

Is Philosophy Regional or Global? (FISP lecture, Delhi Dec. 2006*)

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My answer to this question is that philosophy is global. I have two reasons for this answer: first from a historical perspective and secondly from a systematic and factual-*sachlich* way of thinking. It is a historical fact that the concept of philosophy was founded by the ancient Greeks, especially by pre-Socratic philosophers like Heraclitus, Parmenides, and Plato. A very famous scholar of ancient Greek philosophy, *Olof Gigon* said once that Heraclitus has accepted his philosophical thinking from three origins of Greek culture, namely the Homeric *epos* (epic) and Ionian natural science and Theology of unique God professed by *Xenophanes*. This movement of philosophy expanded into the whole human world. On the other hand, in the epoch at the beginning of 21st century we understand almost the same with this expression “philosophy”: Philosophy is an attitude of human being for the world, the thinking of the relation between Ego and world, as I will explain later.

To elucidate the concept of philosophy, I would like to gain a vantage point from the view of structural linguistics. The word *Philosophy* is a kind of linguistic expression, a term or anyway a literal sign. It has, as a sign, dual sides: *signans* and *signatum*. *Signans* is a series of voicings, letters, and phonemes. This *Signans* brings the side of concept, *signatum* with itself. *Signatum* is the concept of the word, the essential meaning of the *signans*.

Philosophy as *signans* is a series of letters or phonemes, “P-h-i-l-o-s-o-p-h-y” which means in the Greek <love of the wisdom> or <being friend with the knowledge>. Philosophy is a word, a linguistic element. What does this expression mean? *Philosophy* as *signans* in terms of the structural linguistics is the historical notion developing since its origin in Hellenic culture. They thought of the relation, the *logos* of the human being and the nature (world) in the fundamental dimension. Then Greek expression, *logos* (λόγος) means “relation” in English. Relation-thinking is the *signatum* of the concept of *philosophy*. The relation-thinking, however, between the

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Ego and the world will be found in India, China, and Mesopotamia and also in the culture of the American Indians. The eminent English anthropologist, Radcliffe-Brown stated that the main thought of Heraclitus will be found in the traditional myths of American Indians. (The Comparative Method in Social Anthropology, Huxley Memorial Lecture for 1951.) They share the idea of *logos* which means the coincidence of oppositions.

In the human world, a few intellectuals think of the relation between the Ego and the World, the birth and death, the beginning and the end, the mode of my being in the world. Especially in the socio-ethical dimension, it concerns the relation of the Ego and others. Jesus Christ said to his disciples: “Treat others exactly as you would like to have them treat you.” (Luke, 6-31) Confucius answered to his disciple, when this person asked about a word that one could live by unto death: that word is *siag* in Chinese, *jyo* in Japanese. *Jyo* means originally that a person sees his partners as he sees himself. *Jyo* means therefore to treat others as one would treat warmly and with friendliness. Confucius crystallized his thought in the following expressions: “Treat not others exactly as you would like to have them not treat you.” Confucius and Jesus Christ say the same thing, but in different ways; Jesus expressed his thought positively. And Confucius negatively. In ethics this maxim is called the *Golden Rule*, because this is the basic rule in human society, and abiding by this rule render human beings as incorruptible as gold. The so-called *Golden Rule* is supposed to be in every human culture and society. It is related to the fundamental humanity of mankind.

What, then, are the concrete forms of relation that philosophers think about? As formerly mentioned there are many kinds of relations in Philosophy, the relation between the Ego and the world (epistemological attitude in Husserl), the ego and thou (social-phenomenological attitude based on the intersubjectivity), and the living flesh and the body (new phenomenological cosmology in my interpretation of Platos Timaios and Philebos or “*System der Philosophie*” of H. Schmitz), and finally between the birth and the death (like Heideggers *Daseinsanalytik*). You could increase this list with many examples and cases of the relational structure like parts and whole (just like in Mereology), love and hate (like in Schelers and Schmitz’ phenomenology) and so on.

In this context I will mention that perhaps the most important discipline in the philosophy, “ontology” is not universal and global. “Ontology” is originally expressed as technical term for the observation of the statements like “it is”, “to be” “beings” and so on. Indeed ontology is very important technical term in European philosophical tradition since Parmenides, the forefather of ontology. He stated, “being is and not-being is not” (ἔμφασις - ἐμφαινεῖν. Fragment, B6) Obviously this word “to be” is

common in the Indian-European languages, Sanskrit (asmi), Greek (εἰμί < ἐσμί), Latin (est), English, German (Sein<ist) and French (être<est) and so on.

But there are in some cultures the languages in which you will find no correspondence to the verb “is” or “being” or “to be”. The verb “to be” means simultaneously the existence of something and the predication. In the first case, you will say, the desk is in my hotel room. In the second, the hotel room is comfortable. But in Chinese or in some other languages you will find no correspondence to this verb. In Japanese, however, you will find the correspondence. “To be” corresponds in Japanese “*ari, are, araware*”. *Ari* means the existence, *Are* “to be born”, *araware* means to appear. Paradoxically the Japanese verb, *ari* is almost the same as what Heidegger insisted as meaning of “to be” namely Sein. Therefore we should have the right to get rid of the term “ontology” from philosophy, if my thesis that philosophy obtains only when it is global is right.

In this context I would like to insist that nowadays philosophers must find out another term to express the most important discipline in the philosophy. In my view, that is the relation, or logos which I understand as structure. The thinking of relation, or *logos*, is the core of philosophy.

What a philosopher is thinking about is this relation of between, the logos, and the structure. Philosophy is the thinking of this “between”, namely the structure. The theme <thinking of the relation> transcends the binding nexus to the cultural sphere. Transcendence is possible because of the insight into the identical structures in every culture, which is based on carrying out the re-thinking of the re-analysis of the most fundamental matters. It is not situated on the correspondence of similarities. To count the similarities in every culture is not the philosophical thinking, but nothing other than taxonomy which is a species of empirical research. Empirical researches will count the facts and enlarge the stock of factual knowledge. The act of counting facts has nothing to do with philosophical evidence. It is juxtaposition of facts. What then is philosophical worthy as a philosophical method to elucidate and to observe the identity in the difference?

As Husserlian scholar, I would like to emphasize that every philosophical truth must be based on the necessary method, and not on the contingent happening. To emphasize or to make the emphasis is etymologically derived from the good insight, to
l e t s o m e t h i n g a p p e a r w e l l

(χρῆ τὸ λέγειν τε νοεῖν τ' ἐὸν ἔμεναι. ἔστι γὰρ εἶναι, μηδὲν δ' οὐκ ἔστιν). T h i s

method is therefore the process to gain the essential relation or structure clearly.

What is then the method of the elucidation of identical structure? It is, as I think, the method of free variation which Husserl established. I can grasp the essential structure of something through the steps of going-through it in possible permutations. At the beginning I must see a factual thing as a starting point of the free variation. Then I would like to make variations from the factual thing as this starting point. The variant (a) will produce the variant (b) on the basis of insight into the similarity of both variants. The production of the variant (b) means that I have the insight of the identity between both. As I think, the prediction or assumption that there must be an essential structure between two variants which I must presuppose. This presupposition sees previously the orientation and production of the free variation. This foresight is decisively important. This insight is the activity of seeing through (*noein*). This *noein*, direct intuition into the unity of difference is, I will say with Heraclitus, *logos*. *Logos* and *Nous* are co-primordial.

I have once co-edited a volume of the American philosophical Journal "*The Monist*" on the topic of "Cultural Universals". According to my thesis on the Husserlian method of free variation as the intuition of essence, there are three stages:

(1) I begin with a chosen example --- a table, given in perception or imagination. I then allow the starting example to vary in my mind along all conceivable dimensions, but always in such a way that it remains a *table*. Such variation is a potentially endless open process. Its openness is shown in the fact that the real or imagined example that is taken as starting point is chosen arbitrarily.

(2) Through all the differences that are yielded by the performance of variation there will be some invariance --- there will be an overlapping, or "coupling", as Husserl calls it. The progression of variants converges around what is common in all the variants and there is generated thereby a unity which binds them together. Starting with a particular table which we see, and going through a series of other tables which we also see or merely imagine, we eventually arrive at the *eidōs* "table" as "this here necessarily common". If we started a new process of varying with a new example of a table, we should discover that the two processes merge into one as far as their result is concerned, that the variants occurring in either are those of one common *eidōs*.

(3) The identity of the overlapping moments is then grasped by active intuition. This identity is the *eidōs*. In grasping it, intuitions which come from the empirical level of what is spatio-temporally defined begin to transcend this dimension and take in what is ideal.

Husserl's phenomenology has many, different moments and motivations. His philosophical method is, as I interpret it, originally and essentially almost the same

throughout his life, although he allowed a historical and genetic aspect of the essential intuition in his later stage of life. This thesis was constantly alluded to in his posthumous works such as the “Krisis”. It is very similar to the *eidōs*-theory of Plato. Then what is the so-called Platonism in Husserl? That is this doctrine of *eidōs*, essence or the identical entity which he saw in everything. This *eidōs*, this identity is “everywhere and nowhere” as essence. It is the synthesis of the individual and the universal, namely the *genos* which I would like to express with the term “structure”.

Plato nurtured philosophical thinking from three traditions, namely the poetry (*Homer* and *Hesiodos*), natural science (*Thales* and Ionian school) and monotheism (*Xenophanes* and *Parmenides*). In this genetic and historical sense philosophy was originally bound to the regionalism. This regionalism insisted that Europe especially Greece is the homeland of philosophy. But I must inquire: Is philosophy totally European happening as Nietzsche or Heidegger insisted it? I will not agree with this attitude of Nietzsche or Heidegger, although Nietzsche and Heidegger are for postmodern people now the most favorite thinkers. It means the authority in the philosophical world. Therefore you will ask me why I will take another position than Nietzsche or Heidegger.

My argument for this position is as follows: As mentioned previously, the essence of philosophy is the relation-thinking. The problem of the relation-thinking is, however, in every culture, that is to say it is global. Philosophy is a global event. The transcendence of every own culture is for the culture itself a kind of self-negation. Asia was as matter of facts Europeanized. The Euro-centrism of Europe must deny itself and transcends to the global dimension which I name the De-Europeanization. Parallel to these phenomena, as matter of facts, there is the simultaneous happening of the De-Europeanization and the Europeanization. This encounter and crossover of two movements is what Max Scheler called <Ausgleich>.

The progression of “Ausgleich” in the human society is the fate of mankind. In the 20th and now 21st century the mankind has arrived to the complicated stage in the human history. That step is characterized as the simultaneous existence of differences and identity. For example, as Scheler mentioned in his lecture “Der Mensch im Zeitalter des Ausgleichs”, that in that era when Scheler gave this lecture, at that beginning of 20th Century, the contradiction between elite and democracy will be nullified, women would like to become men, the opposition of Marxism and Capitalism will be neutralized, the difference of the West and the East will be overcome. These phenomena will be found in every cultural sphere of Mankind. This neutralization and overcoming of every difference is Ausgleich. We can understand it as “re-conciliation”.

The new tendency and spirit of re-conciliation between every contradiction is, as I hope, now able to be positively to postulate. Now in this new age of 21st century the mankind should come to the global dimension of philosophy.