



Interkulturelle Philosophie

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What is it?

The German term *interkulturelle Philosophie* (IP) proposes to rejuvenate academic philosophy. IP is best understood as an attitude of intellectual humility, respect, and sincerity in dealing with unfamiliar, or even alien, philosophical and intellectual traditions. This moral commitment, it is hoped, will lead to a more nuanced perception of other traditions. IP commits the philosopher to guard against constructions of other traditions in which these mutate into mere inferior and pale imitations of one's own. However, IP is equally cautious of those cross-cultural comparisons that tend to explain away all differences between traditions. In addition, IP focuses on the common ground or the conceptual overlap between traditions.

Who uses the concept?

The term is especially prevalent among comparative philosophers in German-speaking countries, who are influenced by the hermeneutic tradition. These philosophers underscore the urgent need to reflect upon standards, precepts, and principles that come into play during processes of cross-cultural philosophical comparisons. They seek to develop an understanding of intercultural dialogue enabling an equal participation of all involved parties. They attempt to revoke cross-cultural comparisons that were (and continue to be) subversively used to sustain the supposed superiority of the dominant Anglo-European philosophical tradition. Distancing themselves from their intellectual predecessors in these countries, these philosophers explicitly avoid using the German term *komparative Philosophie* (comparative philosophy). They believe that other traditions were homogenized and essentialized in

their predecessors' use of this term. The 'Other' became a simple foil in highlighting the singularity of one's own tradition. Such pernicious conceptual frameworks of comparison continue to prevail. Undoubtedly, a crucial factor in this regard is the failure at systematically overhauling the educational infrastructure in most former colonies. As a result, contesting understandings cannot sufficiently develop from within these contexts.

Fit with intercultural dialogue?

Philosophers working in this field argue that IP can spark a radical change in intercultural dialogue precisely because it sufficiently attends to the normative pre-conditions of such a dialogue. Partners philosophizing in this mode will choose to interact in a spirit of mutual learning and explicitly abandon tactics of intellectual posturing. Their moral commitment will lead them to maintain openness and clarity in their exchange.

What work remains?

Initiators of this project have paved the way for a comprehensive critique of the term 'philosophy' itself. Ensuing developments in this field are set to make deep inroads into conventional ways of understanding and teaching philosophy in the German-speaking countries. This project can be carried forward by forging alliances with philosophers calling themselves comparative and cross-cultural philosophers in the English-speaking countries, but nevertheless share a focus and aims.

Resource

Kirloskar-Steinbach, M., Ramana, G., & Maffie, J. (2014). Introducing *Confluence*: A thematic essay. *Confluence*, 1, 7-63.