

# The Situation of Philosophy Today and the Question of Interculturality<sup>1</sup>

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‘Interculturality’ is obviously a new concept which owes its origin to the political situation of modernity. In this regard, it seems to be basically a political concept responding to the evident need to prevent the interaction of different cultures from plunging humanity into violence. Modernity seems inevitably to be faced with ‘Fundamentalism’. Fundamentalism, as it springs up in all parts of the world, might be understood as the basic claim to withdraw historically ‘grown up’ cultures from the alienating process of western modernity by reaffirming the supposed or real ‘Fundamentals’ of its - very different - way to conceive of human life. As such it is a specific modern counter-reaction against the process of modernity - the globalization of western technology and its underlying scientific patterns and practical values. From the perspective of cultural intersubjectivity, the political problems raised demand a political solution organizing the interaction of different cultures on the level of their pragmatic co-existence within the unity of the world community - but not a genuine philosophical questioning. A genuine philosophical questioning responds with the specific means of the epistemic discipline called ‘philosophy’ to a philosophical problem - and it is not very clear, how the *political* issue of ‘Interculturality’ should become *philosophically* relevant. Why should ‘Interculturality’ become a major issue of philosophical thinking today? Doesn’t that imply that, first of all, we have to reformulate a *philosophical* concept of ‘Interculturality’ in view of the very specific challenge that modernity might be to philosophical thinking? It is quite significant that ‘Interculturality’ has until now never been a theme of philosophical thinking - neither in the western nor in the eastern tradition. Most likely the historical process of modernity itself has produced now and only now the need for an intercultural inquiry. The political issue of ‘Interculturality’ might thus merely be a symptom hinting at some deeper problem. If Fundamentalism is a ‘counter-reaction’, and if every ‘counter-reaction’ is rooted in the primary action by which it is solicited and provoked, then the question of Fundamentalism is basically identical with the question of what is happening to humanity through the historical process of modernity. This seems already a more pertinent philosophical question. If the historical process of modernity affects ‘human being’ as such, philosophy cannot stand apart as if its way of understanding what is and what human being is all about would not be deeply challenged by the situation of modernity. It is this perspective which I will try to explore within the following pages in order to reformulate an ‘intercultural’ concept of philosophy.

## 1. The concept of culture

The starting point for any philosophical reflection about something should be the conceptual clarification of the terms in which this ‚something‘ is conceived. In our case, the concept of ‚Interculturality‘ implies an understanding of ‚cultures‘ as being different from one another. There can be no *inter*-culturality without there being differences of ‚cultures‘. But what do we mean by ‚culture‘? And in what way are the presupposed differences of ‚culture‘ not only apparent and superficial differences of manners and behaviours, but differences of human being? This means that in order to think - and not to abolish - the concept of ‚Interculturality‘ we need a strong concept of difference. That is, we require a concept of difference that does not break up the identity of the reference term - ‚human being‘ - but rather conceives of it as basically ‚differential‘. In view of what? - Not in view of an ‚aprioric‘ concept of what human being - notwithstanding its factual reality - is supposed to be, but in view of the phenomenon of human being itself as revealed by its factual reality. Therefore, our task will be to clarify our immediate pre-understanding of ‚culture‘ and to re-think it out of the phenomenon of human being itself. We will thereby pass to a phenomenological concept of ‚culture‘ which should enable us to conceive of ‚Interculturality‘ as a difference in human being that pertains to the factual reality of what humans are.

In our immediate pre-understanding we refer to ‚culture‘ as the specific fact of human existence. Every concept of ‚culture‘ will therefore imply a certain concept of human being. But ‚culture‘ denotes more specifically the intersubjectivity of human existence to be shared with others: It is never the ‚culture‘ of one, but of many. Humans share their lives with each other insofar as they constitute a certain community distinct from other communities by their customs and rules, their basic orientations and their beliefs as expressed in their common juridical and political institutions, their art and their religion. Whatever we discover as ‚cultural phenomena‘ will refer in one way or the other to this intersubjective reality of human being. But human being is individual human being. It is ‚my‘ or ‚your‘ being that is human, and every kind of ‚intersubjectivity‘ will necessarily imply ‚subjects‘ as beings that denote themselves by personal pronouns. The individual will be said to belong to a certain ‚culture‘ insofar as he or she shares its basic orientations about human life and the world in general. But how does the individual ‚share‘ these orientations? Because he or she decided to do so - on any grounds whatsoever? Surely not; human life is not individualized before, outside of or in exclusion of its intersubjective participation in a common ‚culture‘, but as being-together-with-others. The individual as such is constituted by being-together-with-others. It is the intersubjective reality of the individual's ‚culture‘ that shapes his or her life and specific way of dealing with things. This points to the very essential fact that ‚culture‘ is *pregiven* with respect to individual existence. It is *pregiven* not only in the historical and external sense that it has been founded by others within the succession of generations - the ‚tradition‘, but in the very systematical sense that it is the condition of the possibility of existing in a common world. ‚Culture‘ pre-intentionally shapes the intentional relations to the world in general that constitute a human community. That is why we immediately recognize the other as belonging to our own or a different ‚culture‘ in view of his or her way of relating to things.

We will - sometimes easily, sometimes with quite some difficulty - realize that a certain way of dealing with things is obviously guided by a different comprehension of their being. What seems ‚instinctively‘ evident *to us* - meaning beyond the quite natural variability of particular human behaviour - might not be for somebody else, and we will most likely account for this difference by referring the other to another ‚culture‘. Only this encountering of the other may make us aware of our own ‚culture‘ as something which already, pre-intentionally and without explicit knowledge, constitutes our way of relating to things in general, the very ‚substance‘ and ‚reality‘ of our being. In discovering our own ‚culture‘ through the mediation of the Other, we might discover how little of what we ascribe to ourselves by personal pronouns we really owe to ‚our Selves‘.

But this is only one aspect of the phenomenon of ‚culture‘. Human being is never without the awareness of its specific ‚culture‘ as its intersubjective way of relating to what is. It is never without the awareness of the Other. This awareness is not necessarily or exclusively the empirical knowledge about other co-existing communities, but, in the first place, knowledge generated by the culture's diachronical memory of its own predecessors, that is, of those who have lived before it, who founded and modified the tradition, and who - in the vast course of ‚history‘ - were involved in different relationships with things. We should already note here that ‚interculturality‘ is not - as usually taken - a mere synchronic concept of simultaneously co-existing ‚cultures‘, but includes the diachronic differences a specific tradition realizes as its ‚historical genesis‘. In a very general but philosophically very important sense, we can say that every ‚culture‘ is aware of its contingency; it is aware that the prevailing ‚rules‘ of interacting with what is are not unconditioned laws prevailing by themselves. If they prevail, they prevail only because they are enacted by the participants of the community, thus implying the possibility of their transgression. The relationship to what is *could be otherwise* than it actually is. It is this awareness of the possibility of ‚being-other‘ that is already included in every awareness of ‚culture‘ as such. The constitution of the ‚We‘ - constitutive of every individualizing personal pronoun - delineates the prevailing measures under which human beings are pre-intentionally socialized and associated *as* cutting across an indefinite variety of other possibilities. No authority claims, no myths of the original institution and foundation of a ‚culture‘, no attempt to rationalize the rationality of a cultural heritage would have been made without the consciousness that the relationship to things could be completely different from what it actually is. Cultural awareness is by itself the awareness of the contingency of ‚culture‘. By becoming the intentional object of an ‚awareness‘, ‚culture‘ ceases to be only pre-intentionally ‚valid‘. It becomes the object of validations and rejections, modifications and transformations. ‚Culture‘ as the pre-intentional ‚substance‘ and ‚reality‘ of human being is thereby never withdrawn from intentional activity that places ‚culture‘ at the disposal of its participating ‚subjects‘. We would completely misunderstand the phenomenon of cultural intersubjectivity if we were to try to play off the constitutive and equi-original moments of ‚culture's‘ pre-intentional constitution against its intentional constitution by its partaking subjects. In other words, ‚Culture‘ is at the disposal of its individual subjects only from within. It would be equally erroneous to think of ‚culture‘ as a mere ‚conditioning‘ of individuals as to view it as a product of mere subjective dispositions. The seemingly paradoxical result of these considerations is that ‚Culture‘ as the intersubjective way of

relating to the world is originated within this relation itself. It presupposes itself. In presupposing itself, ,culture' exists only by way of ,tradition': its ,mode of being' (modus essendi, tropos tou einai) is ,history', i.e. the diachronic intersubjectivity of human being.

What exactly does ,culture' consist of? If the ,cultural awareness' generated by the Other reveals ,culture' as a specific - intersubjectively valid but contingent - relationship to what there is in general, then our central concern from the point of view of a philosophical concept of ,culture' has to be the following question: What do we *ultimately* refer to when we refer to a certain ,culture' distinct from others? Certainly not, as we may immediately be inclined to answer, a linguistic or political entity. People belonging to linguistically distinct communities might very well belong to one and the same ,culture'; the Occidental and the Indian ,cultures' comprise quite a variety of different languages which we would not refer to as ,cultural' differences in the same sense as the opposition of Occidental and Indian. Why? Because we discover a unifying pattern of ,cultural intersubjectivity', such as Christianity, that creates the distinctive feature of ,occidental culture' for example. The ,Indian culture' - not participating in the fundamental religious paradigm of Christianity - will be a *genuinely* different ,culture' while Anglo-Saxons, French, Italians, Germans etc. will recognize each other as fundamentally sharing the unity of a ,culture', even if they belong to linguistically and politically distinct unities with quite some differences in life-style, manners and behaviours, customs and traditions. These will be assessed as rather superficial differences compared with those prevailing between the Christian and the Indian ,cultures'. On the other hand, we might very well discover politically unified communities, such as the Roman Empire or maybe in modern times the Soviet Union or even India, which in reality and with reference to the very heart of their specific relationships to the world could be seen as being constituted by ,different cultures'. We will fail to give an adequate account of ,culture' as long as we do not conceive of it in terms of the maximum of its possible difference, because it is precisely this maximum of possible difference that has to reveal the amplitude of the concrete possibilities of human being to organize its relationship to what is. A concept of ,culture' generated with regard to the maximum of possible difference in the human relationship to the world will always also be applicable to minor differences while the reverse is obviously not the case. If we derive the concept of ,culture' from the difference between the German and the Italian ,cultures', we will not be able to define the difference between Occidental and Indian relationships to things in terms of ,culture'. As a sufficient concept of ,culture' has to be able to give an account of the most extreme ,cultural' divergence, we will have to direct our philosophical attention towards the phenomena of the utmost differentiation of factual human being.

With reference to the opposition of Occidental and Indian ,cultures' we have already alluded to such an extreme differentiation of factual human being and ascribed it to Christianity, i. e. ,religion'. ,Cultural difference' would then ultimately be referred to as a difference in ,religion'. But this will confront us with the following very difficult question: What is religion? Without a conceptually satisfying answer to this question we will be unable to make any headway in our search for a phenomenological concept of ,culture'. However, in the present context it seems impossible to survey a phenomenology of religion. It would be perhaps possible to simply introduce a certain concept of ,religion'

dogmatically without any attempt to show its validity for all religious phenomena. Such a ,tour de force' would surely cut the Gordian knot but leave in theoretical suspension the whole question of interculturality as a philosophical issue. As neither of the proposed solutions is really satisfactory we should simply bypass about the whole question of ,religion' and regard it as a mere hint of something that we should be able to conceptualize in another way. The question is how to avoid the complexity of a phenomenology of concrete phenomena of human being and still give a phenomenological account of human being itself. A solution to this riddle is more easily found than might be suspected. We must simply remember that we have been characterizing the phenomenon of ,human being' as a relationship to what is in general. This is a very formal and abstract characterization with the undeniable advantage of offering a steep but short path to a phenomenological clarification of the concept of ,culture'. From the perspective of this formalization, ,Culture' appears to be the concreteness of a specific intersubjective way of relating to the world or being-in-general. Thus, the question of what we are ultimately referring to when we refer to ,culture' is nothing more than the question of what is the ultimate root, the ground and the foundation of the human relationship to the world. A conceptually adequate answer to this question can only be attained if we take our own formulations seriously. What do we mean by ,human relationship to the world'? What reveals itself to be the condition of the possibility of this relationship? —

Human relationship to what is does not simply mean ,acting' and ,interacting' with things in general as all living beings might do. It is basically an intentional relationship that finds whatever it is relating to before it. The intentional relationship is not only directed towards something - as any directed action might be - but towards something *as something*. It indicates the epistemic relationship to what there is as awareness, consciousness, knowledge and understanding of whatever is being related to. We are not just behaving or acting blindly towards a given stimulus but within an open relation to something that is *in itself* revealed (known, understood) *as* what it is. The intentional relationship consists in relating to something *as* this something *is in itself*; it presupposes the revelation of what we are relating to by a certain comprehension of what it is, that it is and how it is. To deal with things - in terms of theoretical cognition or practical action - means for us always to deal with them in the light of a certain pre-comprehension of their being. We would not be able to treat a chair as a chair if we have not previously understood what it means for the chair to be a chair. ,Previously', i.e. as a condition of the possibility of relating to it. Therefore also ,pre-comprehension': because the intentional object of our relationship is not primarily our comprehension of the being of the things but the things themselves. They are pre-intentionally understood in their being in order to be the intentional objects of our relationship to them. The intentional relation to what is is rooted in and made possible by a pre-intentional comprehension of being in general. In our everyday life this remains the unthematic and hidden background that enlightens and guides all our intentional activities. We might only become aware of it when we loose it - in moments of astonishment, terror or anguish - not knowing anymore how to relate to things, i. e. ourselves and everything else. By this awareness, the pre-intentional comprehension of being may become the intentional object of our theoretical inquiry into its truth and falsehood, thus making us ,philosophize' about what is.

As the root and foundation of the human relationship to the world we discover the pre-comprehension of being. It is this pre-comprehension of being which is as such the ultimate point of reference for the concept of 'culture'. It therefore has to show the same characteristics as those analyzed with regard to the concept of 'culture', i. e. that it is pre-intentional and intersubjectively shared with others, handed down by tradition, but at the intentional disposal of its subjects insofar as they are unthematically aware of how they have understood human being and being-in-general. Different 'cultures' as different intersubjectively shared relationships of man and world will ultimately be rooted in different pre-comprehensions of being-in-general. And it is quite evident that these constitute radical differences in the factual reality of human being such as we discover between radically different 'cultures'.

It should be no secret that this attempt to phenomenologically reconstruct the concept of 'culture' is entirely guided by Heidegger's concept of human being as 'Being-in-the-world'. Without entering into the theoretical details of the latter concept and its phenomenological foundations<sup>2</sup>, I would like to point out some of its aspects that seem particularly important for a genuine inquiry into the cultural and historical differences of human reality.

According to Heidegger, 'Being-in-the-world' means that human being is in itself and with regard to its innermost epistemic structure of understanding Being-in-general (World) opened to what is. On the ground of this epistemological opening to things, man *is his being* as intentional relationship to world. This is nothing but a conceptually completely neutral description of the phenomenon of human being without any conceptual, hermeneutic or cultural prejudice. Only man exists as knowing what is; this 'knowledge' - as the pre-intentional comprehension of being - 'possibilizes' the specific human relationship to the world that constitutes in so many - synchronically and diachronically - different ways his factual intersubjective reality, i.e. his 'culture'. The concrete form of this pre-comprehension of Being is itself the object and purpose of different explicit 'cultural' activities such as Art and Poetry, Mythology and Religion, Ethical Wisdom and Philosophy. As the different 'foundational instances' of different ways of 'Being-in-the-world' (cultures), they will also be the primary objects of any diachronic or synchronic intercultural analysis. To know a 'culture' always means in one way or the other to know its 'Religion' or 'Philosophy'. The concept of 'Being-in-the-world' thereby meets all the indispensable requirements of a philosophically adequate concept of 'culture', i. e. phenomenological evidence and adequacy, applicability and operationability.

But the decisive point is what I would call its 'cultural neutrality'. This is a basic methodological requirement for any research about 'Interculturality'. The concept of Being-in-the-world avoids introducing a culturally specific and ontologically predetermined concept of human being which would as such immediately serve as an evaluative criterion of cultural differences such as is the case with the traditional occidental 'definition' of human being as 'animal rationale'. The latter is much more than just a 'logical definition' of man without any deep ontological implications and cultural determinations: 'Animal rationale' expresses the prevailing self-comprehension of occidental Being-in-the-world and is completely unknown and even alien to every other 'culture'. First of all, it implies a certain ontological comprehension of Nature, of Man's position in it and his way of

relating to it - including his own 'naturalness'. Second, it stands for a certain comprehension of Knowledge (understanding, consciousness, spirit) and Truth. In the third place, the comprehension of Knowledge and Truth assembled under the common name of Reason (Logos, Nous) is highly equivocal as it contains all the semantical transformations to which the concept of Reason was subjected from the period of Greek Philosophy up to the modern concept of Rationality. And fourth, it is axiologically and ideologically absolutely overcharged. This is due not only to its historical function of serving as a promoter of what human being - according to changing philosophical and ideological conceptions - *should be*, but also because of the logic of the 'definition' itself. A 'definition' delimits the 'essence' of something - its 'true being' - in opposition to its factual way of being - its appearance - thereby serving as a 'standard', a means of measurement to evaluate factual reality. If, how and to what extent a factual reality corresponds to a thing's true being is known by referring to its definitory concept. If Man is a 'rational animal' and this is his supposed 'true being', which he permanently fails to actualize as his factual reality, then every human being will be measured and evaluated in his or her very quality of being 'human' by this concept. It is a more normative than descriptive concept that throughout occidental history as well as in modern times primarily had the ideological function of dogmatically affirming, promoting and universalizing the thinker's own values: To associate one's private prejudices with the concept of rationality suffices to condemn the other to the silence of 'irrationality' and deprive him of the quality of being human. There can be no doubt that these ontological implications and ideological functions of the concept of reason spoil right from the beginning any attempt on intercultural inquiry. Since the concept of human being as 'animal rationale' already contains all the answers a philosophical questioning has to investigate, it thereby blocks our view of the phenomenal reality of human being instead of opening up a perspective allowing for its adequate treatment. Quite the opposite is the case with the concept of Being-in-the-world. It sets free a perspective for understanding human being in itself without any ontologically normative prejudice originating in a specific way of Being-in-the-world ('culture'). It makes little sense to speak of a *more* or *less* Being-in-the-world, and we inevitably have to speak of *more* or *less* 'rational cultures' once we apply the historically and culturally determined concept of Reason. The formal concept of 'comprehension of being' remains open to different conceptions of human knowledge (understanding, consciousness) and truth and, thus, enables us to see the specific determinations which constitute its occidental concept as 'Reason'. 'Cultural difference' will not be of the superficial quantitative order of a 'more and less', but a difference *in* human being itself. The indefinite variations of possible human relations with things are not by themselves, but only with reference to a distinct comprehension of being, indications of a difference in culture. The pre-intentional comprehension of being does not unilaterally determine one specific relationship with things, but rather opens up a well circumscribed space of possibilities that in the indefinite variety of particular behaviour might all be developed within one and the same 'culture'. 'Cultural difference', in the sense of different ways of Being-in-the-world, should never be confused with mere physical and practical differences in dealing with things. While spicy food is not an indication of 'cultural difference', vegetarianism may very well be.

Let me sum up the result of our first step in re-thinking a philosophical concept of ‚Interculturality‘. We started with the general remark that the concept implies a *difference* of ‚cultures‘. I then tried to show that ‚cultural awareness‘ is mediated by the Other thus revealing ‚culture‘ immediately as a particular and contingent way of intersubjective Being-in-the-world. Otherness was referred to what - according to Heidegger’s phenomenological analysis - has to be considered the foundation of the relationship of Man and World: the pre-intentionally underlying comprehension of Being-in-general (World). ‚Interculturality‘ then means the relation between different ways of Being-in-the-world and ultimately between different comprehensions of being. Such a relation *between* different comprehensions has to be qualified as a ‚hermeneutical relation‘. It indicates basically the relation of comprehension of human reality. ‚Interculturality‘ indicates the hermeneutical interaction of different comprehensions of being. The theoretical thematization of ‚Interculturality‘ will consequently have to deal with this hermeneutical interaction of different comprehensions of being. The *concept* of ‚Interculturality‘, thus, still remains based on the presupposition that there *really are* different ways of Being-in-the-world and consequently different comprehensions of being. In every other case, the concept of ‚Interculturality‘ will be a mere provisional guide exploring the apparent differences of factual human being that ultimately dissipate in view of a fundamental and all-embracing unity of human comprehension of being. This possibility, of course, remains open. The concept of ‚Interculturality‘ is nothing but a hypothesis serving as a heuristic-methodological device to explore factual human being without anticipating any of its possible outcomes. It will be the task of concrete hermeneutical research to explore and experience the ‚reality‘ of this concept. But I think there can be no doubt that the overwhelming evidence of even limited hermeneutical experience in synchronical and diachronical different ways of Being-in-the-world should suffice to ascertain the reality of the concept.

In conclusion, I would like to point out a very important consequence for the philosophical inquiry into Interculturality that already shows up here but will be elaborated only in the subsequent steps. This consequence follows immediately from the change in the prevailing concept of human being from ‚animale rationale‘ to ‚Being-in-the-world‘ and entails the dismissal of any kind of ‚Comparative Philosophy‘ which up to now has almost exclusively claimed the title of the Theory of Interculturality. ‚Comparative Philosophy‘ consists basically in comparing different entities in view of the generic unity of Reason that is supposed to particularize itself into different forms or types of rationality that are historically all - more or less - contributing to the realization of humanity. For ‚Comparative Philosophy‘ ‚Reason‘ is the substantial reality of human being unfolded within the historical reality of humanity to different degrees and altered by its constitutive ‚naturalness‘ (animality). ‚Comparative Philosophy‘ is a branch of Historicism which involves the transformation of philosophy into a historical discipline - the ‚History of Philosophy‘. The hermeneutical subject of ‚Comparative Philosophy‘ is basically identical with its object, i. e. human reason; due to his historically posterior position the hermeneutical subject will even hold a rationally privileged position qualifying him immediately to evaluate the different realizations of reason according to the standard of his own rational evidences and insights. The hermeneutical subject of ‚Comparative Philosophy‘ will

immediately claim for himself the right truth-position in order to evaluate the historical and cultural particularizations of rational activity with regard to its truth and falsehood, its cognitions and its mere fantasies or illusions about being-in-general. The (historically achieved) rationality of the hermeneutical subject will function as the basic criterion of the truth and objectivity of any synchronically or diachronically differing ‚culture‘ as represented by its Art, Mythology, Religion or Philosophy. ‚Comparative Philosophy‘ never really deals with ‚Interculturality‘. ‚Interculturality‘ remains a transitory appearance of an underlying substantial identity of human being which is defined by the truth-position of its hermeneutical subject. If we reject the prevailing concept of human being as defined by Reason we will thereby also immediately dismiss all ‚Comparative Philosophy‘. This is primarily a consequence of the formal property of the concept of ‚being-the-world‘ itself. It is not a *generic* concept denoting the substantial reality of Man particularized in an indefinite number of historical different cultures, but a *formal* concept devoid of all concrete determinations. Every concrete reality will fulfill its prerequisites without any difference in regard to its formal structure<sup>3</sup>. As every simple subject-predicate sentence - no matter what its concrete terms are - will entirely fulfill the requirements of the formal structure ‚S is P‘, every concrete ‚culture‘ will - without any deficiency, alteration or specification - fulfill the formal concept of ‚Being-in-the-world‘. Unlike different realizations of the substantial being of Reason different ways of Being-in-the-world are equally and completely likewise ‚Being-in-the-world‘; they are not specified, particularized and thereby imperfect and deficient fragments of something ‚above‘ and ‚beyond‘ them, but the reality of Being-in-the-world itself. This applies of course in the same way for the hermeneutical subject of any inquiry into cultural different ways of Being-in-the-world. There is absolutely no truth-privilege to be claimed by the subject nor is there any substantial content in the concept of Being-in-the-world that the subject could refer to as a measure or criterion for evaluating the concrete reality of human being. The subject’s theoretical position is without reference to a presupposed measure or truth about being; it is nothing but the recognition of the facticity of human Being-in-the-world as such. In the approach we have adopted, therefore, we are assisting the promotion of a basic change in the theoretical *attitude* towards human being; and as a comparison is always an evaluation in regard to the common substantial reality, it is quite evident that from this perspective it will no longer make sense to ‚compare‘ different ways of Being-in-the-world. Thus, the *purpose* of theoretically thematizing different ‚cultures‘ will also be other than that of ‚Comparative Philosophy‘. It should suffice here to point out that the new philosophical thematization of ‚Interculturality‘ can not consist of the comparative evaluation of different ways of Being-in-the-world or their underlying ontological paradigms. What the philosophically more adequate approach to ‚Interculturality‘ positively consists of, will be revealed in our following steps.

## 2. Reason and purpose of the philosophical question of ‚Interculturality‘

In our second step we should try to clarify why and in view of what we are motivated to engage in a *philosophical* thematization of ‚Interculturality‘. If ‚Interculturality‘ is a new concept arising out of our historical situation, the hermeneutical understanding of this

situation will be constitutive for any attempt to respond to it in a philosophical manner. It would be philosophically quite naive to see thinking as a mere reaction to any given 'problem' presented by everyday life. At least this immediate way of reacting is not the way genuine philosophical thinking constitutes itself as 'philosophy' with regard to specific philosophical issues. Thus, the question why and in view of what we are motivated to engage in a *philosophical* thematization of 'Interculturality' has to be taken very seriously. It touches on the hermeneutical situation of thinking constitutive for its specific philosophical way of dealing with the issue of 'Interculturality' and pertains therefore to the very foundation of any form of 'intercultural philosophy'. It is quite evident that the present issues emerging around the general topic of 'Fundamentalism' and the socio-economic, ecological and political problems of the modern civilization in general can very well be faced from within the frameworks of traditional philosophies, which - as already pointed out - lack the dimension of an 'intercultural inquiry'. There is at least no obvious reason why the present situation of modernity should require a new 'intercultural approach' in philosophy and in what way such an approach would entail a modification of philosophy's traditional patterns. Philosophy should not be overcharged with the problems only politics and - in the ultimate instance - the behaviour and interaction of concrete individuals can solve. The task of philosophy is neither to legitimate the existent nor to invent concepts that would assuage common sense. Philosophy converts into ideology where it tries immediately to meet the needs of its time. The project of 'intercultural philosophy' has suffered to quite some extent from pretensions to functionalize thinking for the common need of a harmonic world-view, which in reality would leave things unchanged. We can only be sincere in philosophical thinking if we critically examine the motives that guide us in our questionings and the problems out of which they arise. Philosophy must always counter-balance the human need for illusion and self-betrayal which is even reinforced by the pressure of the actual historical situation. If this situation is what makes us think, then it might only be the acute awareness of the historical process of modernity which can reveal to us the possible 'reason' for a *philosophical* inquiry into interculturality. In this second step I will therefore try to briefly summarize some of the essential features of 'modernity' that have become relevant to contemporary philosophy and to relate them to the question of 'Interculturality'.

The term 'Modernity' refers to the historical way of Being-in-the-world which originated within the occidental tradition some three or four hundred years ago. In promoting a new scientific-technological way of dealing with reality, 'Modernity' has profoundly revolutionized human Being-in-the-world. Through a series of ruptures in the foregoing patterns of human existence, such as the development of the new physical and historical sciences, the industrial revolution and - on the political level - the French Revolution, all deeply indebted to the reformulation of human values propagated in the period of the Enlightenment, 'Modernity' has asserted itself as the prevailing way of Being-in-the-world covering all realms of human existence. As has been extensively analyzed within modern philosophy itself, 'Modernity' is rooted in the 'principle of subjectivity', thereby indicating its underlying 'comprehension of Being' as the condition of the possibility of the specific *modern* relationship of Man and World. I would simply characterize the concrete reality of this 'comprehension of Being' by using the term

'scientific-technological rationality'. Scientific-technological rationality organizes and determines all specific modern ways of human relationship to what is - not only in the field of science and technology, but also in all other domains of contemporary life. It delimits a certain constellation of Man and World and functions as the underlying ontological paradigm of our theoretical and practical relation to things. At this point, I will neither bother to repeat what has already so pertinently and comprehensively been worked out by others as the underlying ontological paradigm of modernity nor will I try to embark upon a phenomenology of the modern life-world and its basic orientational pattern - scientific-technological rationality. In this regard, one can refer to one's own experience of historical reality and the modern conception of human being as subjectivity; its rules of self-conscious and autonomous relationship to being as objectivity will be known to everyone who has studied modern philosophy from Descartes onwards. The important point for our present purpose is rather to outline some of the fundamental features of this historical reality itself that have inevitably become constitutive determinants of the contemporary situation of philosophical thinking.

One of the first things to recognize is that dealing with a historical reality - even if this is supposed to be rooted in a certain ontological pre-comprehension of being - is something very different from dealing with a 'theory' that we might reject or accept on grounds of intellectual insight. This may sound very evident and even trivial, but it is not. What we have to consider - put in a more technical language - is the 'mode of Being' (*modus essendi, tropos tou einai*) of what we call 'historical reality'. We might easily accept that 'historical reality' *as such* does not exist in the way physical beings do and that, in distinction to physical reality, it implies a 'consciousness' (knowledge, understanding) which produces, acknowledges, modifies or rejects the prevailing pattern constituting the intersubjective reality of human being. Unlike physical reality, the being of historical reality seems to be entirely dependent upon intersubjectively enacted epistemic functions that prevail by reason of the comprehensive-hermeneutical acts of its participants. To change the participant's consciousness means to change their historical reality, i. e. their specific way of Being-in-the-world. Exactly this is the difficult point: because it gives to historical reality the appearance of having something like a 'quasi-theoretical' existence. We all know that a change in historical reality is something much more than 'just' a change in what we usually call 'consciousness'. The individuals belonging to the same common historical world may indeed have very divergent ideas and explicit understandings of Man's place in the world and his relation to it. Especially in our contemporary world we are witnessing quite an inflation of private 'ideologies' and 'meta-theories' about what is without any impact on human beings' concrete relationship to things which basically remains determined by scientific-technological rationality. Thus, if historical reality consists in an 'ontological paradigm' which has as such an only 'mental existence' within its subjects, this 'mental existence' has strictly to be distinguished from any intentional, theoretical and individual mode of being of 'mental entities'. The comprehension of being as the foundation of a historical world 'exists' as the intersubjectively unified pre-intentional way of the actually enacted relationship to all beings - ourselves and everything else. The validity of the underlying ontological paradigm does not depend on the intentional-theoretical recognition of its truth but consists of the mere facticity of being

enacted within the concrete relations that constitute a specific historical reality. This is why a change in the underlying comprehension of being will necessarily entail a change in the concrete historical practice of interacting with what is; and vice versa every change in this practise will indicate a change in the intersubjectively unified pre-comprehension of being. Even if the individuals of a certain historical time - or their philosophers - were all entirely convinced that the actually prevailing way of interrelating with things and its underlying ontological pre-comprehension of their being is completely ‚wrong‘, ‚false‘ or ‚illusionary‘, this would by itself not *affect* the historical reality in any way. Historical reality exists - and this is my point - without the recognition of its subjects and will constitute the structure of their common Being-in-the-world notwithstanding any question regarding its theoretical or practical truth. This is exactly what makes historical reality a *reality*, i.e. something quite distinct from just a mentally intentioned object whose existence would depend entirely on the intending subject and its conceptual capacities. If historical reality is at Man's disposal, this never occurs in the way we usually dispose of intentional objects. Moreover, it would be - and has often already been - a very fatal error of thinkers to ignore the autonomy of historical reality as if this reality could be subjected to Man's intentional and conceptual disposition.

These remarks may suffice to make clear that in dealing with the historical reality of modernity we are dealing with a very specific intersubjectively shared practice of Being-in-the-world - scientific-technological rationality as an autonomous reality, ‚autonomous‘ with regard to the explicit and intentional creeds, beliefs and values of its subjects. Historical reality is in this sense ‚anonymous‘ and without any assignable ‚subject‘; it is the mere intersubjective ‚substance‘ of its individual subjects. Every explicit and intentional relation we might establish with regard to the historical reality of modernity on grounds of theoretical insights has to take into account that this relation can only be a secondary *re*-action to something that exists independently. But the historical reality of modernity is not primarily something outside and detached from us which we can externally relate to or not; it constitutes rather our very being that by its socialization has become intersubjectively unified into the common modern way of Being-in-the-world. Our primary and immediate way of thinking and acting, of relating to and interacting with ourselves and others, as well as the structures and conditions of our understanding something as true or false, right or wrong, good or bad - arise out of our identity as ‚modern subjects‘, i.e. as sharing one common world. It is only against this background that we might develop our own ways of being ‚modern‘ or that - to any extent whatsoever - we might reject and overcome our own modernity. Relating to ‚modernity‘ is relating to one's own intersubjectively constituted identity.

Turning our attention now to the historical process of modernity itself, we will meet two basic phenomenal features of this process that are constitutive for our specific modern situation of Being-in-the-world. I will call the first one ‚Nihilism‘, indicating by this the rupture of modernity with all foregoing traditions, and the second one ‚Universalization‘, thereby hinting at the phenomenon of the unification of all humanity within the ontological paradigm of scientific-technological rationality.

1. The term ‚Nihilism‘ indicates neither a theoretical position nor a practical or moral judgement but the historical phenomenon of ‚modernity‘ asserting itself as an overall

revolution in the human relationship to world with regard to *everything* that has been handed down by tradition as the prevailing measure of human existence. Modern scientific-technological rationality constitutes itself *as* the prevailing measure of human relationship to things only insofar as it entails the annihilation of *all* those orientational patterns which up to now have served as the foundational instances of human Being-in-the-world, i. e. Art, Mythology, Religion, Metaphysics (Philosophy). ‚Modernity‘ is in this sense the absolutely unique ‚invalidation‘ of human history in general. The innovative uniqueness of scientific-technological rationality breaks not only with an indeterminate past but with the foregoing principles of human relationship to what is in general, thus leading to a complete revolution in human being itself. The modern subject constitutes itself *as such* by the hermeneutical privation of its own tradition; it simply no longer makes ‚sense‘ how previous humanities related to world, and it is basically this ‚non-sense‘ which constitutes the modern conceptual understanding of Religion and Metaphysics thus giving rise to the hermeneutical effort of ‚historical sciences‘ to reconstruct a ‚sense of the past‘. The ‚invalidated tradition‘ alone becomes the object of historical sciences; modern Historicism originates as the entirely new relationship to the traditions of human being as invalidated forms that might at the most enjoy an esthetic appraisal of their way of dealing with things. ‚Nihilism‘ as the outstanding event of Modernity points basically to this loss of traditional patterns to organize the human relationship to world; they become marginalized as mere private and subjective ideologies which everybody might have. What has been called the ‚End of Philosophy‘ as well as the ‚End of Art‘ or the ‚End of Religion‘ does not indicate the ceasing of a specific intentional activity but the functional change to which they are subjected in the realm of Modernity. Art, Religion, Philosophy and Metaphysics loose their force as the prevailing *foundational instances* of the intersubjectively unified way of relating to Being and cease to constitute the historical world even if by way of their marginalization they might attain an increasing and even overwhelming relevance for the individual subjects. The ‚anti-metaphysical‘ essence of scientific-technological rationality might very well be ‚counter-balanced‘ (or even frenetically abolished) on the subjective level of its participating individuals without any consequences for its being the prevailing measure of intersubjective Being-in-the-world. One of the central phenomena of the age of scientific-technological rationality is its tendency to produce an indefinite variety of ‚metaphysical‘, ‚meta-religious‘ and ‚meta-scientific‘ theories that constitute the inner ideologization of modern society as an indefinite number of private meta-worlds. This profound dissociation of the individual from the historical world he or she belongs to points to the fact that the ontological paradigm of scientific-technological rationality creates a completely new form of human intersubjectivity devoid of ‚persons‘ and constituted only by ‚rational subjects‘ equivalent to each other. ‚Nihilism‘ denotes not the mere passage from one to another way of Being-in-the-world but characterizes rather the specific modern relation of Man and World on all the subjective and intersubjective levels of its concrete reality.

2. The second fundamental feature of modernity is that its way of Being-in-the-world does not remain restricted to the geographical region of its origin but tends to become the foundational ontological paradigm of all humanity. The absolutely unique and singular fact of modernity is that for the very first time in Man's history we are dealing with a global

unification of mankind into one exclusive and singular way of Being-in-the-world. This, of course, does not exclude the possibility that there are and always will be indefinite variations of how human beings deal with their affairs and handle their lives. But on the deeper level we are witnessing an entire revolution of human Being-in-the-world which is turning cultural differences into the singularity of the one historical world of scientific-technological rationality. It goes without saying that ‚Nihilism‘ thereby becomes a global phenomenon pertaining to every culture that is absorbed by the process of modernity. The historical experience of the last two centuries has shown clearly enough that there seems to be no way of withdrawing anything from this revolutionary process of *ontological homogenization* of what in the past used to be ‚different cultures‘. The contemporary supersession of the manifold traditions of Being-in-the-world and their constitutive comprehensions of being by the *one ontological paradigm* of modern subjectivity seems to be one of the most tremendous and breath-taking events in human history and inevitably will inaugurate a completely new phase in the historical being of Man. I think we would miss the point completely if we try to understand this process of universalization in terms of colonization and imperialism or with reference to the historical spreading of religions like Buddhism, Christianity or Islam. The process of modernity has - by virtue of its nihilistic features - been as overwhelming for the Occidental world as it is now for the African and Asian cultures, which of course does not mean that the occidental origin of scientific-technological rationality is purely accidental<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, the outstanding fact remains that scientific-technological rationality is not globalized by external domination but by converting the innermost attitude of man towards things in general. This globalization occurs without any explicit recognition or intentional belief in the ‚truth‘ of scientific-technological rationality. It is the technological product itself that conveys a certain ontological message, converting the subject that makes use of it to a certain ‚mentality‘ that defines itself by exactly those rules of interaction with what is that were needed to produce it. There is something deeply magical about modern technology and its irresistible way of transforming all humanity simply by means of its products into one intersubjectively valid ontological relationship to the world thereby marginalizing all the regional differences of cultures and peoples into folkloristic or historical reminiscences of the past.

The foregoing remarks may suffice to make clear that the concept of ‚Interculturality‘ emerges at the very moment Interculturality - as the possible relation between *different* historical worlds - is about to disappear. The question of ‚Interculturality‘ arises where Interculturality as a basic reality of human existence vanishes. Paradoxically, the concept of ‚Interculturality‘ is conceived in a historical situation which by its own inherent force tends to entirely abolish every different way of Being-in-the-world. Thus, ‚Interculturality‘ is *almost* a diachronic concept retaining the memory of pre-modernity as a condition of human existence from which we are radically excluded. What, then, makes us think ‚Interculturality‘ is nothing but the uniqueness of our historical situation operating a revolution within human Being-in-the-world never seen before. It is in view of the historical situation of ‚Nihilism‘ that the concept of ‚Interculturality‘ arises as a positive orientation pattern of philosophical thinking destined to counter-balance its immediate historical truth. The ‚modern subject‘ committing himself or herself to a philosophical inquiry about ‚Interculturality‘ will be a subject who no longer shares the belief in the

exclusive claim of modernity to yield the ultimate truth to humanity: It is basically the ‚broken subject‘ of modernity who becomes the hermeneutical subject of a ‚Philosophy of Interculturality‘.

This perspective will also enable us to understand the field of contemporary philosophy as the depiction of the different possibilities to react to the process of modernity. The scale of these reactions will vary from the complete acceptance to the entire rejection of scientific-technological rationality as the normative measure of the (theoretical and practical) truth of human Being-in-the-world, passing by an intermediate position which would attempt to reconcile modernity with the ‚rational essence‘ of the religious and metaphysical traditions such as Transcendental Philosophy or Speculative Idealism (Hegel):

Affirmation	Intermediate Positions	Negation
←-----→		
Logical Empirism	Kant/Fichte	Nietzsche
Analytical Philosophy	Schelling/Hegel	Adorno
Philosophy of Science	Marx/Husserl	Heidegger

This sketch may give sufficient support to my thesis that the field-structure of contemporary philosophy is not so much generated by divergent theoretical insights as by different hermeneutical comprehensions of the historical situation of modernity. The decisive foundational question of contemporary philosophy becomes whether the ontological paradigm of scientific-technological rationality is or is not to be taken as the definitive measure of human Being-in-the-world. But in view of what and on what grounds can such an alternative be decided? If philosophy is - according to its Greek definition - the science of the first principles of Being or at least a radical inquiry into the constitutive presuppositions of our knowledge about what is, then it seems quite legitimate to demand that contemporary thinkers should give some account of those issues they have already decided about in order to generate their philosophical position in the field of contemporary philosophy. However, as this account would have to be philosophical in nature - and not just the narrative of a private option or preference - contemporary philosophy would have to engage in some sort of hermeneutical research about the constitution of the historical situation of modernity. If only the investigation into the truth-principles of modern scientific-technological rationality and their historical constitution can reveal to us the foundations of the modern way of Being-in-the-world then our initial question - what is happening to human being today? - would thereby be raised to the rank of a foundational question of contemporary philosophical thinking itself. It might very well be that this is exactly the systematical place of a genuine philosophical inquiry into ‚Interculturality‘.

This is indeed the point I want to make: The question of ‚Interculturality‘ is not a subordinate and incidental question that would join philosophical thinking casually as just another interesting topic. Rather, the question pertains to the foundation of philosophical thinking insofar as philosophical thinking generates its specific intellectual position only through the mediation of a hermeneutical understanding of the historical situation of

modernity. This hermeneutical comprehension of the historical situation of modernity decides upon the question if and to what extent its underlying ontological paradigm of scientific-technological rationality is the absolute truth condition of human Being-in-the-world in general. Every position of contemporary philosophical thinking therefore already implies a certain decision about human history in general. We can easily see that the affirmative and intermediate positions imply a concept of history as the 'teleological' realization of Reason while the negative position will necessarily entail a more or less 'nihilistic' comprehension of human history. Modern scientific-technological rationality will appear either as the overall 'telos' of all human history, absorbing all factual differences of human Being-in-the-world, or as just another illusion threatening Man with the utmost loss of his quality of being human. As this foundational question of contemporary philosophy is systematically involved in the hermeneutical understanding of the historical world, the systematical place for the question of 'Interculturality' is what traditionally has been called the 'Philosophy of History'. The 'Philosophy of History' will in this sense no longer be one philosophical discipline among others but 'First Philosophy' (prote philosophia) as the foundation of philosophical thinking itself. I think that this is the genuine philosophical perspective of the question of Interculturality that contemporary philosophy has to deal with in order to cope with its own claim to be - in any way whatsoever - the fundamental discipline of human knowledge.

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, we should now be able to outline a concept of an 'Intercultural Philosophy' as distinct from 'Comparative Philosophy'. Because the concept of 'Intercultural Philosophy' is systematically related to the factual historical being of Man and therefore the 'Philosophy of History' - but now in the quite new sense of exploring the foundation of thinking itself which inevitably transforms the common traditional concept of the 'Philosophy of History' - I will rather speak of 'Inter-storical Philosophy'. The title 'Inter-storical Philosophy' should not only point out the systematical connection of this concept to the (revised) concept of 'Philosophy of History', but also the primary diachronical orientation of 'intercultural' questioning which moves in between historical worlds and their foundations. If the reason, the necessity and the condition for the possibility of a philosophical thematization of 'Interculturality' lies entirely within the historical situation of Modernity, as the process of the global unification of mankind within the single ontological paradigm of scientific-technological rationality, then it is - quite paradoxically - the disappearance of, actually' (synchronically) possible, 'intercultural' relations that is constitutive for 'intercultural thinking'. The only exception to this might be the field-research of Cultural Anthropology and Ethnology. The possibility of actual synchronical experience of 'Interculturality' is increasingly marginalized and restricted to very exclusive practical and theoretical adventures even if its traces, as the touch of cultural difference, are still distinctly tangible with any shift to geographically different world-regions. However, the relation between, for example, Western and Indian, Japanese or Chinese (etc.) philosophers will not be an 'intercultural' relation given that they are - by reason of their life-world as well as their professional education - 'commensurated modern subjects' *equally* uprooted from their cultural traditions, notwithstanding the fact that this uprootedness is asymmetrical with regard to the cultural inheritance which generated 'modernity'<sup>45</sup>. This is why there will be no privileged access among different

philosophers coming from different cultural heritages to either of the divergent traditions but only a professional distribution of competence within the realm of one intellectual identity. The modern Indian or Japanese philosopher might very well have greater philosophical competence in dealing with western philosophy than his Western colleague who, in turn, may prove to have a more pertinent comprehension of Eastern ways of thinking. The divergent traditions will be equally objectified by basically one and the same 'modern consciousness' whose hermeneutical position towards them will be - with regard to its immediate access - external. The 'intercultural relation' will therefore predominantly consist in the diachronical relation to textually documented or orally preserved traditions of pre-modern historical worlds; it will not be the relation, for example, between an European and an Indian scholar but of both of them to the Greek or medieval Christian, the buddhist Hinayana or Mahayana worlds.

As that what makes us think 'Interculturality' is basically a profound change in human being itself, the central purpose of an 'interstorical thinking' is to explore the question: What is happening to human being today? — Its main object will therefore be to thoroughly investigate the origin and meaning of the ontological paradigm of scientific-technological rationality in regard to the diachronical succession of occidental ways of Being-in-the-world and their ontological pre-comprehensions of being. But this is neither thematically nor methodologically possible without taking into consideration other traditions that obviously did not generate scientific-technological rationality but were only magically seduced by it. The thematization of non-occidental ways of Being-in-the-world will not merely serve as a means to better delineate the specific determinations the occidental relationship of Man and World has realized, but also to open up the question of another comprehension of human being. It might very well be that the aporetic and nihilistic situation of the unified modern world can only be overcome by generating a different kind of thinking that finds its essential point of departure in the encounter with the non-occidental traditions. The basic diachronical orientation of 'interstorical thinking' does not relate possibilities of human being historically to the past but systematically to the future. Although this orientation is inevitably centered in what is today - and therefore 'eurocentric' because of the actual universalization of Europe - it is nonetheless directed towards possible changes in the relationship of Man and World that might encounter the lost traditions of occidental and non-occidental thinking in a new way. Thinking is 'interstorical' in between the horizons of different historical worlds that might result in a new constellation of Man and World.

I think that, at this point, the difference between 'Interstorical' and 'Comparative' Philosophy needs no further explication with regard to their different attitudes, questions and purposes of thinking. 'Interstorical Philosophy' is not 'comparing' but 're-constructing' the conceptual results of different traditions - their 'ontological paradigms'. This does also imply a basic difference between the hermeneutical subjects of 'Interstorical' and 'Comparative' Philosophy. While the hermeneutical subject of 'Comparative Philosophy' will be the 'modern subject' as basically identical with the truth-presuppositions of scientific-technological rationality, the hermeneutical subject of 'Interstorical Philosophy' will be, as already pointed out, the 'broken modern subject', i. e. one who has basically dismissed his modernity as a valid framework for mediating objective knowledge about

being. This dismissal is not an ontological commitment but constitutes the methodological attitude of interhistorical thinking - the condition of the possibility of a methodologically adequate hermeneutical re-construction of the ontological basis of other historical worlds. I will take up these methodological questions of interhistorical thinking in my third step.

### 3. Methodological questions and the idea of phenomenological Hermeneutics

A 'method' consists basically in the spiritual/cognitive attitude of the subject in dealing with something - the object to be cognized - in view of a prevailing purpose or interest in cognition. The methodological reflection will then have to ask how this spiritual/cognitive attitude has to be constituted in order to achieve the theoretical or practical purpose of cognition. As I have already tried to point out, the theoretical subject of intercultural or interhistorical thinking will be a 'broken modern subject'. This 'brokenness' will, in its immediate appearance, be existential and emerge out of the hermeneutical situation of the subject in the context of his historical world, thus giving origin to new theoretical perspectives and orientations, questions and investigations. Without this brokenness the subject will remain within the auto-sufficiency of his tradition lacking any motive to pass beyond the given conceptual framework. This has been largely the case in Western philosophy, but has also occurred in the different non-occidental traditions too secure about themselves to bother with what has been thought elsewhere<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless, it is also quite evident that this 'brokenness' itself has been experienced differently by 'occidental' and 'non-occidental subjects' according to their divergent historical situation thus leading to different methodical approaches in dealing with another cultural tradition. The hermeneutical subject coming from the occidental tradition discovered the 'non-occidental' as the Other that could be critically held against the prevailing western way of Being-in-the-world. His 'brokenness', transformed into the methodological attitude of 'Critique', basically disposed him to look upon the other traditions as possible compensations for the deficiencies of his own. We discover here the origin of the rather 'idealizing' attitude of so many Western thinkers towards the Eastern traditions, especially that of India but also those of China and Japan. The cognitive attitude towards the Other, i. e. the non-occidental, is constituted by a basic truth expectancy generated by the disappointment of the own cultural heritage<sup>7</sup>. On the other hand, the subject coming from non-occidental traditions has constituted his hermeneutical attitude largely under the impression of the overwhelming 'success' of western scientific-technological rationality, with which his own lost tradition was now called to compete. The 'truth' of western rationality, overwhelming on the scientific-technological level, was readily assumed as the prevailing measure for a re-validation of the own tradition. From this perspective, the basic hermeneutical effort had to consist in showing that the own tradition had fundamentally developed the *same* 'rationality', i. e. the same truth of human being; and the purpose of this hermeneutical effort is simply to be recognized from the (internalized) occidental standpoint of view *as human beings* who might even dispose of a spiritual superiority over the Westerner. Indian philosophers discovered their own tradition in the light of the changing intellectual fashions of Anglo-Saxon philosophy; and the explicit maxim and device of the founders of the Kyoto-school of Philosophy in Japan was to prove the

'superiority' of Eastern over Western thinking<sup>8</sup>. The general attitude of philosophers coming from non-occidental traditions is still today marked by the deep and almost ineradicable tendency of competition whose basic evaluative parameters are - paradoxically - all 'un-critically' and even 'un-consciously' adopted from modern Western rationality<sup>9</sup>. Instead of the Western attitude of 'Critique' we meet the Eastern attitude of 'Competition' as an almost 'negative idealization' of modernity which has also used - if not 'abused' - the Western 'Critique' of modernity to quite some extent, as it seems to be the case in the Japanese reception of Heidegger's interpretation of occidental history as 'Nihilism'.

These few reminders of the well known hermeneutical situation in the field of 'Intercultural Philosophy' may suffice to show the basic methodological question, namely how to convert the existential 'brokenness' of a (differently experienced) historical situation into the discipline of a spiritual/cognitive attitude capable of generating adequate objective insights and truths about the realm of its intentional objects. The undeniable *heuristic* value of the diverging experiences of 'brokenness' in the historical situation of modernity should not make us forget that they will inevitably distort the theoretical truth value of methodical research. The elaboration of a methodologically clarified theoretical attitude of cognition requires a sort of 'invalidation' of the subject's own truths and evidences as mere presuppositions. Accordingly, in my proposed first step I made the methodological claim that an intercultural inquiry requires a 'culturally neutral' concept of human being. Put in general terms, this claim consists in stating that the conceptual framework of the hermeneutical subject, (which is essentially the underlying ontological pre-comprehension of being of scientific-technological rationality), has to be radically suspended in view of a possible re-construction of another way of Being-in-the-world and its underlying ontological paradigm. This is easier said than done. It requires us to confront the following quite difficult theoretical questions about the nature of 'understanding' and 'comprehension' taken as the fundamental terms of human knowledge and cognition:

1. If the comprehension of being *pre-intentionally* functions as possibilizing every practical and theoretical relationship to what is, we 'live' in it rather than know it intentionally and thematically; in our immediate relationship to things it is necessarily un-thematic and therefore 'un-known' and 'un-conscious' *as such*. But how can we cancel and invalidate something methodically without knowing what we are supposed to cancel and invalidate? We have to become aware of this pre-intentional comprehension of being thereby turning it into an intentional object thematically known as such. But how can we become aware of it and ascertain us methodically of knowing it *as such*? —

2. If the comprehension of being pre-intentionally functions as *possibilizing* every practical and theoretical relationship to what is, we will cease to understand being whatsoever by cancelling and invalidating this comprehension. We will be plunging into complete nescience and ignorance about what is. How can we possibly understand anything by cancelling the conceptual framework which is the condition of the possibility of our comprehension of anything? How can we 're-construct' another conceptual framework *out of itself* and without any reference to a pre-supposed conceptual framework of our own? What is the inner 'condition of possibility' for the 'comprehension of being' - if not another pre-supposed 'comprehension of being' or, put somewhat differently, on

what grounds do we understand ‚Being-in-general‘ at all? What does this understanding of Being-in-general refer to and how is it generated? —

3. Even supposing a re-construction of different ontological comprehensions of being were possible, how can we thematize their ‚truth‘ or ‚falsehood‘? If the *assumed truth* of a given conceptual framework is the measure and criterion to decide upon ‚true‘ and ‚false‘, ‚right‘ and ‚wrong‘, ‚good‘ and ‚bad‘ (etc.), how are we then able to relate the re-construction of conceptual frameworks to the question of the ‚truth‘ of human being? Are we not bound to affirm the equal truth of all different comprehensions of being as self-validating constructions of ontological knowledge if we reject a transcendent criterion - such as ‚Reason‘ and its constitutive principles? Can the result of this rejection be other than a complete ‚relativism‘? But how should the interhistorical inquiry then attain its purpose to investigate about the ‚truth‘ of modern scientific-technological rationality? Can a spiritual/cognitive attitude which cancels every ‚truth-presupposition‘ right from the beginning ever return to the question of truth without simply making an arbitrary decision and thus forfeiting its genuine philosophical claim? —

It is of course not possible within the scope of the present essay to discuss these fundamental methodological issues of an ‚Intercultural philosophy‘ thoroughly and to unfold their implications for any possible solution<sup>10</sup>. The central question obviously touches the concept of ‚Comprehension of Being‘ as the foundation of human Being-in-the-world and whether ‚Truth‘ can at all be a valid and sufficient parameter of thinking. Maybe that seeing ‚Truth‘ this way is a very ‚occidental presupposition‘ which in the context of an intercultural inquiry would become quite questionable, thereby also affecting the exclusive ‚ontological definition‘ of human being inherent in the concept of ‚Comprehension of Being‘. An initial and provisional approach to the subject-matter of ‚Interculturality‘ may have to work with concepts that, in the course of its thematic research, will change and transform their initial meaning and exclusive relevance. These concepts still may serve - in the Platonic sense - as unavoidable ‚footboards‘ on the way to a more genuine comprehension of the issues of ‚Interculturality‘. What I am trying to suggest is that it is precisely the hermeneutical experience of interculturally different ways of Being-in-the-world that will transform the sense of these questions and resolve them into a different awareness of human being which is neither ontologically related to ‚being‘ nor theoretically to ‚truth‘. But as these issues are not treatable in the present context I will restrict myself to the necessary conceptual clarifications of the methodical approach which should open up and mediate new ‚intercultural‘ perspectives on human Being-in-the-world. This task basically amounts to the exposition of the methodological concept of ‚Interhistorical Thinking‘ as distinguished from ‚Comparative Philosophy‘. I will entitle this methodological concept ‚Phenomenological Hermeneutics‘ as opposed to ‚Receptive Hermeneutics‘, which refers to the underlying methodology of ‚Comparative Philosophy‘.

‚Receptive Hermeneutics‘ stands for any way of understanding the other within the conceptual framework of the hermeneutical subject’s own Being-in-the-world: the other way of Being-in-the-world and its underlying comprehension of being is entirely ‚received‘ - appropriated and interpreted - on the basis and by the means of the ontological paradigm of the subject. This ‚reception‘ is undoubtedly the most common hermeneutical behaviour. Every ‚culture‘ understands other ‚cultures‘ on the grounds and within the horizon of its

own ontological pre-comprehensions and will relate to them accordingly. But it is quite bewildering that this immediately ‚instinctive‘ attitude has almost never been radically and systematically broken up when it came to the theoretical cognition of ‚historical sciences‘. The ‚non-receptive‘ part of their cognition remained largely restricted to casual insights or the unique hermeneutical efforts of individual researchers without ever becoming the object of a methodology established and shared by a ‚scientific community‘. The fundamental claim of theoretical cognition as pretending to cognize its object *as it is in itself* - and not merely ‚for‘ or ‚in‘ the realm of the conceptual presuppositions of the respective hermeneutical subject - should undoubtedly be a ‚non-receptive‘ Hermeneutics which operates what Husserl called an ‚epoche‘ - the ‚invalidation‘ of the subject’s own conceptual framework. I believe that the phenomenological method elaborated by Husserl and - with decisive improvements - Heidegger<sup>11</sup> can provide us with the conceptual means and possibilities for deriving a feasible methodological concept of a genuine theoretical - ‚non-receptive‘ - Hermeneutics.

The fundamental point of such a ‚phenomenological Hermeneutics‘ is less the ‚epoche‘ than what it leads to, i. e. the phenomena a conceptual framework has hermeneutically appropriated itself. What is left when we cancel our conceptual interpretations of phenomena is the pre-conceptual awareness of these phenomena that, by way of a hermeneutical appropriation, have become conceptually known *as what they are*. Consequently, a ‚comprehension of Being‘ will be understood as a specific hermeneutical appropriation of the phenomenal unconcealment of what is. The purpose of the interhistorical inquiry will then be the ‚re-construction‘ of a given ‚comprehension of Being‘ out of its phenomenal reference *as* the specific hermeneutical appropriation of these phenomena. The ‚comprehension of Being‘ is basically seen as the transformation of phenomenal being into conceptual knowing. To explore this transformation is to explore the foundations of the culturally specific ways of Being-in-the-world. Thus, while a ‚receptive Hermeneutics‘ basically deals with traditionally handed-down and documented ‚opinions‘ about what is, arguing pro and contra their truth or falsehood, ‚phenomenological Hermeneutics‘ will deal with ‚the things themselves‘, i.e. the phenomena as transformed into a conceptual knowledge which reveals them in what they are in themselves. The principle of this transformation will not be a presupposed ‚transcendental Ego‘, ‚Consciousness‘ or ‚Reason‘, but ‚Thinking‘ in its respective factual and historical formation as generated by this transformation itself. ‚Thinking‘ is nothing but that which is generated by itself within the transformation of the phenomenal appearance of Being into Knowing, i.e. originating a specific ‚comprehension of Being‘. The plurality of historical worlds in the sense of both ‚comprehensions of Being‘ and ‚ways of thinking‘ is nothing but the plurality of originally different ways of transforming phenomenal Being into Knowing which have constituted different traditions in their intersubjective relationships to the world. The ‚truth‘ of such ‚comprehensions of Being‘ can therefore only consist of how these comprehensions fulfill their internal hermeneutical criterion rendering what is ‚understandable‘ to anyone who shares these comprehensions. We will not doubt, for example, that the ‚vedic‘ or the ‚homeric world‘ was as understandable to its participants as ours is to us.

We can now, thus, delineate the idea of a phenomenological Hermeneutics as opposed to the constitutive distinction that governs all contemporary philosophy. Modern research in philosophy distinguishes a ‚primary‘ from a ‚secondary‘ literature. Philosophy, which primarily deals with what is, has separated from a secondary historical discipline dealing with the accumulated opinions or theories about what is. Thus, systematical and historical research, Philosophy and History of Philosophy, Reason and Tradition, have broken apart. But the differentiation between systematical and historical research does not make sense any more where the historically assumed knowledge about what is is reconstructed systematically out of its phenomenal realm of reference and every systematical insight into what is is nothing but the conceptual-hermeneutical appropriation of being. Phenomenological Hermeneutics subverts the distinction between ‚systematical‘ and ‚historical‘, between ‚primary‘ and ‚secondary‘ literature, and thereby proves to be a genuine philosophical method, overcoming the usual distinction between ‚Reason‘ and ‚History‘. As a concept of philosophical research phenomenological Hermeneutics may integrate the ‚intercultural‘ situation of contemporary philosophy into the more genuine perspective of a differential ontology which does not separate ‚the thing‘ from the factual-historical way of ‚being-known‘. Instead of a transcendently supposed unique way of constituting the knowledge and consciousness of Being we are thereby able to deal with the manifold factual-historical ways of transforming Being into Knowing: into a ‚Comprehension of Being‘ which is *originally divergent*. The Aristotelean insight into the manifold determinations of Being (*τὸ ὄν λέγεται πολλαχῶς*) may acquire the entirely new sense of denoting the original dispersion of ‚Reason‘ and ‚Being‘ in itself. This may still be a very ‚occidental‘ way of responding philosophically to the challenge of our contemporary historical situation. But nothing precludes the ontological determination of occidental thinking by way of such an inquiry from being resolved into a non-ontological way of dealing with what is.

#### Notes and References:

- <sup>1</sup> Lecture delivered at the Department of Philosophy, Delhi-University (India), November 1994.
- <sup>2</sup> See for this my monograph *Heidegger. Sein und Wissen. Eine Einführung in sein Denken*. Wien 1993.
- <sup>3</sup> The philosophical insight into the fundamental difference between generic and formal concepts respectively between generic and formal generality or universality is due to Aristotle; its importance has been emphasized again in this century by Husserl (Ideen § 13). See for further explication my monograph *Aristoteles*. (forthcoming 1996).
- <sup>4</sup> There is, in a strict sense, no Western domination of the world, but the only temporary advantage of the West over the rest of the world is due to the fact that scientific-technological rationality originated within the Western tradition. As the example of Japan and other far Eastern cultures shows, this advantage might soon be overcome and forgotten; it belongs not to a cultural predisposition but to a temporary phase of the scientific and technological revolution of the world due to its historical origin.
- <sup>5</sup> See as an example for such a missed ‚intercultural discussion‘: *All-einheit. Wege eines*

*Gedankens in Ost und West*. Hg. von D. Henrich (Veröffentl. d. intern. Hegel-Vereinig. Bd. 14), Stuttgart 1985.

- <sup>6</sup> See for this for example the remarks of M.P. Rege (in: *Samvada*, ed. by Daya Krishna, Motilal Banarsidass 1991, XXIII) on the intellectual situation of traditional Indian pandits; according to him, the „geographical isolation was itself partly the result of the mental isolation into which the Brahmins had retreated owing to pride based on ignorance. They, perhaps, took unduly seriously the boast of the Mahabharata that in matters of dharma, artha, kama and moksa what is not here is not found to be elsewhere“.
- <sup>7</sup> See, for example, the works of Heinrich Zimmer, especially his *Philosophies of India* (1951).
- <sup>8</sup> See, for example, the introduction of M.P. Rege (in: *Samvada*, ed. by Daya Krishna, Motilal Banarsidass 1991) for the Kyôto-School Ryôsuke Ohashi (Hg.), *Die Philosophie der Kyôto-Schule*. Freiburg/München 1990.
- <sup>9</sup> As a recent example see J. N. Mohanty, *Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought* (1992). Already the title is a contradiction in terms.
- <sup>10</sup> See for this my monograph *Heideggers Begriff der Geschichte und das neuzeitliche Geschichtsdenken* (1994).
- <sup>11</sup> Husserl - with the typical lack of historical awareness of the Other due to an overall view of History as a ‚Teleology of Reason‘ - never applied the phenomenological method to history nor did he make any use of it in his interpretations of other philosophers; it is the merit of the young Heidegger to have developed the method of ‚phenomenological Interpretation‘ which became the methodological paradigm for so many works on the ‚History of Philosophy‘. But what still seems lacking today is a conceptual elucidation of this methodological practice widely spread in ‚Continental Philosophy‘ and quite opposed to the methods of ‚Analytical Interpretation‘ commonly applied in ‚Anglo-Saxon Philosophy‘. See for further conceptual clarification of phenomenological Hermeneutics my monograph *Was ist und wozu überhaupt - Philosophie?* (1992), 87 - 98 and *Heideggers Begriff der Geschichte und das neuzeitliche Geschichtsdenken* (1994) 159 - 172.