a separate discipline in isolation

from life, but was rather embodied in particular forms of practice" (Okafor, p. 367).[5] Here Okafor sees parallels with African philosophy. A "communal element" dependent on people's own experience, an admitted innocence toward the typically Western distinction between realism and idealism (Okafor, p. 368), and an emphasis on "immediate experience" would all be "non-Western" characteristics shared by both Africans and Japanese.

There might be some truth in Okafor's provocative statement that Japanese philosophy has ethnophilosophical traits. Did not Masao Maruyama suggest that Japanese intellectuals still retain remnants of an "an animist vision of the world" that remains hidden deep in their consciousness?[6] At the same time, it is striking that Okafor does not allude in this context to the *ambiguity* of the whole Japanese philosophical enterprise. True, the works of Nishida Kitarō and Watsuji Tetsurō, developed from the 1920s on, are seen today as early formulations of anti-Eurocentrism in philosophy; but the irony is that these works could acquire their anti-Eurocentric status only because they managed to reformulate traditional Japanese thought in *Western* terms. Any anti-Eurocentrism must first compromise with Eurocentrism in order to become visible for "Europeans." In this sense, the Japanese project runs in parallel with Tempels' attempt to show that "Bantu thought" *does* contain abstract elements, that it *can* be formulated in a language interesting for Westerners, and therefore that it *is* philosophy.

While Okafor spells out his observations in terms of a clearly defined "Renaissance of ethnophilosophy," attempts by other non-Western philosophers (or even Western ones) to formulate similar ideas remain less outspoken as to their intellectual links with this African tradition. Still, ethnophilosophical moments can be recognized elsewhere, and I would like to sketch some examples that have struck me during the last few years. In Finland, an interesting article on the possibilities of "Finnish thinking" recently engaged in the examination of those parts of Finnish thinking that are "not (wholly or totally) translatable," because their meaning exceeds "representations and subjects."[7] These difficult linguistic items cannot be approached with the help of metaphysics or abstract linguistic analysis because all theoretical and conceptual tools remain "hostile to the possibility of local modes of thinking." Instead, we should try to rediscover language as "a form of experience and not a system of representations." The author, Tere Vadén, refers to the Finnish linguist H. G. Porthan (1739–1804), who established language as being "inseparably tied to thinking and culture, so that every language has its own mode of thinking," concluding with the "impossibility of thinking clearly in foreign languages" (p. 388). Thinking and philosophizing in a foreign language suppresses and confuses thoughts.[8] In the end, Vadén does not decide to support Porthan's scientific thesis about the correspondence of language and thinking, but opts for a Heideggerian vision of language as the "place of thinking."

Among those areas that are most obviously marked by ethnophilosophical themes is Russia, in which we can actually observe a virulent revival of the so-called Eurasianist tradition. Historically, Russian philosophers preceded even the Japanese in challenging Eurocentric philosophical and historical models. Some of the Slavo-

phile claims were relaunched in the 1920s by the Eurasianists; they have recently been relaunched once again by so-called neo-Eurasianist philosophical movements. The refusal of Nicolai S. Trubetzkoy (one of the founders of Eurasianism) to recognize "Romano-Germanic" intellectual criteria as valid for Russia[9] seems to have as much potential of encouraging contemporary culturology as postcolonial studies examining Russian culture.[10] Trubetzkoy's criticism of Western terms like "humanity," "universally human," "civilization," or "world progress" lets Eurasianism appear as the earliest form of "postmodernism."[11]

However, ethnophilosophical motives can be observed also in territories where one would not really expect them. I would seriously consider the foundation of a society for the philosophy of "Anglo-Teutonic Peoples" as one step in this direction.[12]

Then there are formulations that are in no way meant as ethnophilosophical statements but that can very well appear as such. Barry Smith recently linked the largest part of German philosophy (and an even larger part of contemporary French philosophy) to a "linguistic culture" that evolved during "a time when the true source of knowledge could be seen as lying not in science and reason but in feeling, passion, sensibility—sometimes even in instinct and blood." According to Smith, "consequences can reliably be drawn for the subsequent development of philosophical writing in this language," because we can find the same "linguistic echo" in Kant, in *Sein und Zeit,* and in Rosenberg."[13] It is difficult *not* to read this statement as a reissue of 1960s ethnophilosophy with an implicit caricature of the Whorff-Sapir thesis about the correspondence of thinking and language.

As can be expected, the contemporary project that could be called the "Renaissance of ethnophilosophy" is developing also along less promising paths leading straight to mysticism, totalitarianism, and populist politics. While specialists of Eurasianism are still arguing whether or not the original Eurasianism naturally tended toward totalitarian forms of the state, the nationalist philosopher and geopolitician Alexandr Dugin founded a new Eurasianist Movement whose explicit aim is to represent an intellectual basis for the Greater Russia movement and a political stance against the Islamic world as much as against the United States of America.[14] Dugin's Eurasianism is opposed not just to the recent unfortunate effects of globalization but to enlightenment as a whole.[15] While a generalized atmosphere of "post-atheist spirituality" (Mikhail Epstein) is even favorable to such attempts, the Russian government has even chosen an ideology based on the "old sacred" and "national Russian spirit" *(narodnost')* in order to put the Russian people on a safer path toward "civilization."[16]

In India, intellectuals like Gayatri Spivak, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Anshis Nandy, and Partha Chatterjee have long talked about an authentic national liberation through the rediscovery of authentic traditions. However, the revival of philosophical traditions is not limited to national intellectual liberation as preached by these people. A weird form of postmodernism attempts to establish "Indian philosophy" by way of radical relativism. Meera Nanda reports from the Indian philosophical scene about a "Hindu nationalist promotion of assorted Vedic sciences" getting dangerously mixed up with postcolonial critiques of science as such.[17] What sounds like

a curious echo of the nineteenth-century Slavophile claim that the truth of science should be in accordance with (or even be searched for) in Orthodoxy[18] is, in reality, much worse:

> All of these militant demands for "equal rights" to pursue their own version of theistic or sacred science take it for granted that it is no longer necessary to grant science the status of objective and universal knowledge. Science, it is assumed in the true postmodernist fashion, no longer poses a challenge to the metaphysical assumptions of their own faiths, because scientific knowledge is itself a construct of a wide variety of contested terms, held together, ultimately, by cultural power and social interests which define a given paradigm or an episteme. (Nanda)

In the end, one is ready to "bring in the supernatural as an explanation of natural phenomena" (ibid.).

*Comparative Philosophy*

Having sketched the phenomenon of ethnophilosophy, with its possible variations and aberrations, before analyzing the phenomena discussed above I want to mention another possibility of considering "ethno-" components in philosophy. This discipline is already well established and is developing along safer paths: "comparative philosophy." What comparative philosophy—like the increasingly influential "intercultural philosophy"[19]—has in common with ethnophilosophy is that it takes the "ethno-" part of any philosophy seriously and is even ready to establish it as a starting point for fruitful comparisons. The comparative approaches of comparative philosophy are meant to transcend the statements contained in a certain tradition and to lead them to a "higher" truth. Retrospectively, even the initial suggestions made within the framework of a single tradition will be understood in a better and "fresher" way. The model of comparative philosophy is efficient and justified as a method. Moreover, it represents a case in point for the illustration of the difficulties involved in ethnophilosophical projects in general.

Among the numerous comparative disciplines practiced in academic research (e.g., comparative literature, comparative religion, or comparative linguistics), comparative philosophy has an outstanding position. In the case of comparative literature, it is not really the *subject of the discipline* (e.g., "literature") that engages one in comparative activities; rather, a certain "science of literature" compares its subjects to each other. Also, in the case of comparative religion, we do not really mean that "religion" itself would become comparative but rather that a "comparative science of religion" compares different religions. The exceptional status of philosophy becomes clear here. Philosophy, by comparing different philosophies to each other, does not become a "comparative science of philosophy," but *is* philosophy. Comparative philosophy is identified by an inner self-contradiction: on the one hand, philosophy, like literature and art, is part of a cultural experience that cannot be fully materialized because it is an intimate process. In principle, such intimate processes cannot be "compared" (there is, e.g., no "comparative art"). On the other

hand, philosophy *is itself* one of those materializing disciplines that attempt to transform culture, art, religion, et cetera into something that can be "grasped" through concepts, ideas, and notions and—finally—be compared.

The self-contradictory character of comparative philosophy becomes particularly obvious with regard to ethnophilosophy. Ethnophilosophy contains a rich "inner" cultural experience, but it would be mistaken if it thinks that it can grasp itself *from the inside,* that is, by developing its methods out of its own traditions. It will always remain impossible to grasp one's own inner philosophico-cultural experience from the unique standpoint of that experience itself. In order to grasp itself *philosophically,* ethnophilosophy has to leave the "inside" sphere of the "ethno" and become, like any full-fledged philosophy, "universal."

*Pragmatism*

I will now try to analyze the phenomenon of ethnophilosophy and confront it with certain theoretical stances, the first of which will be pragmatism. Specialists in international relations have coined the term "glocalization" as a hybrid form of globalization and localization. Also, philosophy as an expression of contemporary culture should be seen as ethnic and global at the same time. The reason for this is that today, even more than in former times, for philosophy, as much as for any other discipline, "experience" is global as much as it is ethnic.

In the domain of philosophy, Richard Rorty has repeated what Feyerabend and Kuhn undertook in the domain of science: he has cut philosophy off from its traditional obligation to create unifying, that is, "global" theories. For Rorty, philosophical truth, like that of science, is not a-historical and neutral but determined by cultural forms of life.

John Dewey (1859–1952), and pragmatism in general, engaged in a paradoxical project. They reacted against a nineteenth-century idealist philosophy that was deeply involved in metaphysical problems, and *at the same time* they reacted against positivist ambitions to fundamentally contest the usefulness of metaphysics. Although the pragmatist alternative remains difficult to spell out, it seems that Rorty's step to deny the existence of global truths is one of its necessary consequences.

In an article on the future of pragmatism,[20] Rorty suggests reconsidering the central motives of William James (1842–1910) and John Dewey, to develop a philosophy that remains aware of its own and others' historical, cultural, and ethnic bases. Rorty develops a philosophical attitude that can look like a form of ethnophilosophy. The particular feature is that it bases its right to exist not on ideological but on purely "pragmatic" motives.

First, Rorty does not talk about ethnophilosophy but of other philosophers who emphatically contested the Kantian claim that the task of philosophy is to establish "truth" within an a-historical, culturally neutral context. Among these philosophers were Nietzsche and Heidegger. Their problem, however, was not to be guided by pragmatic motives. One of the consequences of their non-pragmatic criticism toward general truth is that they developed a generalized anti-scientific attitude.

Pragmatists, on the other hand, see no reason to abandon the heritage of enlightenment. Managing to take into consideration "history" and "culture" without ceasing to be "secular intellectuals" (p. 161), all that James and Dewey did was to abandon the metaphysical, Kantian ambition of *grounding* culture, religious belief, et cetera in *philosophical* bases. To ground culture in philosophy means to impute "general truth" to truths that are only individual. We understand that Kant believed that he had established a standard of reason naturally transcending communal conditioning or even any conditioning of single cultures. Still, Khlebnikov could reproach him with the claim that he never succeeded in determining "the boundaries of reason [but that] he determined the boundaries of German reason."[21]

Jürgen Habermas points to the danger immanent in Rorty's pragmatic step, because Rorty could end up "drowning philosophy in contexts determined [only] by contingency."[22] Implicit in Habermas' criticism is the warning that once we abandon general truths, philosophy will be drowned in *relativism.* On the other hand, as Habermas also recognizes, the incontestable advantage of Rorty's approach is that it makes philosophy more apt to consider cultural "multitude" in the form of more graspable realities.

The pragmatist approach thus does not suggest that we should research and collect a maximum of individual truths and then subsequently declare that all these truths are incompatible with each other. The pragmatist only constantly points out that "truths" are less general than idealistic philosophers want us to believe. For James, Rorty says, "truth" is "what is good in the way of belief." It is "not the sort of thing which *has* essence" (Rorty, p. 162).

Pragmatists follow Hegel's conviction that "philosophy is its time grasped in thought" (Rorty, p. 174). They display thus an ethnophilosophical input with regard to themselves as well as to the philosophy of others that becomes particularly obvious when Rorty writes: "The pragmatist . . . must remain ethnocentric and offer examples. He can only say: 'undistorted' means employing *our* criteria of relevance, where *we* are the people who have read and pondered Plato, Newton, Kant . . ." (Rorty, p. 173). It is because pragmatists are rational that they recognize that "rational" philosophy cannot exist, simply because there is no absolutely rational life (in a Platonic sense) to philosophize about. Philosophical vocabulary, just like everyday language, cannot be derived directly from *nature* but only from *culture.* A priori structures of language, social life, or politics might offer comfort to our thinking but correspond to no cultural reality. Any philosophy not recognizing this pragmatic reality will not find truth. Rorty is a pragmatist because he is a realist, and the statement by the Russian philosopher S. A. Frank (1877–1950), who reflected so much upon the character of "cultural reality," can be read as an elucidation of Rorty-style pragmatism:

> The true realist is not one who sees only what is in front of his nose. On the contrary, this sort of "realist" is usually destined to be a doctrinaire, for he sees not God's wide world as it really is but only an artificial little world limited by his interests and personal position. The true realist is one who, having ascended the heights, has the ability to survey the wide distances, to see reality in its fullness and objectivity.[23]

In spite of this Nietzschean account of philosophical truth, Rorty successfully escapes the reproach of relativism as well as that of irrationalism. Pragmatists do not hold "that every belief on a certain topic . . . is as good as every other" (p. 166), nor are they eager to invent new "irrationalist," pseudo-metaphysical notions like "intuition," "thinking with the blood," et cetera (p. 171). Since pragmatists follow no ideal at all, they simply do not have to face such "idealist" charges. What counts is the philosophical process, or the "conversation" (as Socrates would have said): "We are not conversing because we have a goal, but because Socratic conversation is an activity which is its own end" (p. 172).

Finally, all we can gain is "a new sense of community" (p. 166) but no abstract truth: "Our identification with our community—our society, our political tradition, our intellectual heritage—is heightened when we see this community as *ours* rather than *nature's, shaped* rather than *found,* one among many which men have made. In the end, pragmatists tell us, what matters is our loyalty to other human beings clinging together against the dark, not our hope of getting things right" (ibid.).

I have produced this lengthy account of Rorty's reflections because they come remarkably close to what could be considered a positive form of contemporary ethnophilosophy. Rorty's pragmatism obviously adopts the traits of contextualism. However, to spell out a "context" signifies already putting something abstract on those pedestals that are usually built with the help of metaphysics. A real pragmatist is unable to indicate a firm point of view from which "contexts" can be established.

It is interesting to note that comparative philosophy has actually always implicitly agreed with this. No "comparative science of philosophy" can ground a certain philosophical tradition in a way that makes it look as if it were firmly anchored in a certain context. It is misleading to view philosophical truth as contained in a context represented by different cultural *spheres* jealously concealing their content from each other, even if we subsequently set out to compare them.

Habermas recognizes the affinity that Rorty's context has with Wittgenstein's *Lebensform.*[24] He also recognizes that Rorty's contextualism only makes sense as long as it remains moderate, that is, as long as it does not idealize the community and turn it into an abstract life-world (Habermas, pp. 176 ff). This is very important, because within the provincial communities called "life-worlds," communication, as much as comparisons, has become unnecessary.

### *Essentialism and Relativism*

I now want to suggest an approach that can be read as an answer to Habermas' criticism of Rorty's contextualism. It is remarkable that all the examples above of "ethnophilosophy," reaching from Watsuji[25] via Eurasianism to the "Hindu Right," have been reproached with Spenglerian essentialism. This is one of the reasons why I sympathize with Rorty's claim that ethnophilosophy must be pragmatic, or with James' idea that "truth is not the sort of thing which has an essence" (Rorty, p. 162).

Akira Iriye has explained that essentialism in culture leads more or less automatically to the belief that "every culture is an empire."[26] This must be the same

"essentialist understanding of culture" that, according to Nanda, the Hindu Right has "borrowed straight from Spengler's *Decline of the West*." Curiously, once it is established, this essentialism can find a very comfortable shortcut to communal relativism:

> They argue, in essence, that what constitutes relevant evidence for a community of scientists will vary with their material/social and professional interests, their social values including gender ideologies, religious faith, and with their culturally grounded standards of rationality and success. Thus, scientists with different social backgrounds, from different cultures and from different historical periods, literally, live in different worlds: the sciences of modern Western societies are not any more "true" or "rational" than the sciences of other cultures. (Nanda)

Most remarkably, these populist Hindu philosophers established their views (according to Nanda) with the help of Feyerabend, Kuhn, Quine, Wittgenstein, and Foucault. We are here confronted with what Habermas sees as the main problem inherent in Rorty's philosophy: that everything can all too easily be sucked into the "whirlpool of contingent experience" *(Strudel der Kontingenzerfahrung)* (Habermas, p. 179).

Habermas' concerns continue to be as valid as Rorty's concerns are interesting. All that remains to be said is that, almost ironically, today Habermas' nostalgia for fixed forms of transcendental reason on the one hand and "singular reasons" of different ethnophilosophies on the other become combined *without* the help of philosophy. The prominent existence of a globalized reality that asks for—pragmatic—recognition, thwarts all attempts at finding a *general* reason as much as those at finding a "*singular* truth." The reason is that, on a globalized philosophical scene, the opposition of a spherical, universal, abstract "globe" to a concrete, Heideggerian, flat "earth" no longer makes sense. In a time of mass immigration, the internet, and economic internationalization, it is equally difficult to produce a philosophy modeled after Kant's transcendental idealism as it is to introduce a Tempels-style ethnophilosophy. At the moment the *Lebenswelt* itself is globalized, philosophy remains unable to opt for either the one or the other: either model would shift somewhere between "asking the impossible" and "running in open doors."

The reason is also that both Kant and Tempels cling to the idea of a *sphere* as the most convenient model for reason. Be it the *local* reason or the *universal* one: both consider it their highest aim to embrace fully and first of all *themselves,* that is, the sphere they have chosen as a target (either their local culture or the whole—abstract—world).

Today, the aim of philosophy *can* only be to effectuate, in a pragmatic way, a synthesis of globe and earth—the squaring of the circle, so to speak. The result is the deduction of a more complex notion that I would like to call "scape."

### *Toward a Philosophy of Ethnoscapes*

The sociologist Arjun Appadurai has suggested that we should see the world in terms of "ethnoscapes, technoscapes, mediascapes, finanscapes [and] ideoscapes."[27]

"Scapes," Appadurai explains, "are like perspectival landscapes." They have "fluid, irregular shapes" and "do not look the same from every angle." While the appearance of ethnoscapes, technoscapes, mediascapes, and finanscapes is relatively recent and linked to a later stage of modernity, the ideoscape (which is most closely linked to philosophy) is certainly the oldest of the five members. Contemporary scapes are, according to Appadurai, formed to a large extent by immigrants, refugees, and exiles; they are not limited to national boundaries but scattered across the globe, although still able to form more or less coherent "scapes." We can add that in the realm of ideas "migrant notions" and "refugee concepts" have been moving around the globe for centuries, probably because *ideas* are easier to displace than anything else in the world.

Looking at Appadurai's construct from a philosophical standpoint, we are tempted to see all five scapes as being contained in the older notion of "mindscape." In the past, the "mind" has often been accepted as a model for the expression of cultural particularities, and it served, in postwar academic studies, as an important guideline for the analysis of national or regional cultures. After Franz Boas' *The Mind of the Primitive Man* (1917),[28] books like *The Japanese Mind, The Korean Mind, The Chinese Mind, The Mind of the South, The Austrian Mind,* and others became popular, especially in the 1960s and 1970s.[29] Looking at these books, it is notable that most of them contain studies covering very precisely the five fields that Appadurai also put forward—plus another one: philosophy. It is true, as previously mentioned, that Appadurai's "ideoscape" comes close to philosophy, but it is limited because it contains only enlightenment values such as freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty, and democracy. What seems to be lacking in Appadurai's combination of scapes is philosophy as another legitimate expression of *culture*—but is it really lacking? Is it not possible to see the "mindscape" as not simply the sum of its five parts but as representing just that quantity that is usually referred to as *philosophy*? Of course, if one considers philosophy as an elitist discipline dealing with cultural facts only after having formalized them into abstract configurations, one might not see the "mindscape" as an expression of a philosophical landscape.

However, if we accept the "squaring of the circle" and admit ethno-cultural experiences as creative elements of a self-forming process of philosophical culture, the "mindscape" appears as a viable reality for intercultural philosophy. After all, the more "formal" and abstract part of philosophy is not abandoned. Philosophical mindscapes can have elitist parts (in which we can encounter the *categorical imperative* or the Buddhist *śūnyatā*) and other parts that can be more "ethnicity-," "ideology-," "media-" or even "finance-" oriented. What all parts have in common is that each is structured like an open scape and not like a closed sphere, and that together they all form a single "mindscape."

Finally, the squaring of the circle, that is, the transformation of the sphere into a scape, goes in parallel with the dissolution of philosophy's internal "self-contradiction." As we have seen, philosophy is, by its nature, torn between subjective experience and objectivizing ambition; in the worst case this tension gets polarized to the point where a subjective sense of ethnicity finds itself opposed to

objective global order. Within the philosophical mindscape this tension does not exist. Neither is the scape an object nor can it be reduced to "subjective experience." Neither is it an abstract quantity (as "globalized experience" would be) nor is it concrete, "bound-to-the-earth," folk-like experience.

Another important point is that Appadurai's scapes are "imagined worlds": they are "multiple worlds constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups around the world" (Appadurai, p. 296). Also, a philosophical mindscape is not "real" (in the same way that anthropological facts are real) but participates in the fluent movement of cultural experience.

The above-mentioned conundrum, elucidated in the section on comparative philosophy, that philosophy cannot grasp itself through (its own) method because a part of it is constituted in a non-methodological, cultural *reality,* gets naturally dissolved within the model of the scape.

Another problem that no longer appears within scapes is that of the discrepancy between the individual and the group. Ethnophilosophy established the idea of philosophy as being created not by an individual (even if this individual manages to mold a purely "individual" truth into general concepts) but by a group. The Kantian ambition to provide a philosophical grounding for truths that are, at their origin, cultural and thus dependent on groups is here inverted. The individual *cannot* produce anything, neither a personal nor a general truth. There are only "group truths" produced by groups. The problem is that, once such a status of truth is established, it is difficult to bring together (group) ethnos and (individual) mind within discussions on intercultural philosophy, although, originally, they were not separated; after all, the individual is part of a group. The "scape" helps to overcome this problem as much as it helps to overcome the opposite problem, that of Western philosophers who believe certain truths to be universal, although, in reality, their beliefs are perhaps only group-oriented ones.

*Mind-Body Scapes*

Appadurai does not make an essential "ethnophilosophical" difference between persons and groups: both of them can be encountered within scapes. The novelty of Appadurai's scape-scheme is that it sees economic, technological, and cultural structures not as fixed but as open, evolving, and merging, although still recognizable as scapes. The *Oxford Dictionary* explains the origin of the word "scape" as stemming from "escape" (cf. scape-pipe = escape pipe).[30] This is, in my opinion, the most important reason why it represents such a strong alternative to "spherical" metaphors. Spheres contain something that needs to be protected by a shell. The German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk strongly emphasized the idea of the sphere as a metaphor for the "internal" position of culture that can exist as long as it protects itself against something external:

> The sphere is the inner, discovered, shared round shape that men live in as they become humans. Because to reside somewhere always already means to form bubbles, in the particular as much as in general, humans are those beings who put up circular worlds and

> look into horizons. To live in spheres means to create those dimensions that can contain humans. Spheres are spatial creations effective from the point of view of immunology, made of ecstatic beings on whom the exterior is working.[31]

The sphere not only protects but, according to Sloterdijk, also "gives sense" to any form of social life (p. 57), appearing thus as a psychosocial dimension of collectivism.

A scape must be defined as the opposite of such a protective psychosocial bubble. It produces "sense" without limiting this sense to a certain sphere but remains open and can even absorb and integrate other "senses." A good way to imagine a "mindscape" is to see it, in a Bergsonian way, as a "center of habits." According to Bergson, what is decisive for man's existential condition are not the intellectual motives located within a closed mind but rather the "bodily prolongation" of our mind that determines our behavior within a certain cultural space. These habits—which are a matter of the body as much as of the mind—are more stable than the mind.

It is indeed possible to perceive in Bergson's distinction the difference between a sphere and a scape, or, more precisely, the difference between the conception of the mind as a (spherical) container "containing" ideas, values, et cetera, and the mind as a mental phenomenon connected to social, cultural or "bodily" behavior. Bergson's center of habits, just because it represents a paradoxical fusion of the abstract and the concrete, is a center not only of thought but also of action. The idea of the mind as a closed entity is abstract and can easily become stagnant. A way to oppose this is to see the philosophical "mindscape" as a dynamic center of habit-action. Within this scape or within this "center of action" we act. Since, according to Appadurai, scapes look different from every angle, an important precondition for the existence of these de-centered scapes is thus that there must be bodies that move within these scapes. Effects of location and dislocation can take place only if the mindscape is not seen as an intellectual, spiritual, objectified sphere, but as constantly being-related-to bodies, who, since they are moving, disrupt any fixed perspective. In this sense, every mindscape is at the same time a "bodyscape." Jean-Luc Nancy's concept of body-space characterizes very well this idea of bodyscape as an existential space:

> Bodies are not "full," or filled with space (space is always full): they are *open* space; that is to say in one sense, space that is properly *spacious* rather than spatial, or that which one could perhaps call *place.* Bodies are places of existence, and there is no existence without place, without *there,* without a "here," a "here it is" *(voiçi)* for the *this (ceci).* The body-space is neither full, nor empty; there is neither outside nor inside, any more than there are no parts, no totality, no functions, no finality.[32]

What does all this mean more concretely for intercultural, comparative philosophy or for the philosophy of ethnoscapes proposed above? To try to understand, for example, "Japanese philosophy" in one's own, Western terms is wrong although not entirely avoidable. However, it would still be more wrong to reduce Japanese philosophy to "Eastern Spirituality" or perhaps to one expression or another of "National

Identity" in order to avoid any Western preconceptions. This would be the contrary of understanding Japanese philosophy as a philosophical mindscape. When we try to understand "Japanese philosophy," our intellect is not penetrating a sphere within which everything stands at certain fixed positions; rather we perceive things in the same way as a body perceives a landscape. The body, at the moment it perceives a "scape," is unable to locate it independently of its own (moving) position within this scape, and is forced to link every impression to a larger universal (which is equally dependent on the body). In some way this comes down to saying that in order to understand "Japanese philosophy" in the right way, it is necessary to take care that those things that have been located get immediately dislocated.

In any case it is a mistake to believe that a larger universal sphere contains individual, fixed items, and that "explanations" can be delivered by drawing links between the individual and the universal. If the "individual" is seen *only* "in terms of the universal," all that will be produced is a cliché because the individual will only be the *typical* representative of a universal. On the other hand, if the "universal" is seen in terms of the "individual," the result will most probably look like a typical product of rationalism or idealism who, as Ram Adhar Mall has said, always likes "to think [of] the multiple as dependent on the One."[33] The multiple will then not be established as a composition of different, autonomous, concrete entities, but will be installed through an intellectual and abstract shortcut as a total unity. To try to explain the existence of the multiple *only* by way of its identification with the One neglects the concrete reality of the multiple.

The problem is reminiscent of the hermeneutic circle, although it is, in fact, more complicated. The suggested alternative is to define philosophical mindscapes as mind-body scapes that are neither abstract nor concrete. Idealism and rationalism engendered Hegel's philosophy of the Absolute Spirit, which attempted to imagine a kind of spherical One (a community, a nation) as an organic whole. What is missing in Hegel's model is the moment of "dislocation," which the Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitarō has called "nothingness," in opposition to Hegel's Absolute Spirit. As a matter of fact, the idea of body-scape overlaps to a very large extent with Nishida's notions of "place" and "horizon," which are *non-organically unified entities* in which no element can be "located" without constantly being "dislocated." The horizon and the constellations within the "place" are constantly changing according to the "body" through which it is perceived.

Although a real "hermeneutics of scapes" remains to be written, it is certain that in times of intensive intercultural communication, "mind-spheres," as long as they appear like philosophical bio-topes, create an unacceptable situation: they leave no choice between neotraditionalism and universalism. Frederic Jameson's vision of a postmodern geopolitical system thus comes close to a vision of a world in which thoughts are defined in terms of mind-spheres instead of mind-body scapes:

> In the absence of general categories under which to subsume such particulars, the lapse back into features of the pre–World War I international system is inevitable and convenient (it includes all the national stereotypes which, inevitably racist whether positive or

> negative, organize our possibility of viewing and confronting the collective Other). It is also important to stress the fact that these archaic categories will not work for the new world system: it is enough, for example, to reflect on the disappearance of specifically national cultures and their replacement, either by a centralized commercial production for world export or by their own mass-produced neotraditional images, for the lack of fit between the categories of the nineteenth century and the realities of the twenty-first.[34]

What is true for Jameson's "New World System" is also true for philosophy. Neo-provincialism in philosophy can be avoided only when philosophies are seen in a pragmatic way as what they are: dynamical mindscapes.

## "Culturéalité"

Finally, I would like to take the characterization of the mind-body sphere one step further. In *Perspective as Symbolic Form,* Erwin Panofsky makes the interesting observation that "as soon as space is included in the representation, above all in landscape painting, that world becomes curiously unreal and inconsistent, like a dream or mirage."[35] Panofsky points to the interesting fact that, as soon as we perceive a painted reality through space (that is, the painting's own, "real" space), it becomes more than an accumulation of concrete facts. At the same time it is also much more than an accumulation of abstract concepts. We see the "reality" in the landscape painting, but this reality is neither that of the "mind" nor simply that of "the other" (of facts). Curiously, the spatialized reality of the landscape appears like the extension of our own mind toward the other, and the extension of the other's mind toward us. This produces a feeling of vertigo, which comes close to the experience of dreams. If we transpose Panofsky's observation onto the model of "cultural mindscapes" the question will be formulated like this: is "cultural reality," at the moment it is approached as a scape, not a sort of "half-real" quality reminiscent of dreams rather than of empirical facts, social structures, natural laws, et cetera?

If we answer "yes," we find ourselves opposed to the most common approaches of "seeing" culture. Generally speaking, culture has been seen either in terms of abstract, unchanging "metaphysical" qualities (especially when it has been equated with "civilization") or it has been seen in terms of concrete laws of social life (e.g., through approaches elaborated by Auguste Comte). The rough methods of positivism have been refined, leading to the perception of culture as an accumulation of anthropological facts, as structures between these facts, et cetera. The list could be made longer and more diversified, searching the entire methodological potential of modernity, but still it is certain that most approaches will appear to have one thing in common: they all see culture *as* a reality. The problem is the "as": culture itself does not exist *as* a reality; it *is* reality. At the moment that this reality is seen *as* a reality, culture is already objectified. We lack words here, but the problem is exactly the one that Panofsky encountered in the domain of the aesthetic perception of space.

The space between a culture and its others, which is also the space between me and the culture I observe, makes of the cultural sphere a dreamlike phenomenon as such. Culture explains itself through itself; it produces its own space, and this space

cannot be made accessible by drawing geometrical lines from my point of view to that of the culture (or, as it has been for Panofsky, of the painting) that I am trying to understand.

Wilhelm Dupré has insisted that culture "exhibits circular patterns that bring it forth as a constitutive horizon, i.e., a horizon yielding content and structure at once."[36] In other words, culture yields its own space not as a "container" of itself, but "at once" as a spatial phenomenon that follows its own logic. I would hold that on this point it is comparable only to dreams. According to Freud, in dreams, an internal and particular, logical structure is produced by the dreamwork. This structure is never a matter of explanation but is accepted as a part of an existential, and also spatial, experience.

In another article, written in French,[37] I have suggested calling the cultural reality described above *"culturéalité,"* suppressing the second "r" as well as the space between the words culture and reality. This is one—admittedly improvised—way of avoiding seeing culture *as* reality. Culture is a spatial and temporal reality but, since this reality is not perceived as something objective from the inside, it should not be objectified when looking at it from the outside. *Culturéalité* represents an alternative: it is a scape-like reality whose space is not objective, geographical, or mathematical, but more like that of a *chōra* that exists without the help of limits between what is "real" (here and for "us") and unreal (real only for "the others").

Contrary to what most people might believe, the vertigo that culture produces from the inside is powerful, just like the spatial component that Panofsky speaks of. I hold to Paulin Hountondji's claim that "instead of trying to impose norms imported from other cultures, it [is] more effective to draw upon the inner dynamism of every culture, the inner potential for self-criticism and self-improvement."[38] Beyond that, the cultural vertigo of *culturéalité* does not weaken the cultural force of the scape but makes it solid enough to open itself up toward the outside. Here, the scape clearly appears as the opposite of the sphere. Spheres might be solid on the outside but they are potentially weak on the inside; scapes deploy their dreamlike cultural reality at the very inside but remain open to outside influences.

## "Culturéalité" *versus Hyperreality*

It is impossible to reflect upon these problems without spontaneously thinking of the phenomenon called "cyberspace" in contemporary culture. "Cyberspace" represents an entirely spatialized reality, although here *space,* as much as *time,* is absolutely abstract. We know that the "space" suggested by cyberspace does not exist "in reality" (*should* we ever *see* it, it could only cause us to experience vertigo). The existence of cyberspace leads sooner or later to the creation of a so-called hyperreality, that is, to a "reality by proxy" (Baudrillard), which exists without existing "in reality." The "real" is here created through a purely conceptual model, neglecting those more complex cultural components like "context," "polyvalence," "interference between reality and illusion" (because this reality *is* a kind of illusion), or "historical depth."

With regard to the above-mentioned constellations between reality and dreams, we must conclude that what is lacking in hyperreality is the dreamlike space that can only be provided by a sort of reality that is not itself closed in. Reality—if it really is reality—must open itself like a scape in front of the spectator in order to be seen by the other. Hyperreality, on the other hand, is *closed* in the sense of being a reality that *is* objectified even before anybody attempted to see it (as an object). The model of *culturéalité* thus turns out to be the exact opposite of hyperreality because it remains subjective-objective even when confronted with the other.

Notes

1 – Placide Tempels, *La Philosophie Bantou* (Paris: Présence africaine, 1965).

2 – Paulin J. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). The Ghanaian philosopher Kwasi Wiredu wrote especially on this topic in his *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996). See the special issue on Wiredu in *Polylog* 2 (2000).

3 – Against this, the Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye insisted, in his important book *Essays on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), that even African collective philosophy is the expression of individual minds.

4 – Fidelis U. Okafor: "In Defense of Afro-Japanese Ethnophilosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 47 (3) (1997): 363–381. In the following paragraphs I am also paraphrasing Okafor's paper "African Aesthetic Values: An Ethnophilosophical Perspective," given at a conference in Bologna in 2000.

5 – Quoted in Okafor, "In Defense of Afro-Japanese Ethnophilosophy," from Graham Parkes, "Ways of Japanese Thinking," which was published in R. Solomon and K. Higgins, eds., *From Africa to Zen: An Invitation to World Philosophy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1993), p. 27.

6 – Masao Maruyama, "Introduction" to *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989); this is a translation of *Nihon seiji shisōshi kenkyū.*

7 – Tere Vadén, "On the (A)metaphysical (Im)possibilities of 'Finnish Thinking,'" in P. Pylkkänen and P. Pylkkö, eds., *New Directions in Cognitive Science* (Helsinki: FAIS, 1996), p. 385.

8 – Porthan himself undertook the task of developing the Finnish language into a "true language of culture."

9 – Nicolai S. Trubetzkoy, *The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia's Identity* (Ann Arbor: Michigan Slavic Publications, 1991), pp. 12–13. The Slavophiles were active around 1830–1870. In Slav countries outside Russia,

"Slavophilism" is a generic term for all pro-Slav movements, including Pan-Slavism. In Russia, Slavophilism is restricted to those thinkers organized around Ivan Kireevsky and Aleksei Khomiakov.

10 – See the introduction by the authors to the bibliography on Eurasianism established by Alexander Antoshchenko and others. It can be found on A. Antoshchenko's home page, http://www.karelia.ru/psu/Chairs/PreRev/BIBLENG.RTF. I quote L. V. Ponomareva from this introduction.

11 – F. I. Girenok, quoted from Alexander Antoshchenko.

12 – See http://angloweb.com.

13 – Barry Smith, "On Forms of Communication in Philosophy," in S. Dawson, ed., *Intercultural Philosophy* (Bowling Green: Philosophy Documentation Center, 2001), p. 80.

14 – Anssi Kullberg, "From Neo-Eurasianism to National Paranoia: Renaissance of Geopolitics in Russia," *Eurasian Politician* 4, August 2001.

15 – Cf. special issue on Eurasianism, *Studies in East European Thought* 52 (2000).

16 – Cf. Alain Besançon, "Mutmassungen ueber Russland: Geschichte und Gegenwart," *Europaische Rundschaau* 30 (2002): 30. See also E. V. Barabanov's statements about the mystical character of contemporary Russian philosophy and the curious mixture of Schelling, Orthodox dogmatic theology, and romantic utopianism (to which one could add cosmology or cosmological fantasies) fabricated by contemporary Russian religious philosophy, in "Russian Philosophy and the Crisis of Identity," *Russian Studies in Philosophy* 31 (2) (1992): 26–27.

17 – Meera Nanda, "Postmodernism, Science, and Religious Fundamentalism" (parts 1 and 2), in *Butterflies and Wheels,* October 28, 2003, at http://www.butterfliesandwheels.com (there are no page numbers).

18 – Cf. Eberhard Müller, *Russischer Intellekt in Europäischer Krise: Ivan V. Kireevsky* (Köln: Böhlau, 1966), p. 36. It is equally similar to what the Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsurō suggested at some point during World War II: that the sciences must be delimited by ethnic nationality *(minzoku).*

19 – Intercultural philosophy "departs from the thesis that in the fields of philosophy and arts intercultural communication can happen on the level of equality" (statement of the Foundation for Intercultural Philosophy). Important works: Heinz Kimmerle and Henk Oosterling, eds., *Sensus Communis in Multi- and Intercultural Perspective: On the Possibility of Common Judgments in Arts and Politics* (Wurzburg: Konigshausen & Neumann, 2000)*;* Franz Martin Wimmer, "Is Intercultural Philosophy a New Branch or a New Orientation in Philosophy?" in Gregory D'Souza, ed., *Interculturality of Philosophy and Religion* (Bangalore: National Biblical Catechetical and Liturgical Centre, 1996), pp. 45–57.

20 – Richard Rorty, "Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism," in *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), chap. 9.

21 – Velemir Khlebnikov, *Sobranie proizvedenij* (Collected works), 5 (Leningrad, 1933), p. 183. Khlebnikov (1885–1922) was the founder of Russian futurism.

22 – Jürgen Habermas on Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*: "Damit wird auch noch die schwächste der Kantischen Vernunftideen eingezogen. Die objektivierende Wissenschaft versinkt ebenso wie die Alltagspraxis—ohne den Stachel eines idealisierenden Weltentwurfs und eines transzendierenden Weltanspruchs—in ihren zufälligen Kontexten" (Jürgen Habermas, "Die Einheit der Vernunft in der Vielfalt ihrer Stimmen," in *Nachmetaphysisches Denken: Philosophische Aufsätze* [Suhrkamp 1984], p. 173).

23 – S. A. Frank, *The Spiritual Foundations of Society: An Introduction to Social Philosophy* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1987), p. 6.

24 – "Rorty führt die Objektivität der Erkenntnis auf die Intersubjetivität einer Übereinstimmung zurück, der gut wittgensteinianisch die Übereinstimmung in unserer Sprache, unserer faktische geteilten Lebensform zugrunde liegt" (Habermas, "Die Einheit der Vernunft in der Vielfalt ihrer Stimmen," p. 176).

25 – See Bellah's treatment of Watsuji as an essentialist because he relies on the Spenglerian distinction between "civilization and culture," in Robert Bellah, "Japan's Cultural Identity: Some Reflections on the Work of Watsuji Tetsurō," *Journal of Asian Studies* 24 (1965): 580–581.

26 – Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. 8.

27 – Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," in Mike Featherstone, ed., *Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity* (London: Sage, 1990), p. 296. See also his *Modernity at Large* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

28 – Franz Boas, *The Mind of the Primitive Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1911).

29 – The books in question are: *The Chinese Mind: Essentials of Chinese Philosophy and Culture,* ed. Charles Moore (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1967); William B. Johnson, *The Austrian Mind: An Intellectual and Social History 1848–1938* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972); *The Japanese Mind: Essentials of Japanese Philosophy and Culture,* ed. Charles Moore (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1968); Wal-dal Yang, *Korean Ways, Korean Mind* (Tamu Dang, 1982); N. E. Abraham, *The Mind of Africa* (University of Chicago Press, 1962); W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Doubleday, 1954).

30 – Supplement to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 1514.

31 – Peter Sloterdijk, *Sphären I* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998), p. 28.

32 – Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus* (Paris: Métailié, 1992), p. 16.

33 – Ram Adhar Mall, "Einheit angesichts der Vielfalt," in N. Schneider, R. A. Mall, and D. Lohmar, eds., *Einheit und Vielfalt: Das Verstehen der Kulturen* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998).

34 – Frederic Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 3.

35 – Erwin Panofsky, *Perspective as Symbolic Form* (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

36 – Wilhelm Dupré, *Religion in Primitive Cultures: A Study in Ethnophilosophy* (The Hague: Mouton, 1975), p. 29.

37 – Forthcoming in *L'Aleph* 15 (2005).

38 – Paulin J. Hountondji, "Tradition, Hindrance or Inspiration?" in "Intellectuals," special issue, *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy* 14 (1–2) (2000): 8.