

SPECIAL THEME: COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY IN THE BALKANS

DOING PHILOSOPHY COMPARATIVELY IN THE BALKANS

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In the midst of the rising interest in cross-cultural comparative philosophy in the Balkans,¹ as one of the Bosnian pioneering comparative philosophers, this author is convinced that philosophy must diversify or die. The question is if there is a real

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¹ Insofar as the development of comparative philosophy in theory and practice in the past decades, “comparative philosophy” is considered to be more inclusive than what is sometimes labeled ‘cross-cultural’ philosophy; comparative philosophy, as understood broadly in philosophically interesting and engaging way, is a general “cross-tradition” engaging way of doing philosophy, instead of being restricted to “cross-cultural” things: “cross-tradition” is more inclusive than “cross-cultural” as the term ‘tradition’ can cover either different traditions distinguished culturally or by style/orientation [the examples of the former are Chinese philosophy, Indian philosophy, etc. while the examples of the latter includes “analytic” approach, “Continental” approach...[there are manifestations of them in, say, Chinese philosophical tradition (for example, parts of Gongsun Long and the later Mohism are quite “analytic”; Lao Zi’s *Dao-De-Jing* with its poetic style is a kind of manifestation of “Continental” approach)]; it is not merely a broad understanding with “cross-tradition” engagement in verbal usage but has been delivered through substantial collective “comparative philosophy” research projects and their published results [for example, Bo Mou and Richard Tieszen co-edited anthology volume, *Constructive Engagement of Analytic and Continental Approaches in Philosophy: From the Vantage Point of Comparative Philosophy* (Mou and Tieszen 2013), goes that way]. In addition, Mou 2020 gives a systematic explanation, and illustrates the value of, *doing philosophy in a general cross-tradition engaging way*.

This is essentially the way this journal *Comparative Philosophy* understands comparative philosophy in terms of cross-tradition engagement in philosophy: at the outset of the document “About This Journal” posted at the journal website, it states:

Comparative Philosophy is a peer-reviewed, open-access/non-profit international journal of philosophy, with emphasis on the constructive engagement of distinct approaches to philosophical issues, problems, themes from different philosophical traditions (whether distinguished culturally or by style/orientation) for the sake of their joint contribution to the common philosophical enterprise and the development of contemporary society, and on general theory and methodology of comparative philosophy.

difference between doing what is here characterised as “comparative philosophy”² and simply doing philosophy well, or, perhaps, is all philosophy is comparative philosophy? It is a paper about the very possibility of intercultural thinking in a global age on that historically big fault-line, i.e., on the edge of two interconnected and interdependent worlds, the East and the West, and their intercultural encounter, cross-currents, Asian perspectives, ethnocentrism and multiculturalism in contemporary philosophy, beyond philosophical euromonopolism, as a critique of Eurocentrism, toleration in comparative perspective, comparative philosophical methodology, and, finally, the East/West philosophy and the comparative approach, exploring intersections, including sinologism as an alternative to orientalism and postcolonialism. Actually, this paper, valuing diversity, is putting philosophies versus philosophy in defence of a flexible definition following in the footsteps of the patriarchs of comparative philosophy from Hawai’i and elsewhere.

1.

It is indisputable that the cradle of comparative philosophy is Hawai’i [it was institutionalized in East-West Philosophers’ Conference³ which took place in Honolulu in 1939 (Marietta Stepanyants, Stepaniants in *PEW*)].⁴ The author of this paper is a lucky Bosnian *hapa-haoli* guy, who was invited by the East-West Center⁵ and one of the leading patriarchs of Comparative Philosophy, professor Eliot Deutsch⁶ from Philosophy Department of the University of Hawai’i-Mānoa in Honolulu, to join him, Roger T. Ames,⁷ Chung-Ying Cheng,⁸ Tamara Albertini,⁹ and other colleagues there to spend the entire fall semester in 2006, affiliated as a Fulbrighter¹⁰ with their Philosophy Department¹¹ and the East-West Center¹² on the very eve of the centennial

² See <https://www.comparativephilosophy.org> (all previous issues can be downloaded from there).

³ The East-West Center: <http://hawaii.edu/phil/journals/east-west-philosophers-conference/>.

⁴ See “Retrospective on the Global Reach of the East-West Philosophers’ Conferences” (Plenary Address at the Tenth East-West Philosophers’ Conference, May 16, 2011) published in *Philosophy East and West* 64.4: 829-837. Prof. Stepanyants (b. 1935) is a Russian philosopher, the founder and the Chairholder of the UNESCO Chair in “Philosophy in the Dialogue of Cultures” and the Chief Research Fellow at the Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences. See further info about her at: www.en.wikipedia.org.

⁵ <https://www.eastwestcenter.org/> and <http://hawaii.edu/phil/>.

⁶ Eliot Deutsch (1931-2020), a Professor Emeritus of Philosophy at the University of Hawai’i-Mānoa in Honolulu (1967–2008), an eminent philosopher, teacher, and writer, who contributed greatly to the understanding and appreciation of Eastern philosophies in the West through his many books and papers on comparative philosophy and aesthetics. See <http://hawaii.edu/phil/people/emeriti-faculty/>, as well as https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eliot_Deutsch, and <https://philpapers.org/s/eliot%20deutsch>.

⁷ Professor Emeritus (1978–2016), who succeeded E. Deutsch as an editor of *Philosophy East & West*, and this journal is now in its seventieth year. See: <http://hawaii.edu/phil/people/emeriti-faculty/>.

⁸ <http://hawaii.edu/phil/people/current-faculty/>.

⁹ Professor and Department Chair.

¹⁰ The Fulbright Visiting Scholar Program, fall semester 2006.

¹¹ <http://hawaii.edu/phil/>.

¹² <https://www.eastwestcenter.org/>.

year of the UH.¹³

Given that comparative philosophy as a kind of way of doing philosophy (or a kind of cross-tradition engagement in philosophy) has been carried out from ancient times, as Robert E. Allinson's article well makes the point on this,¹⁴ rather than a totally new thing just newly happening in the 20th century or since 1930s' in Hawaii, I mean by the preceding phrase 'cradle of comparative philosophy is Hawaii...' that Hawaii colleagues' efforts in 1939 constitute a (first) collective (or more or less systematic) meta-philosophical and meta-methodological emphasis on comparative philosophy (instead of the first beginning of comparative philosophy *per se*).

According to Gerald James Larson and Eliot Deutsch, "comparative or cross-cultural philosophy can be seen as a relative newcomer to the field of philosophy. It has its antecedents in the emergence of comparative studies in the nineteenth-century European intellectual history, as well as in the sequence of East-West Philosophers' Conference at the University of Hawaii, which began in 1939."¹⁵

Frankly speaking, we do know for a French orientalist and philosopher, Paul Mason-Oursel, as a pioneer of "comparative philosophy" and his famous book, *La Philosophie Comparée* (1923),¹⁶ his Sorbonne doctoral dissertation, applying a comparative method which identified "analogies" between the philosophies of Europe, India and China; Bartholomeus de Ligt *La philosophie comparée* (1929); Henry Corbin's *The Concept of Comparative Philosophy* (1974),¹⁷ and some other philosophers-comparatists, but it was definitely institutionalized at the East-West Philosophers' Conference, and as early as 1977, Archie Bahm affirmed that "comparative philosophy has become a recognized philosophical discipline or field".¹⁸

In our own region, i.e. Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the surrounding countries, unavoidable is the name of the late professor Čedomil Veljačić (Bhikkhu

¹³ See www.media.proquest.com: established in 1936 under the leadership of Charles A. Moore and Wing-tsit Chan. Eliot Deutsch succeeded Charles A. Moore upon his retirement in 1967 as editor of *Philosophy East and West* and as professor of comparative philosophy. Highlighting his contributions to transcultural understanding, he was editor (1967-1987) of this international journal *Philosophy East and West: A Quarterly of Comparative Philosophy (PEW)* <https://uhpress.hawaii.edu/title/pew/>, Director of the Sixth Eastern Philosophers conference, and past president of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy.

¹⁴ See Robert E. Allinson's contributing article "The Myth of Comparative Philosophy or the Comparative Philosophy *Malgré Lui*" in Mou 2001, 269-291.

¹⁵ See Larson and Deutsch 1988, 325.

¹⁶ (1923) (Paris: Alcan), 203 pages, which was translated by F. G. Crookshank into English (1926), *Comparative philosophy* (London, K. Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.; New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co.), reprint as Mason-Oursel 2000; and for his *Objet et Méthode de la Philosophie comparée*, see Masson-Oursel 2011.

¹⁷ A Lecture to the Faculty of Letters, University of Teheran, December 1974 (Golgonooza Press 1981), translated into our local language (Henry Corbin, "Pojam komparativne filozofije") by myself in Kahteran 2009, 193-221.

¹⁸ Bahm 1995, 25.

Nanajivako)¹⁹ as a pioneer from the former country of Yugoslavia, his own successors, professors Rada Iveković (b. 1945),²⁰ Mislav Ježić (b. 1952),²¹ and someone whom we called among rare scholars a philosophical bard, academician Abdulah Šarčević (b. 1929),²² from my Philosophy Department - who paved the way to the introduction of Eastern Philosophies to our curricula in the early 1970s, and owing to him personally we have followed in those footsteps from then onward. Finally, let us mention Dušan Pajin from Belgrade (b. 1942)²³. As a practical benefit from my stay in Hawai'i, I have dared to introduce Comparative Philosophy as a subject at our Philosophy Department curricula and I have published the pioneering book under exactly the same title²⁴ upon my return to Sarajevo, but also prior to publishing my the Fulbright grant project in a book form, *Situating the Bosnian Paradigm: The Bosnian Experience of Multicultural Relations*,²⁵ aiming to explain the need to introduce Comparative Philosophy, as well as challenges and benefits of its teaching at our University, and this book examines the challenges confronting the teaching of Comparative Philosophy at a university-level philosophy curriculum in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a part of the world where multicultural societies are the norm. While specific in its context, its very considerations have implications for a world that is rapidly globalising, creating more opportunities and certainly the need for an intercultural interaction.

In addition, for more than a decade, I has been deeply immersed and engaged as an editorial-board member of *Comparative Philosophy*,²⁶ working with Bo Mou (its editor-in-chief);²⁷ I also work with distinguished scholars like Tu Wei-ming,²⁸ James

¹⁹ See Veljačić-Akpinar, S. (2016), *Čedomil Veljačić and Comparative Philosophy*. Remarks on “An Introduction to the Comparative Study of Indian and European Philosophy” by Čedomil Veljačić (2016). *Synthesis philosophica* 31.2: 249-253. <https://doi.org/10.21464/sp31201>.

²⁰ See www.en.wikipedia.org: Rada Iveković (born 1945) is a Croatian educator, philosopher, and writer. She works as a Professor in the Department of Sociology at Jean Monnet University. Iveković's research interests include comparative philosophy (Asian philosophy, particularly Indian, and Western), feminist theory and feminist philosophy as well as political philosophy. Also, see https://archive.is/20121222055727/http://chst.nctu.edu.tw/war/Rada_CV.htm & <https://philpapers.org/s/Rada%20Ivekovi%C4%87>.

²¹ http://info.hazu.hr/en/member_of_academy/personal_pages/mislav_jezic_en/mislav_jezic_en_bibliography/books/

²² https://www.anubih.ba/images/clanovi/dopisni/biografije/abdulah_sarcevic.pdf; <https://www.unsa.ba/index.php/en/novosti/abdulah-sarcevic-winner-world-award-humanism-2021>. Also, see Šarčević (2014), *Simpozij Abdulah Šarčević – Filozofsko iskustvo vremena (znanost, filozofija, umjetnost)* (Filozofski fakultet u Sarajevu), 246.

²³ See his personal web-site at: <http://afrodita.rcub.bg.ac.rs/~pajin/>.

²⁴ Kahteran 2009, 332.

²⁵ Kahteran 2008, 195.

²⁶ See the Journal's website: <https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/comparativephilosophy/editorialboard.html#editorialcommittee>.

²⁷ Cf., Kahteran & Mou (eds.) 2018.

²⁸ See <http://tuweiming.net/about-tu/biography/>, being invited by professor Tu to join him at the Peking University, July-August 2010, which is by all means a great honour and privilege taking into account that my host later organized the Beijing 2018 World Congress of Philosophy: Learning to be Human (13-20 August 2018): <http://wcp2018.pku.edu.cn/yw/index.htm>. Owing to this short stay as a result I have published Kahteran 2010 (155 pages).

W. Heisig,²⁹ Hans Daiber,³⁰ Oliver Leman,³¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr³² among others. For a whole decade already, students from several departments of the Faculty of Philosophy have attended these courses and public lectures delivered by distinguished visiting scholars and philosophers-comparatists in this field nurturing their inclinations towards comparative reflections, i.e., universalism and inclusivism vs. particularism and exclusivism. Now I would like to start my paper by conveying the opinion of a well-known philosopher that where danger is, there is also the possibility of salvation, which, in fact, is a paraphrase of the following statement in the Holy Qur'an:

So, verily, with every difficulty, there is relief:
verily, with every difficulty there is relief.³³

Generally speaking, we can say that our generation lives in an unstable world with wars, environmental crisis, economic and cultural globalisation in the current COVID 19 circumstances, and they all contribute not to social and existential stability but to global uncertainty. The matter at stake is as follows: Should we retain confidence in our rational ability to create a new world order that could save us from such uncertainty? The author of this paper sees salvific knowledge in comparative philosophy which might rescue humanity from existential, intellectual as well as spiritual uncertainties – even beside the fact that the Sacred, Ultimate Reality, that is, the source of unity, stability and certitude, is no longer the regulating power in modern societies. Of course, this is diametrically opposed to the currently prevailing perception of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the point is that our whole region has become one of the many places on the map of the world where things are routinely bad, and we need the wisdom I am speaking about more than ever before, both from the philosophical and intellectual standpoint and, even more, in the practical sense of the improvement of the daily life with an all-inclusive framework of traditional civilisations relating to the multiplicity of holy forms and ethnic genealogies.³⁴

Obviously, the answer does not lie in mere refutation of, or confrontation with, these modern and postmodern Western philosophical traditions. We could rather say

²⁹ Kahteran & Heisig (eds.) 2009 (240 pages), volume 5 in this series: <https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/en/publications/ejp/>.

³⁰ Daiber, Hans 2008 (trilingual edition: in Bosnian, 275 pages; in English, 275 pages; in German, 282 pages); later republished by Brill in 2012 as *Islamic Thought in the Dialogue of Culture: A Historical and Bibliographical Survey* (Leiden-Boston, 274 pages).

³¹ Oliver Leman (ed.) (2006), *The Qur'an: an Encyclopedia* (Routledge: London-New York), str. 771 (member of Editorial Board and the author of certain number of entries), including translation of his book (2004) *Lost in Translation: Essays in Islamic and Jewish Philosophy* (Sarajevo: Buybook), as well as (2004) *Islamska estetika: uvodnik / Islamic Aesthetics: An Introduction* (Edinburgh University Press, Islamic Surveys Series; (2005) (Sarajevo: Kult B; 376 pages).

³² Nevad Kahteran (2002), *Perenijalna filozofija (Sophia perennis) u mišljenju Rene Guenona, Frithjofa Schuona i Seyyeda Hosseina Nasra*, including a translation of his book on the very first anniversary of the 9/11 events: Seyyed Hossein Nasr (2002), *Srce islama: trajne vrijednosti za čovječanstvo / The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (Sarajevo: El-Kalem).

³³ Qur'an, XCIV: 5-6.

³⁴ Kahteran 2008, 8.

that the answer could be found in a fruitful association of controversial issues and in an improved understanding of the standpoints themselves and the issues involved, and I am not arguing for any kind of heresy but for persevering action with regard to human differences in order to achieve the greatest possible measure of traditional not traditionalist harmony, the lack of which, for the past two or even three decades in Bosnia and Herzegovina and whole our region, has been witnessed by the entire international community.

2.

The question is if there is a real difference between doing what is here characterised as “comparative philosophy” and simply doing philosophy well, or perhaps if all philosophy is comparative philosophy, i.e., comparative philosophy is tantamount to philosophy.³⁵ With Bret W. Davis³⁶ and others, I will be arguing against the Euromonopolistic claim that philosophy is Western, against stubbornly ethnocentric and racist reasons as well as against unconvincing arguments for making this claim.

It is a dialogue between two or more (contemporaneous or otherwise) philosophers that is made possible through a comparatist philosopher who facilitates their dialogue in order to come up with a solution to a problem (or a set of problems) or to further clarify them, and this is the dominant understanding of comparative philosophy as cross-cultural philosophy – a branch of philosophy which examines and contrasts different traditions of philosophy.

According to Xiao Ouyang,³⁷ more than half a century ago Charles A. Moore,³⁸ foresaw in its first issue a new stage in the development of philosophy “characterized by transcultural co-operation and world perspective.”³⁹ Although Moore’s enthusiastic vision of “a synthesis between Eastern and Western philosophy” was questioned by other leading philosophers regarding its validity and possibility, the important area of East-West Philosophy and the comparative approach have been recognised by an increasing number of philosophers worldwide. Convinced by the mutual complementarity and significant enrichment of research by this emerging sub-

³⁵ Van Norden, Bryan W. (Author), Garfield, Jay L. (Foreword) (2017). *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto* (Columbia University Press), available at the following link: <https://muse.jhu.edu/journal/156>.

³⁶ Bret W. Davis is Professor and Thomas J. Higgins, S. J. Chair in Philosophy at Loyola University Maryland, where he teaches courses on Western, Asian, and cross-cultural philosophy. For further information, see <https://www.loyola.edu/academics/philosophy/faculty/davis>, as well as <https://loyola.academia.edu/BretDavis>.

³⁷ In *Philosophy East and West* 68.1: 242-256.

³⁸ He was the founder and editor of *Philosophy East and West*. For further info about him, see at the following link: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1397056?seq=1> – “Bibliography: The Publications of Charles A. Moore” by Beatrice T. Yamasaki in *Philosophy East and West* 17.1/4 (1967): 173-177.

³⁹ Charles A. Moore (1952), *Philosophy East and West* 2.1: 76-78. *Essays in East-West Philosophy*. Charles Alexander Moore (ed.) - 1951 - Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press.

discipline,⁴⁰ Masson-Oursel⁴¹ held the strong opinion that “true philosophy is comparative philosophy”.

In addition, according to one of the Indian pioneer philosopher-comparatists, Poola Tirupati Raju (1904-1992),⁴² “this need to understand is no longer a matter of mere intellectual curiosity but of survival”.⁴³ And if you visit the web-site of *Philosophy East and West: A Quarterly of Comparative Philosophy*, the world’s leading journal dedicated to this field in comparative perspective, you will find the following:

Promoting academic literacy on non-Western traditions of philosophy, Philosophy East and West has for over half a century published the highest-quality scholarship that locates these cultures in their relationship to Anglo-American philosophy. Philosophy defined in its relationship to cultural traditions broadly integrates the professional discipline with literature, science, and social practices. Each issue includes debates on issues of contemporary concern and critical reviews of the most recent publications.⁴⁴

It is worth mentioning the term ‘Sinologism’ by Steven Burik⁴⁵, which appears when scholars actually display prejudices, biases, and other unwanted cultural hierarchies in their work regarding China and its civilisation, which could be defined as an undeclared but tacitly administered institutionalisation of the ways of observing China from the perspective of Western epistemology that refuses, or is reluctant, to view China on its own terms,⁴⁶ and of doing scholarship on Chinese materials and producing knowledge on the Chinese civilisation in terms of the “Western” methodology⁴⁷ that tends to disregard the real conditions of China and reduce the

⁴⁰ As indicated before, now comparative philosophy has been emphasized as one general way of doing philosophy, as philosophical explorations in various areas of philosophy can, and are expected and encouraged, to take cross-tradition engagement approach.

⁴¹ Masson-Oursel 2006.

⁴² P. T. Raju played an important part in the modern development of comparative philosophy and brought out Indian philosophy to the attention of the American academy. See, among other, his books: Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (2011), *The Concept of Man: A Study in Comparative Philosophy*, edited by Poola Tirupati Raju (Literary Licensing), 382.

⁴³ Raju 1962, v (in its Preface). Also, see Raju, P. T., “Comparative Philosophy and Spiritual Values: East and West”, in *PEW* 13.3: 211-225.

⁴⁴ See <https://uhpress.hawaii.edu/product/pew/>.

⁴⁵ *Philosophy East and West* 65.3 (July 2015): 997-999. Also, see <https://smu-sg.academia.edu/SBurik>.

⁴⁶ For his further detailed discussion of the issue, see relevant parts (say, section 3.3) in chapter 3 of Mou 2020.

⁴⁷ As explained and emphasized in Mou 2020 (152-3), the very phrase ‘Western methodology’ can be misleading and can involve the confluences of several important distinctions:

First, there is the distinction between what is *only historically* related to a philosophical tradition and what is *intrinsically* related to that philosophical tradition; the fact that some resources were historically put forwarded by certain thinkers in a tradition does not imply that these resources must be intrinsically related or belong to that tradition alone. In this way, many effective conceptual and explanatory resources (especially those concerning the instrumental methods and conceptual distinctions, such as various forms of deductive reasoning, the distinction between use and mention, etc.) that were historically suggested or specified in some explicit and articulate ways by thinkers in different traditions are conceptually “neutral” in the sense that they are intrinsically human common spiritual wealth.

Second, there is the distinction between the resources in the literature of contemporary philosophy as joint efforts of contemporary philosophers and the resources in “Western” philosophy, especially in the setting of contemporary philosophy in which scholars from different traditions both physically and mentally work together in different regions (say, in the “Western”

complexity of the Chinese civilisation into simplistic patterns of development modelled on those of the West.⁴⁸

At this place I do presume that we would all agree perfectly on what “comparative philosophy” is, and on how it should be practised:

1. Using terms, ideas, or concepts from one philosophical tradition to help understand or interpret another philosophical tradition.
2. Through cross-tradition engagement, seeking to advance or develop philosophy.

Therefore, we seem to be on solid ground in emphasising that the success in comparative philosophy — the “constructive” kind of engagement that is referred to in the title of the Cres 2020 now postponed for September 2021 — is judged from within the distinct perspectives that the comparative philosopher is bringing into contact. One need not be limited to only one of the perspectives.

With respect to incommensurability, most of us at the Cres 2020, which is postponed for September 2021, I hope believe that differences between concepts or languages or traditions did not make the comparison impossible.⁴⁹

So, on the basis of this understanding of comparative philosophy, the characteristics of minimal methodology, i.e. the “minimal” nature of the methodology, does not mean that we each felt that a more “maximal” set of principles was needed, but could not agree on such principles. The general preference for a “minimal” methodology, therefore, does not express a compromise or the lowest common denominator.

countries). In this way, the fact that certain ideas and resources were put forward by some philosophers who have currently studied or worked in the West does not necessarily mean that these ideas and resources are part of Western philosophy, even in the aforementioned “historical” sense.

Third, related to the foregoing first distinction, and to take Western philosophy for example, there is the distinction between those resources in the “Western” tradition that are not located at the level of Western philosophical *frameworks* and those that constitute “frameworks” in Western philosophy. Though it seems to be hard to discern the distinction, and though there are some borderline cases, this distinction can be relatively clearly and effectively maintained in many cases. Employing some of the conceptual resources together with their associated lexical distinctions, as introduced in section 0.2.3 of the “introduction” chapter, Bo Mou endeavor to identify and specify this distinction in the following way. So to speak, many resources concerning methodological instruments and those “methodological-perspective” resources concerning the issues addressed in Western philosophy that are also jointly-concerned explicitly or implicitly by some other traditions are those resources in the “Western” tradition that are not located at the level of Western philosophical *frameworks*, and those resources are or can be shared by other traditions without being “imposed on” them; in contrast, those guiding-principle resources in many systematic accounts or approaches in Western philosophy regarding how to look at the relation between the “methodological perspective” dimensions of their own accounts and of some accounts belong in Western philosophical *frameworks*.

⁴⁸ In addition, there are three other journals worthy of mentioning at this place:

Comparative and Continental Philosophy, see at <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/yccp20>.

Comparative and Continental Philosophy is a peer-reviewed and fully refereed journal that appears tri-annually and publishes leading edge papers by internationally respected scholars in Comparative and Continental philosophy.

Dao: a journal of comparative philosophy, is a publication sponsored by the Association of Chinese Philosophers in America and the Philosophy Department of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, supported by the Center for the Study of East Asian Civilizations of National Taiwan University. It aims to serve as a bridge between Chinese and non-Chinese philosophies and philosophers. See further info at: <http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~Dao/>.

Finally, *Journal of Daoist Studies* (<https://uhpress.hawaii.edu/title/jds/>).

⁴⁹ For example, see S. H. Nasr, “Conditions for meaningful comparative philosophy” in *Philosophy East and West* 22.1 (January 1972), 53-63.

In Ames' view,⁵⁰ as the common philosophical theorisation between the two different cultural traditions could hardly be achieved, we could hardly conclude a joined philosophical problem between the two different philosophical traditions.

In contrast to Ames' pragmatic approach, Bo Mou⁵¹ argues for *the constructive-engagement strategy in comparative philosophy*.⁵² Mou's strategy is to find a common philosophical problem which is jointly concerned by different philosophical traditions. Faced with the common philosophical problems, the different philosophical traditions could have their own answers.

Mou's constructive-engagement strategy is different from Ames' approach.⁵³ Mou's strategy is finding a common philosophical problem which is jointly concerned by different philosophical traditions. While acknowledging the different traditions and cultural background, it focuses on the philosophical problem derived from different traditions.

So, the question which strategy is more adaptable to the comparative philosophy is the one I will be leaving to you in order to rethink again and again when dealing with these issues, because if we scratch the surface we will find many books like *Heidegger's hidden sources: East Asian Influences on his work* written by Reinhard May, and translated, with a complementary essay, by Graham Parkes.⁵⁴ Professor Parkes,⁵⁵ Professorial Research Fellow at Institute of Philosophy, University of Vienna, the author of two well-known bestsellers, *Nietzsche and Asian Thought*⁵⁶ and *Heidegger and Asian Thought*⁵⁷, was eager to join us in Cres this year, but, unfortunately, was prevented with a pandemic COVID-19 situation.

⁵⁰ In the fields of sinology and philosophy in the Western world, Roger T. Ames is currently one of the big names. See <https://www.allbookstores.com/Roger-T-Ames/author>. Also, see Wei Sun, "Pragmatic Approach or Constructive-Engagement Strategy?—A Methodology in Comparing Chinese and Western Philosophy" in *Comparative Philosophy*, Volume 10, No. 1 (2019): 127-142, Feb 2019 available at: <https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/comparativephilosophy/vol10/iss1/11>.

⁵¹ Mou, Bo (2010), "On Constructive-Engagement Strategy of Comparative Philosophy", *Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 1/1 (2010): 1-32. Also, see Id. (2018), "General Introduction: Constructive-Engagement Strategy to Explore Chinese Philosophy", in Bo Mou (ed.) (2018), *Chinese Philosophy: Critical Concepts in Philosophy* (London: Routledge), 1-28. Id. (2019), *Semantic-Truth Approaches in Chinese Philosophy: A Unifying Pluralist Account* (Lexington Books).

⁵² See Mou & Tieszen (eds.) 2013.

⁵³ Bo Mou, "On some methodological issues concerning Chinese philosophy: an introduction" and "On some methodological issues concerning Chinese Philosophy: an introduction" and "Constructive engagement of Chinese and Western Philosophy: a contemporary trend toward world philosophy", in Mou (ed.) 2009, 1-39 and 571-608.

⁵⁴ 1989 in German as *Ex Oriente lux: Heideggers Werk unter ostasiatischem Einfluß*, by Reinhard May (1996), (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden); English translation first published 1996 by Routledge.

⁵⁵ <https://univie.academia.edu/GrahamParkes>.

⁵⁶ Parkes 1991 (253 pages).

⁵⁷ Parkes 1987 (282 pages).

3.

That is, in fact, a pioneering undertaking, not only in Bosnia and Herzegovina,⁵⁸ to encourage the interest in this huge team project, to draw attention, in our predominantly western philosophical curricula, to the importance of transcending cultural borders between the traditions included, providing insights that, despite these significant differences, become foundational similarities in their abstract principles.

There is, of course, the dilemma, or even doubt, when we are following the herd philosophies, whether something of this kind can be done at all at a time when we are frenetically falling into ethnic traps in this part of the world, which the late Serbian philosopher and writer, Radomir Konstantinović (1928—2011), called in the very title of his notable philosophical treatise – the small town philosophy, i.e. provincial or unsophisticated philosophy in small-town manners.⁵⁹ *Small Town Philosophy* by Radomir Konstantinović represents a critique of the small town spirit, which is hatred towards life, and we in the Balkans are living exactly that kind of philosophy *hic et nunc* (Philosophy vs. Misosophy).

However, to what extent have I succeeded in demonstrating that our philosophy students, who are predominantly western-educated, can really gain from a study of comparative philosophy, and, in particular, of ‘the distinct model of thought from other non-Western philosophical traditions’, and from the very outset of their studies, is not for me to judge. And yet, I am now less and less reticent in speaking, both at home and abroad, about the possibility of setting up a world-relevant school of comparative philosophy and comparative religious reflections for all the newcomers flocking to the encounter such comparative deliberations in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the region, because, given its historical fate, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the whole region is predestined, philosophically speaking, to comparative considerations of this kind, to comparative thought or a cross-cultural or multicultural philosophy. Our aim as philosophers-comparatists in the Balkans is to redefine defining philosophy and to call attention to the need to introduce inter-traditional, cross-cultural, cross-systematic, more integrative and more global studies. Hence our hope that the insanity in the prevailing cult of ethnicity, of the nation, in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the surrounding countries will not impede us in such efforts. To move in the opposite direction would be to maintain the continuity of ostensible alterity, of mutual ignorance, between Muslims and non-Muslims, with its distrust, isolation and extremism on both sides simultaneously being as misosophists immersed into misosophy⁶⁰ of the worse kind.

We can call it as the East and the West: inter-cultural encounters, contrastive⁶¹ or transcultural philosophy,⁶² or simply intercontinental philosophy as fusion philosophy which is genuinely original and creative philosophy, i.e., comparative philosophy with

⁵⁸ Milčinski, Maja, “Contrastive philosophy in world perspective” in Kahteran 2009, 13-28.

⁵⁹ Konstantinović 1969.

⁶⁰ A hatred of wisdom or knowledge, which comes from ancient Greek μισόσοφος hating wisdom.

⁶¹ As in Maja Milčinski’s title mentioned above.

⁶² As in Jana Rošker’s title of her own paper for the Cres 2020.

its borderless thinkers, specialists across borders in the agora of multicultural philosophy,⁶³ but this kind of knowledge will beyond doubt reinvigorate philosophical deliberations in this part of Europe. The awareness is growing on placing reliance on this model of thinking and living as the only possible and realistic prospect for an acceptable future in a world containing different religious and ethnic communities.

Of course, this is not my own orientophilia, nor europcentrism, but being the proponent of the Truth, which is neither Eastern, nor Western, but universal, one with consciousness which is put as the motto of the University of Hawai'i-Mānoa: *Mahuna a'e o nā lāhui āpau ke ola ke kānaka* (Hawaiian) – “Above all nations is humanity”.⁶⁴

Thus, the obvious question now is the following: how can we reinforce the aspirations for a traditionally positive multicultural coexistence, shaken up and brought up to the edge of survival by the unfortunate events during the 1992-1995 period and by an unnatural situation maintained to this day in one way or another? Another way of putting the question is: how do we support the construction for a stage for peaceful co-existence with due respect for all the Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian and other individualities and varied cultural frameworks, without their violent destruction on the one hand, and without becoming prey to nationalistic illusions of uniqueness on the other? This is a very difficult task; it seems to me that comparative philosophy mediates between, and reconciles, the opposites contrasting different traditions, and it converts the opposites into differences which are part of an all-inclusive single entity. In this way, it reconciles universalism and multi-culturalism, because it demonstrates that differences and oneness are not mutually exclusive. But what, then, is the criterion suitable for our reality? It seems to me that the criterion of a cross-cultural or cross-tradition philosophy as a new paradigm to which we are predestined, philosophically speaking, lies in this:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments
by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into
the dreary desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by these into ever-widening

⁶³ Chakrabarti, Arindam, Weber, Ralph & Contributors (eds) (2016), *Comparative Philosophy without Borders* (Bloomsbury: London-Oxford-New York-New Delhi-Sydney), 227. According to Arindam and Ralph as editors in the Afterword/Afterwards: “The fusion that fusion philosophy propagates should not be misunderstood as a syncretic inclusion of whatever thought one come across. The fusion happens at the level of making viewpoints that some established borders might portray as unrelated, speak to each other” (232) and “Simply comparing philosophies, but not comparing them philosophically will not do. This is why fusion philosophy decidedly demands of the comparative philosopher not to be satisfied with the role of the comparatist” (233). Definitely, it might turn out to be a border-crossing experience.

⁶⁴ See <https://www.hawaii.edu/campuses/manoa/>, established in 1907, the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa is the largest and oldest of the 10 UH campuses.

thought and action.

Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.⁶⁵

This is the very reason why this paper examines the challenges confronting the teaching of Comparative Philosophy within the university-level philosophy curriculum in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the surrounding countries in the Balkans, a part of the world where multicultural societies are the norm.⁶⁶

I would like to say that comparative philosophy is the ambitious but a historically necessary project of establishing a critical discourse between different philosophical systems and the thinkers belonging to those diverse cultures and traditions, with the aim of broadening philosophical horizons and the possibility of understanding among our students involved in the study of the field.⁶⁷ Another of its specific tasks is to establish international peace and a deeper understanding in a specific, practical, and yet intellectual venture within multicultural societies. As a result, comparative philosophy – or what one might more appropriately these days call “cross-cultural”, “transcultural” or simply “global” philosophy – has manifested a wealth of different aims, methods and styles throughout its history and evolution.⁶⁸ One of enduring aims of comparative or cross-cultural philosophy was to bring to light the foundations of the cognitive and evaluative postulates of traditions that are different from our own, in the expectation of a greater clarity and a better understanding of the postulates that inform us on a given tradition. We thereby begin to get to know ourselves better, it is thought, within and through the recognition of other alternative conceptual frameworks, values and modes of organising and finding a meaning in the human experience. The principal Eastern traditions are being studied,⁶⁹ as are now many other non-Western ones, discovering how they reveal different “modes of thought” and how they could be contrasted with

⁶⁵ Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), from *Gitanjali* (Song Offerings), originally published in Bengali with the title “Prayer” and published in Tagore’s own English translation in 1910. See the following link: <https://www.spiritualbee.com/media/gitanjali-by-tagore.pdf>.

⁶⁶ See Roger T. Ames (ed.) (2000). *The Aesthetic Turn: Reading Eliot Deutsch on Comparative Philosophy* (Open Court: Chicago and Lasalle, Illinois), 225 pages. The book is dedicated to one of the most remarkable philosophers of our time, inheriting the mantle from Charles Moore and Wing-tsit Chan, in which twelve leading figures in comparative philosophy described his own wide-ranging opus. The contributors in this book as an essential document in comparative philosophy are as following: Roger T. Ames, Arthur C. Danto, Herbert Fingarette, David L. Hall, Thomas P. Kasulis, Daya Krishna, Gerald James Larson, Graham Parkes, J. N. Mohanty, Henry Rosemont Jr., Leroy L. Rouner and Tu Wei-ming. Beside above-mentioned scholars from our region, for my own scholarly beginning in this field, I am indebted to these outstanding philosophers-comparatists, and this book could be read as *Who’s Who* of comparative philosophy.

⁶⁷ This is an elective course at the fifth year at our Philosophy Department (the second cycle of studies), attended by students from several other departments as well: <http://ff.unsa.ba/index.php/en/study-programmes-ii-cycle>. For the similar subject Asian philosophies run by doc. dr. Nina Petek see Department of Philosophy in Ljubljana: <http://oddelki.ff.uni-lj.si/filo/>, and by Prof. Dr. Borislav Mikulić & prof. dr. Goran Kardaš, see Department of Philosophy, University of Zagreb: <https://filoz.ffzg.unizg.hr/nastavnici/borislav-mikulic/>; <https://filoz.ffzg.unizg.hr/nastavnici/goran-kardas/>.

⁶⁸ See “Eliot Deutsch Responds” in Roger T. Ames’ book mentioned above, 173-211.

⁶⁹ See Oliver Leaman 1999 and 2000.

one another and with various western forms. This would be comparative philosophy in its broadest cultural modality, according to Eliot Deutsch,⁷⁰ and could be regarded as part of a greater comparative undertaking that one might call the problem-based approach. I could call this, paraphrasing James Heisig, as redefining philosophy through the lens of comparative undertakings, because we have begun to understand that the very idea of philosophy may denote quite different things in different cultures, and that we have much to learn from these other concepts – which leads us directly to comparative philosophy as creative philosophy. The assumption is that this enquiry could lead us to open up to new and better forms of philosophical understanding, which enhance us to introduce inter-traditional, cross-cultural, cross-systematic, more integrative and more global studies.

As someone with distinct mission of providing access to the non-Western philosophical traditions of India, China, Japan, Islam and Judaism as more pan-geographical phenomena at my own Philosophy Department, this definition of widening the influence of global philosophy (the study of philosophies from various cultures, nations, or epochs) certainly served local needs, and was ambitious enough, and above all, my Fulbright granted stay and affiliation with the UH and East-West Center in Honolulu was crucial in this regard:

To construct a synthetic world philosophy negotiated out of the best of each tradition by distinguished scholars from around the world to serve as a philosophical charter for world peace and prosperity.⁷¹

Working hard with only minimal professional and institutional support within the framework of my own self-appointed tasks to sustain dialogue among different philosophical traditions and to enhance our students to challenge complacency and parochialism, i.e. tunnel vision and nationalistic follies and traps, simultaneously being someone who is inclined to celebrate philosophical differences, it seems to me that the field of comparative philosophy with this international symposium had by now matured to the point where an in-depth critical engagement could be carried forward.⁷²

Bo Mou points out: “As different cultural communities and ideological traditions become closer than ever, the desire to bridge the ‘gap’ between different philosophical traditions and the concern with how they could learn from each other and jointly and constructively contribute to a common philosophical enterprise have become pressing in philosophical circles”⁷³ and in certain complementary, and philosophically

⁷⁰ See “Eliot Deutsch Responds”, *op. cit.*, 173-211.

⁷¹ Introduction by Roger T. Ames, *op. cit.*, x.

⁷² In this regard I am thankful to our Hrvoje Jurić who kindly offered that unique opportunity to organise it here in Cres by the Croatian Philosophical Society (<http://www.hrfd.hr/>) around this changing vision and visionaries as its formula for the most effective way to carry on the project of comparative philosophy. Information about him available at: <https://filoz.ffzg.unizg.hr/nastavnici/hrvoje-juric/>, and <https://www.bib.irb.hr/pregled/znanstvenici/238256>. Cres 2020 is postponed to be held in Sept. 2021.

⁷³ Bo Mou (ed.) 2003), xv. This anthology presents recent scholarship in the comparative studies of the Chinese philosophy with regards to the topic and the methodological approach. Also, see “On

interesting ways it happens right here in Cres, because different philosophical traditions are not essentially alien to one another; instead, in the above sense, they are comparable in certain constructive, philosophically interesting ways, as we are seeking to achieve reflective progress in philosophy through a comparative examination. Yet, the aforementioned Mou's constructive way as a methodological approach or orientation, is not exclusive at all, but consists in a variety of comparative approaches.^{74/75}

Facing the twenty-first century, these confluences and cross-currents are increasingly gaining importance, especially in the Balkans, with a comparativism of ethnocentrism and multiculturalism, becoming an amazing tool for overcoming all our psychopathologies, historical myths, prejudices and stereotypes, refocusing these disadvantages into advantages in our contemporary philosophical traditions through the strategies for transformational leadership.⁷⁶ We should learn something from the increasing homogenisation of the world's culture as the possibility of widening of the traditional philosophical curriculum. Our quite correct anticipation is the fact that several of the major countries of the East are becoming *hic et nunc* economically very powerful along with Japan, and this is a very positive possibility taking into account that, in economic and political terms, our world is much more interdependent and interconnected and this is advantage in philosophers seeking to understand and use each other's theories and ideas as a potent catalyst of intellectual progress all of over the world, which is a crucial activity for enriching the world of philosophy (in which philosophers construct a philosophical system based on the fullness of global traditions of thought)⁷⁷.

Definitely, we should work together closely in redefining our philosophy programme to encompass greater goals regarding this issue and this is a significant increase of the philosophical breadth, simultaneously obtaining a grasp of the role of

Interphilosophical Sino-Western Dialogue in the Contemporary World: Interphilosophical Sino-Western Dialogue", in *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, 2013.

⁷⁴ See Bo Mou, "On some methodological issues concerning Chinese philosophy: an introduction", in Mou (ed.) 2009, 1-39.

⁷⁵ Xinzhong Yao, "International Workshop 'Comparative Philosophy: Approaches and Methodologies'", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 40, Issue S1.

⁷⁶ See *Philosophy East and West* 67.4 (October 2017). This quarter's journal of comparative Eastern and Western philosophies is a Special Issue entitled: Eleventh East-West Philosophers' Conference, "State-of-the-Art on Comparative Philosophy" with guest editor Ron Bontekoe and its special issue article "Some Opening Remarks on the Exclusionary Tendency in Western Philosophy" he wrote. Also, see Steineck, Raji C., Weber, Ralph, Gassmann, Robert, and Elena Lange (eds.) 2018 at the following link: <https://brill.com/view/title/32218?contents=editorial-content>.

⁷⁷ See for entry on comparative philosophy: <https://encyclopedia-of-philosophy.blogspot.com/search?q=comparative+philosophy>, and <https://www.iep.utm.edu/comparat/> for world philosophy, which like area studies philosophy, should be distinguished from comparative philosophy. Properly speaking, comparative philosophy does not lead towards the creation of a synthesis of philosophical traditions (as in the world philosophy). See Scharfstein 1998, as well as Solomon and Higgins 1995; Solomon and Higgins (eds.) 1993. Nevertheless, the Society of Asian and Comparative Philosophy (<http://www.sacpweb.org/>) now convenes its own sections in the annual meetings of the American Philosophical, the American Academy of Religion, and the Association of Asian Studies.

philosophy in the world as a whole.⁷⁸ Similarly, as Oliver Leaman says, “our views on how philosophy should be conducted do not just apply to the present but go back into the past and also into the future.”⁷⁹ Hence, my final argument in defence of comparative philosophy comes as a response to the defence of it, and some discussion of its goals, methods, and *raison d'être* are called for. As Gerald James Larson says in the introduction to *Interpreting Across Boundaries*, it is no more difficult to cross the boundary from one culture or tradition to another than it is to cross the boundaries in ordinary conversation (where misunderstanding is always already rife but which we do with some success). Hence, it would seem that Kipling is wrong: the East and the West not only can, but will and must meet (in philosophical dialogue), and in their “mutual fecundation” and cultural impact, transform one another so that they become similar and different in new and interesting ways.⁸⁰

4.

The Bosnian spiritual banquet spread before the audience and the future readership by this brief paper is intended to draw attention to the immensity of new insights into comparative and world philosophy which should encourage western philosophers and especially students of Islam to cultivate their interest in Comparative and Islamic philosophy as we already did several years ago here in Croatia.⁸¹

If one is to take part in these globalising processes, Islamic philosophy must begin with a number of key philosophers from the entire pleiade of Muslim thinkers,⁸² each of whom is worthy, in his own distinct fashion, of our study and research, and a deeper understanding of whom preserves and advances Islamic philosophy. Recognizing these

⁷⁸ Also, see Oliver Leman (ed.) (1998). *Future of Philosophy: Towards the Twenty First Century*, Routledge: London and New York, 192 pages. E-book: <https://libro.eb20.net/Reader/rdr.aspx?b=169798>. Especially “The Future and World Philosophy” (11-13); the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (10 Volume Set; also available online: www.rep.routledge.com) edited by Edward Craig (1998) as the most ambitious international philosophy project in many years, and David Cooper's (1995), *World Philosophies: An Historical Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell), translated and published by Svetovi in Novi Sad (2004), *Svetska filozofija: istorijski uvod*.

⁷⁹ Leaman, *op. cit.*, 13.

⁸⁰ Or, as Ben-Ami Scharfstein states in his 1978 “... the effort we make to understand the others, who are so different from us, may help us to understand ourselves more clearly” (47). Scharfstein also states that “contrast increases visibility” (29), and “...whenever we perceive or think, we compare, that is, respond to similarities and differences” (28); he makes the same point I do, but more concisely when he says: “... comparison is essential to perception and thought” (29). In august 2000, I had the opportunity to meet the distinguished professor Scharfstein at his home in Tel Aviv during my short stay in Jerusalem as the participant at the XV World Congress of Jewish Studies (http://www.jewish-studies.org/history_en). In addition, it is worth mentioning here Daya Krishna 2011, because what passes for a transcultural or universal standard as the basis for all comparison is usually in fact a parochial, and indeed a Western standard.

⁸¹ See special issue of *Synthesis philosophica* 62 (2/2016) dedicated to Islamic and Comparative Philosophy), and it could be downloaded from the link: <http://www.hrfd.hr/synthesis-philosophica-62-22016/>.

⁸² See Leaman (ed.) 2015, 507.

thinkers is an important step forward towards mutual understanding and enrichment.⁸³ As a result, conferences and symposiums like this are significant if prompted by the need to review and systematically expound the great resources of Islamic philosophical wisdom, and if such dialogue would enable Islamic philosophy to become an active force for the enrichment of world civilisation and human society; if, in other words, Islamic philosophy is to gain recognition in the West as a living tradition of philosophical thought and to regain its proper place in the world of living philosophical tradition, rather than merely being the subject of demonstration or repetition in today's world philosophical forum.⁸⁴

Of course, all this goes with a grounding in the western philosophy and a systematic comparison of Islamic and western philosophy, since at least M. Iqbal onwards.⁸⁵ Hence this interpretation of Islamic philosophy as a living tradition, not merely as the knowledge of concepts; the need is thus for attesting to Islam as a living spiritual tradition, contrary to the study or reconstruction of Islam as an abstract, theoretical philosophical tradition. Then again, contacts made at international conferences and symposiums like this are further facilitated by means of electronic communications and web sites – that newly-found continent – an increasing presence, and the impact of this greater ease of communication is quite remarkable especially now in our global current COVID 19 situation. In the light of what I have already said, this growing interaction provides a new vitality for the transformation of human life and society of the world as a whole, because the mentioned pandemic crisis is a chance as well.⁸⁶

In this dismal prospect of drained energy and disintegrating culture in the world of today, of a world order that functions owing only to the balance of fear, dictated by compromises and occasional coincidence of interests, and to the retreat and breakdown of tradition that reflected culture as a life force, it would seem that the Islamic tradition has suffered a loss of confidence, and has become not so much a captive of western ideology and values as trapped in the intellectual morass, lack of inventiveness and self-pity of Muslims themselves as they bewail their own fate. We seem to be so divided that the only thing uniting us is misfortune. True, this wretched state of affairs has been exacerbated by the constant crisis resulting from foreign incursions and outside cultural and military dominance, but it was a different matter as long as the surge of new energy and visions lasted.⁸⁷

Again and again, among the questions we must ask ourselves is: What now constitutes the warrant of the substantiality and value of the Islamic philosophical

⁸³ See my 2008, 116-7.

⁸⁴ According to my own estimation, for instance, may be just several percent of the *PEW* is allotted to Islamic philosophy.

⁸⁵ See his doctoral dissertation (1908), *Development of Metaphysics in Persia: A Contribution to the History of Muslim Philosophy* (now published in my own translation in our local languages as a bilingual edition (2005) (Connectum: Sarajevo). Also, see first edition as e-book at the link: <http://alhassanain.org/english/?com=book&id=1292>.

⁸⁶ In the Chinese language, the word 'crisis' (simplified Chinese '危机'; traditional Chinese '危機' *wēi-jī*) is composed of two characters, one representing danger and the other, opportunity.

⁸⁷ See my 2008, 117.

discourse in general? What is the standard mode of Islamic philosophical discourse? What has become of those unfettered visions of life and reality that even now we can discern in Islamic philosophical way of thinking? By asking this we are raising questions of self-transcendence, or of the transformation of our Muslim identity and the vision towards a global understanding of the human race and the world as a whole.⁸⁸

But, has the Islamic philosophical paradigm really lost its former vitality and vision? In other words, how to optimally define now the theory of wisdom that was embodied by Rumi, Ibn ‘Arabi and other Islamic giants of spirit, like professor S. H. Nasr from the GWU today,⁸⁹ their spirit of openness, which attests to the very opposite of today’s prevailing stagnation and a tunnel vision of the world? The time has finally come for the need to completely acknowledge the value of openness and cultural diversity and revitalise the Islamic discourse in this regard once again. What remains will, I hope, at least give some idea of the variety of resources I have drawn on.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In conclusion, as evidence of this we are all part of the process of the global economy, of geopolitics, and of the planet’s environment. Henceforth, we have no choice but to think globally in the broadest, cross-cultural manner, which goes far beyond what is properly regarded, technically speaking, as philosophy by modern professional philosophers. Also, this is reason why we are speaking about redefining philosophy paraphrasing James W. Heisig from the Nanzan Institute in Nagoya, Japan.⁹⁰

Our prevailing desire to open up a new perspective in the Balkans in the field of comparative philosophy, then, prompted by the conviction that what Henry Corbin calls a “dialogue in metahistory”⁹¹ is much needed if we are to surmount the present unhappy state of the world, and not in this region a situation that threatens to mark the end, the disintegration of human civilisation as a whole and all the great achievements of the human race to date. There is a growing awareness that never in the entire history of the human race has there been a time when the need for understanding between the peoples and nations of the world has been so great as now.⁹² And we do keep finding, within our Balkan heritage, a great deal more to be learned about its cultural peculiarities and plurality not as mere theories but as a centuries-old model of living. Furthermore, it seems that only from this angle can we implement the idea of the pluralistic unity of

⁸⁸ See chapters III and IX (“Knowledge and the Ultimate” and “The Need for a Pluralistic Approach in Religion”) in Adnan Aslan (1998), *Religious Pluralism* (Curzon Press), 55-129.

⁸⁹ For further info, see *The Philosophy of Seyyed Hossein Nasr* (Volume XXVIII, 2001) (Library of Living Philosophers) at: <https://cola.siu.edu/philosophy/llp/volumes/nasr.php>.

⁹⁰ See <https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/en/staff/jheisig/>. In his Preface to *New Frontiers of Japanese Philosophy*, 9-10.

⁹¹ Toshihiko Izutsu 1984, 1.

⁹² See in particular Ben-Ami Scharfstein 1978. The work goes straight to the heart of the ignorance and cultural myopia that has led many to believe that philosophy as we know it is now restricted only to the West. In fact, the work is a unique undertaking in the field of comparative philosophical reflections. The various contributors emphasise in particular the cultural context, following which they take specific examples as the basis of critical and analytical comparisons.

Europe and the world at large. Hence the support of the Bosnian, in particular, and the Balkan model and paradigm, in general, is not a matter of choice, but the issue which makes up or breaks up the picture of the modern world, reinforcing or weakening the trust in the unity of that world.

I said this sharing some of my own reflections with other authors on the Euro-America-centric topography of today's world of globalisation. Today we speak less of "internationalization" and more of "globalization" where the broader context of thinking suggests rather that this new world should be understood as a kind of "unity-in-diversity" (*al-wahda fi-l-kathra* in Arabic and sufi literature), where cultural differences would be able to coexist in a shared place of dialogical exchange. Hence, a truly world can only be opened by way of a cross-cultural dialogue which brings these various microcosmic worlds into communication with one another without cancelling their specific perspectival differences. Or, a true world thus be neither a monocultural fusion, which would abolish cultural difference, nor a relativistic dispersion, which would reify assertions of uniqueness; rather, it would be a multicultural conversation, where cultures maintain and develop their uniqueness only by way of opening themselves up to an ongoing dialogue with one another. In this vision, cultures could freely enter into dialectical and dialogical relations with one another, because a nation that does not contain a principle of globality today (i.e., awareness of and openness to the wider world) within itself is not a true nation.⁹³

At last but not least, I dealt in this paper with issues which are of contemporary importance, and I have a deep belief that dialogue can transcend the borders of ethnicity, religion and ideology and that it is certainly the best and surest method to achieve a peaceful solution for any problem, since it includes a continuous discussion among philosophers-comparatists, as the interpreters, the commentators, the educators, the communicators, the interlocutors – to understand the position of the other, representing various culturological, educational and religious positions.⁹⁴ It is crucial to mention that the function of the dialogue is not only in search for sameness or uniformity, but it is also an enriching way to learn how to be human. Namely, through dialogue, we cultivate the art of listening, the ethics of caring and the feeling of self-discovery through the meeting of various lifestyles simultaneously *freeing philosophy from the "Prison-House" of "I-Centricity"*.

Definitely, I can agree and sign with both my hands something as a maxim: the more diverse and different the interlocutors' intellectual frameworks, the higher the probability of fruitfulness of their "dialogue".⁹⁵

⁹³ See Chakrabarti and Weber (eds) 2016 and Benesch 1997.

⁹⁴ Ali Paya (ed.) 2013, 14.

⁹⁵ Ali Paya's book represents a collaborative effort toward achieving this end and, as a matter of fact, it tells about the dialogue between civilisations concerning globalisation and culturological pluralism vs. falling down into a trap of epistemological relativism. Ali Paya's own research and views in this anthology focus on vital aspects of dialogue culture and peace culture, as well as reforms these contributors offer to the modern world – through the process of dialogue and more than meticulous textual analysis, namely interpersonal and intercultural exchanges based on respect of differences, openness and tolerance, which started in Islamic tradition with philosophers like Suhrawardi and many

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my special thanks to the anonymous reviewers of the journal *Comparative Philosophy* for valuable comments and suggestions as to the further development of my paper. Also, special thanks to: the late professor Eliot Deutsch (1931-2020), Chung-ying Cheng, Roger T. Ames, Tamara Albertini, Graham Parkes (all from the Philosophy Department, University of Hawai'i-Mānoa, during using my Fulbright grant there and later), Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Oliver Leaman, Ben-Ami Scharfstein, Hans Daiber, James W. Heisig, Tu Wei-ming, Lee Ming-huei, Ralph Weber, and Jana Rošker.

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