CULTURAL HERITAGE AND THE PROBLEM OF IDENTITY IN THE WORLD ON GLOBALIZATION PROCESS

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Abstract

This paper will discuss the tensions between cultural heritage and globalization. It will examine the various responses to the challenges of globalization. And it will promote an idea of an 'intercultural philosophy' as a response to the present challenges.

The Process of Globalization

Globalization is certainly one of the central terms describing the present situation of the world. Most of the people would agree with the fact that there is an ongoing, worldwide process of 'globalization'. But, regarding the analysis of its reasons, the estimation of its consequences and perspectives of judging its results, there are vastly different perspectives. Even though the 'globalization' itself is not the theme of this paper, I will explain some aspects in relation to our theme.

The manifestations of 'Globalization' became very familiar even in our everyday life. You can enjoy the new trends of cultures (music, movies, fashion, etc.) everywhere in the world where you have the internet access. The announcement of the flight schedule after 6:00 p.m. in the airport in Berlin is broadcast from California. (in Germany, overtime is expensive). In the dead body of the penguins discovered in the South Pole entails poisonous heavy metal, even though there are no factories in that area. In the department stores all over the world you can find the same brands (Gucci, Christian Dior, Panasonic, Siemens, etc.).

However, 'Globalization' in our time does not only refer to the globally spreading culture and commodities or the amazing development of information, communication and transport technology. These are rather the surface manifestations of a process which is much more complex and touching upon every aspect (economic, social, political and cultural) of human life.

Originally it is based on the internalization process driven by the innate dynamics of the capitalistic economic system. The basic mechanism can be summarized as follows: The ultimate goal of the capitalistic economy lies in the maximization of the profit which produces an intensive competition. It stimulates the technical and technological development in order to reduce the production costs. The enhancement of the productivity results in the continuous increase of the products and the capitalists notice very soon the narrowness of the domestic market. It is very rational for them to seek for other markets in the world. The internalization of the capital is not restricted in the expansion of the market for the surplus products (export). It includes also the direct investment, international division of labor for producing products (for example: row material from Indonesia, fabrication in Thailand, package in South Korea, etc.) and internalization of financial capital (bank, stock market, etc.).

The enhancement of the productivity is not necessarily accompanied by the improvement of the material living standards of the common people in the similar proportion. On the contrary it is normally the case that it produces the increasing disparity between the rich and the poor. It is a problem of the relation of the political power how to distribute the produced wealth. Social democratic governments in Western Europe have tried to reduce the disparity through their social democratic policies of redistribution including policies (regarding tax, activities of trade union, social welfare, etc.) - state intervention in the economic process which look unfavorable for the capitalists.

But, in the present stage of internalization of the economy, the capitalists have possibilities to overcome the state boundaries, it means to escape from the "unfavorable" policies of a national government (for example: moving the production site to other countries where they pay much less taxes and wages). Moreover they have even possibilities to put the national government under the decisive pressure. The "Exit option" of

the financial investors (the possibility to withdraw all the money from the finance market of a country) could mean a bankruptcy of the national economy of that country. It was evidently proven during the Asian financial crisis in the second half of the 1990's.

The total amount of wealth on the global level is still growing, but the income of the state is reducing. It influences directly the budget reduction of the social welfare system. The disparity of the rich and poor is increasing immensely. The possibility of a "20:80" society, where just 20% of the population could have a life appropriate for human dignity, is not exaggerated.

The word "globalization" suggests a harmonic global world. There has been also intensive propaganda that the globalization would bring out a wonderful world. But, Globalization is not harmless, because it is *in essence* combined with the increasing inequality and the marginalization of the weak people. It subjects everything under the principle of the market, even the culture. The asymmetry of the power in the economic and political field makes influence on the constellation of the cultural power.

I am not defining culture on the basis of national boundary. (and I am not suggesting American culture will destroy the cultures of the other countries.) Even in the West, the tendency of the reduction of the culture (the "civilization" of the Market and the culture of consumption[1]) is observed. Only a culture which is subsumed under the principle of the market could survive. We can buy Dimsam and Sushi in the supermarket in Europe. But, I do not think that it signifies the equal treatment of the western and eastern cultures. It means that Dimsam and Sushi succeeded in adjusting themselves under the principles of the market. In this sense I am suggesting that the globalization brings out the uniformity of the culture.

It is very natural that one extreme calls to the other. In this context we can understand the rise of the fundamentalism and the increasing conflicts between the groups with different cultural background. It is a protest against the compelled 'uniformity', which is lacking in 'equality'. In the area of culture we are confronted with a totalitarian ideology robbing a people of the right to create their own culture in an autonomous way. In this sense the globalization does not encourage the development of the dialogue between cultures; it produces rather the conflict of cultures.

"War against Terror" as an extreme manifestation of an essential problem of the current globalization process – Either "we" or "others (=enemy)"

The series of occurrences in the world since September 11, 2001, including the war in Afghanistan and Iraq as well as threat of war in other regions, is a serious challenge also for philosophy. In accordance with the process of the neo-liberalistic globalization accompanied by the expansion of the single super culture there is a clear tendency in this present world: The world is rules by policies lacking in the concept of "the other" as an equal partner. The friend-enemy-dichotomy is prevailing, where waging war is justified by way of removing "the enemy" – even though they are just a "potential" enemy. For theologians it is an urgent task to develop and spread a philosophy of an intercultural and mutual encounter, a theology of living together.

In this context I remember a comment of an American newscaster several days after Sept. 11: "Good and evil rarely manifest themselves as clearly as they did last Tuesday. People who we don't know massacred people who we do. And they did so with contemptuous glee." Then he broke down and wept.[2]

Allegedly there are two antagonistic groups of people, even though all of them are living in the same "global village": people whom the US-Americans know and people whom they don't. This dichotomy of "we" and "the others" is related to the dichotomy of "good and evil". And the problem is that the USA have been at war against "the others", "the evil", *whom they do not know*.

The dichotomy of < either "we" or "the others (= enemy)" > entails a very dangerous potential. First of all, it can function as an epistemic basis for justifying violence against "the others" as well as for desensitizing people in terms of the violation of the human rights of "the others". People tend to think that it is enough to take care of "us". "The others" or the "enemy" must be defeated. This kind of mentality is opposite to the basic premise of the concept of "human rights" which have to be acknowledged for all human beings, just because they are human beings without any condition.

Secondly, the perspective of this dichotomy oppresses any criticism against its own society. In the constellation of < either "we" or "the others (= enemy)" >, to whom do the critics belong? It can happen easily that the critics are regarded as "the others". As a result, they have no place in "our" society. It is justified to deprive them of their human rights and to tyrannize them. The society develops in the anti-democratic direction. The tendency to regard the anti-globalization activists as equivalent to the terrorists[3] is an example of this development.

Thirdly, the dichotomizing mentality creates social atmosphere favorable for militarism. In fear of losing "our" own security it becomes even acceptable to make a war against "the others". The climate of war is used as an excuse to curtail civil liberties, deny free speech, lay off workers, harass ethnic and religious minorities, cut back on public spending and divert huge amounts of money to the defense industry.[4] I remember well the strong civil movement in the 80's in Germany for the protection of data privacy from the state control. At present, however, the German Ministry of Interior dares to introduce the regulation requiring finger prints on identity cards. Democracy takes a step backwards.

Everyone wishes to eliminate terrorism. However, it is absurd to believe that one can stamp out terrorism with more violence and oppression, since terrorism is only a symptom, not the disease.[5] There is a reason and circumstances in which terrorism is nourished. Isn't it natural for the people, who have been defined as "the others", to resist? In the course of proceeding globalization they have been becoming more and more marginalized. The foundation of their existence has been more and more threatened. Globalization and growing fundamentalism are two sides of the same coin.[6]

The basic problem is the mode of relations. Only the Recognition of "the other" as an equal subject, and the development a relationship of mutual enrichment, could be the solution.[7] To react through warfare only worsens the original problem – this ranges from 'ignoring' to a total 'elimination' of "the other". 'Arundhati Roy suggests, "the first step is for America to at least acknowledge that it shares the planet with other nations, with other human beings who, even if they are not on TV, have loves and griefs and stories and songs and sorrows and, for heaven's sake, rights."[8]

But the today's world 'Superpower' does not yet recognize the 'equality' of cultures. The notion of the "Axis of the Evil" and the

manipulation of the public opinions to justify the war against "the evil" show it clearly. The goal of the US policy is not to "live together" but to eliminate "the other", so that only "we" can live. Culturally interpreted, it has the implication of the 'intolerance of the differences' forcing 'uniformity of the culture'. The political and social consequences of this mentality have affected the everyday life of the majority of people in the whole world in a disastrous way.

Response to a Process Threatening One's Own Identity

For the most of Asian countries, which were subjected to colonial rule, the globalization process is a second blow, because they are still struggling with the task of de-colonialization and recovery of their oppressed or lost identities. Moreover, the innovation of their societies with the values of (self-defined) modernity and the formation of a new identity is also on program. (I'd like to avoid using the term "modernization", because it is usually understood as 'westernization'.) The 'Identity' is not a fixed entity, but always in process.

There are various types of reaction:

a) A modernist reaction involves the effort to break with tradition and to radically adopt the so called "modern" values.

b) Efforts to synthesize the modern and the traditional is the second type of the reaction. This often involves modernizing science and technology while preserving traditional culture.

c) Traditionalists idealize the past and appeal for a return to tradition. They regard "the Western" influence as a danger, destroying the ideal and supposed identity of their society.

d) Fundamentalists go even further and try to "protect" their own identity through aggressive attitudes and actions. In extreme cases they use violence and terror as an instrument.

Even though each type of these reactions differs from each other, they are more or less under the common paradigm according to which:

a)   the traditional culture (A) and "Western" influence (B) are antagonistic figures being understood as dichotomous contradiction;

b)   the efforts to innovate or modernize the values and systems of the existing society are often regarded as identical with adoption of the Western values (B);

c)   the traditional culture (A) as well as the "Western" influence (B) are conceived as closed entities (essentialistic conception).

This *essentialistic* paradigm has the following decisive shortcomings to understand the present situation and develop an alternative:

a)   Culture is not an abstract entity in itself; it is rather a horizon of human history on which every concrete human being understands and interprets the reality as well as carries out actions in it. Neither do human beings understand and interpret reality homogeneously, nor do they act in a unified way.[9] Culture is rather a place where different interests, views and actions of different individuals or groups are competing, struggling or living together. Power struggles and the changing constellation of power belong of course to a culture. We can remember how feminist movement changed the cultures of their societies. Culture is never a closed entity, but rather an epistemic unit which entails in reality great internal dynamics and diversities. The essentialistic paradigm does not help us understand the internal dynamics of a culture.

b)   According to the essentialistic paradigm, it is difficult to explain change within a culture. Culture is created by *living* human beings, and to live means to be in continuous change. So culture too is an identity which is continuously in process. Resisting change in a culture results in the mummification of the past, and canceling the dynamic of present life.[10] We need to appreciate a more dynamic concept of culture and identity.

c)   The antagonistic couple of the concepts is rather <tradition vs. innovation>, rather than <one's own tradition vs. influence from others>. Even in one's own tradition the dynamics of tradition and innovation is in process. Also for "Western" culture it is the same. There is no undifferentiated tradition in itself. If there is a tradition of the past dominating system, there is also a revolutionary tradition. The undifferentiated "tradition" designating a culture of those who have power was often misused

by dictators for ideological manipulation of the mass. South-Koreans can remember the propaganda of the "National Identity" or "Democracy in Korean Way" under the military dictatorship in the 1970's. The Asianism of Lee Kwan Yew is another example.[11] The relationship of tradition and "Western" influence regarded as contradictory by the essentialistic paradigm is not really contradictory.

d) According to the essentialistic paradigm, the essential difference between Asian and European value systems lies in the question, whether a community or an individual, duties or rights stands at the center of human life and all sorts of social system and culture. Various values were established as a result of an emancipation movement or revolution against feudal ruling system – the concept of human dignity, human rights, individual person as an autonomous subject, equality of all human beings, freedom of religion, freedom of thought, idea of democracy, tolerance, feminism etc. – are often regarded as "Western" per se. Asians fighting for democracy or human rights, or especially Asian women fighting for gender equality, have been often blamed by the traditionalists for propagating Western values and betray their own country and its tradition.

Dieter Senghaas, a well known German sociologist and expert in development discourses, indicates that these values are never European per se. He asks us to recall European history. Even until the middle of 18th century, the idea of equality, human dignity and human rights were rejected as strange and absurd. The few thinkers who promoted these ideas were persecuted and their books were prohibited. The theocracy and intolerance which existed at the time of the Christian reformation reminds us of the attitudes of the Taliban. Yet less than 200 years later in Northern and Western Europe, people achieved these rights and established them through various democratic systems. Southern European countries achieved these ideals in the 20th century.[12] The success in establishing these values is not 'European' per se, but the result of the hard struggles of the people for their emancipation.

'Intercultural Philosophy' as a Response

What would be an appropriate way to respond to the challenge of globalization? Is there no alternative to its main tendency of expanding the Super Culture while it subdues and marginalizes other smaller cultures? Wouldn't it be conceivable to innovate the cultural heritage of Asia so that it can initiate a cultural change in the process of globalization for pluralization of human cultures in the world? In order to do it, we need not only a competent strategy of adoption (Rezeption) but also we should be able to offer a content which can be universalized. At the same time we have to claim the right to offer it. I think that the "Intercultural Philosophy" is a viable response.

Since the end of the 80's there have been philosophers making efforts to establish a new form of philosophy called "intercultural philosophy".[13] Beyond the horizon of the comparative philosophy the new one has to realize the transformation of philosophy as requested by the 'dialogue of the cultures'.

Now I will introduce some concepts of intercultural philosophy which can hint its essential characters.[14]

1. Contextuality

Philosophy is always done within a culture. It implies that there is a material context of human thinking and the interdependence between the culture and philosophical paradigms. This awareness stimulated philosophers to be conscious of their own context and avoid absolutizing or universalizing one's own paradigm. This awareness contributed, on the one hand, to the critical evaluation of the universality claims of the European or occidental philosophy – "euro-centrism" - leading to the discovery of the regional contextuality of European philosophy. On the other hand, a fundament was prepared to reexamine and revaluate the philosophical traditions of other cultural areas which have been called "cosmovision", "wisdom of life", "religious consciousness", "mysticism", and other ways of thought not traditionally accepted as philosophy by European philosophers.[15]

2. Plurality

There are diversity of contexts which bring about a diversity of the form and content of philosophy. The plurality of the cultural practices of philosophy is the source of the differences in its concrete forms, in which the human being is doing philosophy. Therefore it is necessary to regionalize (to be aware of the regional character of) the forms of practice and expression of philosophy (seminar, lecture, academic articles, conversation, etc.).

3. Reference to Praxis

Philosophy should be contextualized in the sense of being aware of its humus from which it has been growing. The world, within which human beings practice philosophy, influences not only what is thought but also how it is thought. At the same time these activities (practice of philosophy) are a part of the events happening in the world and influence the reality. It implies that philosophy not only knows and explains the world but also forms the reality.

4. Universality

The proposal of intercultural philosophy to regionalize philosophy does not assume cultural relativism, nor is it postmodern. The necessity of the universality is not abandoned. It is not the same universality which the mono-cultural European philosophy has claimed. The intercultural philosophy substitutes the tension between the universal and the particular with the dialogue between the contextual worlds. The universality is produced during the communication praxis, reciprocal translation and mediation of own world of experiences and references.

5. Diverse Types of Rationality

The intercultural philosophy has distrusted the concept of 'reason' of traditional European philosophy (cf.: postmodernism). But it does not mean the absolute rejection of 'reason' itself but the rejection of its background of mono-cultural formation combined with exclusive claim of validity. The proposal of intercultural philosophy is to examine historically the process of the formation of the valid forms of rationality using an intercultural, open dialogue free from prejudice. The dialogue will uncover the mono-cultural structure of the conceptualizing process and suggest a

correction. The diverse ways of practicing philosophy from various cultures of our multicultural world will participate in this process through translation.

Furthermore, the intercultural philosophy proposes to redefine the status of 'reason' by an intercultural and historical reconstruction of its conceptualization process. Here it is necessary to explain the understanding of culture presupposed in this notion. Culture is not an abstract, isolated entity, but forms itself through the continuous process of interactions between the internal and the external, etc. crossing various sorts of boundaries. Every culture knows also the differentiation process as a reflex of internal conflicts – intracultural struggles among various groups based on different constellation of power or different interests (gender, class, ethnic groups,etc.). They are fighting for cultural hegemony in order to establish tradition (including value system) in their cultural world, an authoritative reference point for the order of their world. It means each culture also entails a history of possibilities which were suppressed and cannot be realized. A historical reconstruction of a tradition may discover these oppressed subcultures, reawakening them, and leading to a new integration.

Redefining the status of 'reason' from an historical to an intercultural perspective may allow a transformation of 'reason' – a possible liberation of the historical figure of 'reason' that was limited by its context within western capitalistic modernity.

ENDNOTES

[1] Theoreticians of cultural globalization criticizes this thesis of 'uniformity'. According to Roland Robertson the globalization accompanies always localization. The goods, which can acquire popularity in the world market, are based on the local culture. Not only McDonald, but also Dimsam is sold all over the world. However, in terms of the dominance of principles of the Market, the thesis of 'uniformity' has still its validity.

[2] It was quoted by Arundhati Roy in her article "The algebra of infinite justice" published in: The Guardian, Sept. 29, 2001. The statement of the U.S. President

Bush, "Either you are with us, or you are against us," expresses the same sort of mentality.

[3] For example: Council of the European Union, Working Party on Terrorism: Presentation of a Presidency initiative for the introduction of a standard form for exchanging information on terrorist incidents, Brüssels, January 29, 2002(05.02).

[4] Arundhati Roy, a.a.O.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Josef Estermann, 2001, Religion und Gewalt – Dialektik von Globalisierung und Fundamentalisierung, Manuscript of lecture at Rheinisch-Westfälische Technische Hochschule (Aachen, Germany) in Oct. 2001.

[7] Cf. Vincent Shen, 2002, From Politics of Recognition to a Politics of Mutual Enrichment, in: Taipei Ricci Institute Data Base, http://www.richbase.com (downloaded on Aug. 10, 2002).

[8] Arundhati Roy, a.a.O.

[9] Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, 2001, Einführung, in: Raúl Fornet-Betancourt (Hg.), Kulturen zwischen Tradition und Innovation. Stehen wir am Ende der traditionalen Kulturen? Dokumentation des III. Internationalen Kongresses für Interkulturelle Philosophie, Frankfurt am Main:Iko-Verlag, p. 22.

[10] Ibid., p. 23.

[11] Choe, Hyondok, 1999, Towards a New Life in Asia: Modernity in Asian Context, in: CTC Bulletin, Vol. 16, No. 1, ed. By Christian Conference of Asia, p. 93.

[12] Dieter Senghaas, 2004, Zum irdischen Frieden, Frankfurt am Main, pp. 283-290.

[13] The following publications can be regarded as a milestone to signify the beginning of the explicit constitution of an intercultural philosophy: R.A. Mall / H. Hülsmann, 1989, Die drei Geburtsorte der Philosophie: China, Indien, Europa, Bonn; R.A. Mall, 1992, Philosophie im Vergleich der Kulturen. Eine Einführung in die interkulturelle Philosophie, Bremen; F. Wimmer, 1990, Interkulturelle Philosophie. Geschichte und Theorie, Wien; H. Kimmerle, 1991, Philosophie in Afrika. Annäherungen an einen interkulturellen Philosophiebegriff, Frankfurt am Main.

[14] Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, 2002, Zur interkulturellen Transformation der Philosophie in Lateinamerika, pp. 13-17.

[15] Josef Estermann, 1997, Interkulturelle Philosophie und Mission. Wege zwischen Fundamentalismus und Globalisierung, in: Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft 53-1997/4, p. 288.