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A Distant View

Globalization inside Philosophy

Abstract

When tackling with the issue of globalization in the context of philosophy, this article takes somewhat different route than expected: it doesn't ponder upon the meaning and the consequences of the processes we call 'global', but instead tries to find out how philosophy, theoretical and literary production themselves have been affected by globalization. Instead of an attempt to immediately "think the globalization" it tries to show what "globalization has done to thinking".

In order to illustrate this point three main areas to be explored are taken into account: Africa, Latin America and India. They are chosen on the basis of being representative regions of the so-called "Third-World" or "Global South". Main idea, taken from the arguments of P. Hountondji is that philosophical and theoretical productions mimic economic one; a fortiori: they are actually the same process. This point is illustrated in a number of cases. Further, the paper tries to show that, in spite of huge differences in hermeneutical outlooks, geographical distance and successive traditions, all "Third-World" philosophical/literary production faces similar fate, what could be a consequence of its structural positioning in a contemporary "World-System".

However, the authors who come from "peripheral" areas of theoretical production don't only face similar problems but, as shown, also share similar ideas of what could be done in order to minimize and level out the imbalance and asymmetrical position of their cultures.

Key words

globalization, Dussel, Hountondji, transmodernity, transversality, intercultural dialogue, African philosophy, Latin American philosophy

I

In his *Pragmatism*, one of the forefathers of this genuine American philosophical tradition, William James, stated that:

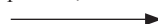
"If philosophers can treat the life of the universe abstractly, they must not complain of an abstract treatment of the life of philosophy itself."¹

The idea of treating "philosophical activity" *abstractly* – in James' case this simply means "from a distance"² – might as well serve as a motto of this

¹ William James, *Pragmatism*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis (Cambridge), 4th printing, 2001, p. 19.

² What James actually tried to do here was to reflect the position of philosophy – or, rather,

philosophical positions – from a distance. In James' case this "distance" was foremost a *psychological distance*. Namely, the task of a philosopher in his case is to reflect upon the "rationalistic" and "empiricistic" inclinations in theories from different characters that people who deal with philosophy possess; a move



paper. What drives the considerations presented in this article is therefore the thought of treating global philosophical activities from a shifted perspective.

When usually dealing with the concept of ‘globalization’ in the context of philosophy, we try to reflect this phenomenon from various philosophical standpoints and theories and try – since the meaning of the concept generally appears to be somewhat fuzzy – to fill the word meaning with some useful contents which can then help us understand the processes we all have to face. Although this procedure is undoubtedly useful, if not even necessary and unavoidable project, it will not, however, be our main task here. Instead of pondering about the phenomenon of globalization from a uniformly located theoretical perspective, this article will try to present various views of philosophers and writers from around the globe on how they perceive the *philosophical activity* for being influenced by the contemporary occurrences. That is, we’ll try to cast our eye over African, Latin American and Indian philosophical/theoretical production and see how thinkers, standing in those consecutive traditions, view their position(s) *in the context* of global production.

Foremost we’ll try to outline the issues they find pressing for their existence as a credible “theoretical figures”, capable of standing next to the most popular “mainstream” philosophies. We’ll also try to list some of their answers on how to “improve” this condition and will try to find out if their strategies bear anything in common; and could anything indeed be done to surpass various “centrism” they – and *we* – have to deal with.

A “shifted perspective” here, therefore, means to treat philosophical activity from bottom-up (looking at the activities and later concluding what we are dealing with) instead of top-down (developing a concept out of one or another theory and then applying it to particular cases). Such project is not only a “distant view” because it tries to present philosophies that are *distant* on geographical and, perhaps, theoretical scale, but again because it primarily tries to distance itself from immediate theoretical surroundings and attempts to look at the philosophical activities *as activities*, subdued to various external as well as internal factors. Still, in other words: this paper *won’t plainly think about globalization but will try to see what globalization has done to thinking itself*.

An important point must be made at the start before we could proceed: we will be developing an outline of a global philosophical activity in order to judge what is going on; but even to sketch such a worldwide activity seems to be an enormous task. Ideally, it has to include not only present philosophies – that have to be as various as possible in order to get what is called a ‘representative sample’ – but also their historical roots and genetic accounts. Needless to say, I do not possess any of the needed resources to embark on such an adventure: the span of this paper will therefore have to be severely limited to few most representative figures, picked out of the vast sea of world’s philosophies.

Faced with this disability, we can choose two options: either to dismiss the idea of presenting an outline of global philosophical activity altogether, or to look for authors that have already developed a synopsis of what was going on in their traditions. I have chosen the second approach: this paper therefore concentrates on thinkers who have already reflected on position of their surrounding theoretical activity. This method undoubtedly still lacks the vigor of such works as R. Collins’ *The Sociology of Philosophies. A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*³ which took him decades to write and which presents genetic accounts of numerous traditions, from China, Persia and Middle East to Europe and USA, and not forgetting to consider the surrounding factors that

contributed to their flowering. But on the other hand, authors like P. Hountondji, E. Dussel and N. Sen – who were here chosen to represent African, Latin American and Indian traditions consecutively – are respected authorities, having covered substantially what went on in their traditions with their own erudition and critical abilities. They, moreover, already did all the “field-work” of summing up what are the nature and the character of the activity of their surrounding philosophical or literary traditions and contrasted this picture against global background – which is exactly what we need. So, in spite of mentioned limitations, we are nevertheless not so bounded as it may appear at the first sight: the pieces which are going to be put together into a more “global mosaic” have already been developed by renowned scholars and have been critically assessed by their audience.

By all means: thinking through of globalization, bringing with all the social, political as well as theoretical issues, is one of the more important tasks of the humanities. Quest for answers on the most pressing issues should perhaps even be called *Die Aufgabe des Denkes* of the contemporary thought. Can we here, right at the start, give away one of the most troubling findings of the analysis in this paper? If we could, it would sound like this: the philosophical and theoretical activity *mimics* the economic one. It seems, unfortunately, that exchange and production of the ideas is equally unevenly distributed like the world capital is. It is a painful observance; very much so since literature and philosophy are usually considered to be to a certain extent exempt from the mundane issues. They sometimes even presented a sort of a *consolation* for people facing the lack of resources and freedom. This, including the somewhat detailed diagnosis on why this is so, is going to be the first part of this paper (chapters II–IV). In the second part (V), as well as in between, we will try to outline some of the useful ideas how to overcome this subdued states of mind and a consequent inequality, that were developed by so-called “Third-World thinkers” themselves.

II

Paulin Hountondji is considered to be one of the most prominent African thinkers. His monograph on *African philosophy* is claimed to be one of the most important books of the 20th century in philosophy and was translated in numerous languages, including Croatian.⁴ Concerning the overview of the African philosophical activity we will therefore, as already announced, turn to his writings.

Hountondji claims that scientific activity in Africa remains basically *extroverted*, *alienated* and *dependent on international division of labor*. In his paper “Producing Knowledge in Africa Today – The Second Bashorun M. K. O. Abiola Distinguished Lecture”⁵ he claims:

that might remind us on J. G. Fichte’s *Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre*, dividing people into “dogmatic” and “idealistic” spirits and concluding that exactly this demarcation is what determines our consequent philosophical systems.

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Randall Collins, *The Sociology of Philosophies. A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*, Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) 2001.

4

O »afričkoj filozofiji«: *kritika etnofilozofije*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb 1983.

5

Paulin J. Hountondji, “Producing Knowledge in Africa Today – The Second Bashorun M. K. O. Abiola Distinguished Lecture”, *African Studies Review* 38 (December 1995), pp. 1–10.

“I argued that scientific and technological activity, as practiced in Africa today, is just as ‘extroverted’, or internally orientated, as economic activity. Most of the shortcomings that can be identified should not be perceived, therefore, as natural and inevitable. They should be traced back, on the contrary, to the history of the integration and subordination of our traditional knowledge to the world system of knowledge, just as underdevelopment as a whole results, primarily, not from any original backwardness, but from the integration of our subsistence economies into the world capitalist market.”⁶

Now, according to Hountondji, *scientific extroversion* in Africa can be observed in a number of steps. While he originally mentions at least thirteen of them, we will here list only five of the most important ones, merging some of them into one category and expounding on the others:

1. Lack of original theory-building – the “means of production” for the theory-building have to be imported. The “African problem” is, as Hountondji sees it, primarily the lack of the “second stage” in the scientific procedure. The scientific procedure can namely be divided into three steps: data *collecting*, *processing* and *application*. The most important one – the heart of it – is, of course, processing stage: there theories that shape the world as we see it are made. Now, this stage is also the most demanding one as regarding the infrastructure:

“No facilities for basic research, no laboratories and no universities existed in colonial Africa. We only had centers for so-called applied research that allowed, first, the feverish gathering of all supposedly useful information, aimed for immediate exportation to the so-called mother country and secondly, an occasional hasty and limited application of metropolitan research findings to some local issues.”⁷

What regards to philosophy, one could add that there were no libraries or, still more important, publishing houses which could encourage philosophical production. Scholars were therefore dependent on foreign documentation centers. Still today, they have to rely on international scientific information system that includes computer-based devices and is largely controlled by North.⁸

For Hountondji, this missing link is the same as the missing link in African economy: “Laboratories were missing just as industrial plants were missing in the colonies.”⁹

2. Permanent scientific tourism. Natural consequence of this state of affairs is “academic nomadism” – scholars are permanently forced to travel abroad in order to conduct research. Yes, it is true: European and American scholars are as well becoming more and more nomadic, but fundamental difference exists between them and Africans. Hountondji explains:

“Nomadism is by no means the monopoly of the African or Third-World scholar. It is also the usual condition of scholars from France, Britain, Germany and many other countries insofar as these scholars too are increasingly attracted to countries like United States and, more rarely, Japan. However, this flow of scholars and scientists from North to North does not have the same meaning as the flow from South to North (...) Each of this countries has developed autonomous, independent, self-reliant research activities (...) In this field as in other fields, the difference (between northern developed countries – T. G.) is a difference of degree, not nature, whereas there is a difference in nature, an essential, functional, structural difference between industrialized and so-called developing countries.”¹⁰

As extreme consequence this tourism actually leads to *brain drain* – complete expatriation of homeland scholars to foreign countries.

3. “Adjusted” audience. Because of the lack of the home public, African scholars are once again forced into being a sort of “data providers” for the Western audience. In philosophy, where we don’t just deal with raw data, this

fact represents a special problem: African philosophers will tend to accept the foreign perspective – the perspective of the Western public – and therefore *predetermine* their thinking. By this, they will actually not only select which issues to address and which themes to pronounce more than the others, but will also try to find answers to them from foreign perspective. Once again, genuine theory-building stage is missing and we face only data-collection and application phases. Hountondji ponders:

“... being aware that their publications will be read more in the North than in the South, African or Third-World scholars are tempted to address issues that are primarily of interest to a Western public and, in one way or another, relevant to the state of knowledge in the West. (...) This is one of the most pernicious forms of extraversion: theoretical, or socio-theoretical extraversion, the fact that we allow the content of our scientific production, the questions we pose, and the way we deal with them to be pre-oriented, predetermined by the expectations of our potential readers.”¹¹

Going along with this is also the acceptance of *foreign languages* as the medium of our thoughts; a problem which has radical consequences regarding the hermeneutic horizons from which we view the world around us – the fact which philosophers are especially intimately familiar with.

4. Ethnoscience. Concepts by which Hountondji became the philosopher familiar to the West are ‘ethno-science’ and, of course, the criticisms of it. The term ‘ethno-science’ tries to address indigenous bodies of knowledge. However, while it obviously tries to acknowledge the positive value of traditional skills and ideas, its problem is that it views those practices from the perspective of modern science with the aim to include them in western corpus, thereby distorting the original contexts of these achievements:

“... the present situation of so-called traditional knowledge and ‘know how’ is obviously one of the most serious indices of ongoing process of underdevelopment. In this connection, the development within Western scholarship of what has come to be known as ethno-science (i.e. the systematic survey of the pre-colonial corpus of knowledge as transmitted through oral tradition down to the present generation) must be understood in all its ambiguity. Ethnoscience, and all its various branches (ethno-botany, ethno-zoology, ethno-medicine, ethno-psychiatry, ethno-philosophy, and many other disciplines) imply the acknowledgement of endogenous systems of knowledge and ‘know-how’. These systems used to be coherent and efficient, and within their own context, they still are. However, the attempt to objectify these systems, to dominate and master them, inevitably reduces them to a dead corpus once their inner, positive constituents have been endorsed by and integrated into the living, dynamic, progressive corpus of so-called modern science.”¹²

5. The fifth, and in our paper the last observed nuance of scientific underdevelopment, is a call for better *communication among Third-World scholars*, which is currently missing in the face of expropriation to the North:

“The fact is that these scientists are much more involved in a vertical exchange and dialogue with scientists from the North than in any horizontal exchange with their fellow scholars from

6
Ibid., p. 2.

7
Ibid.

8
Cf. Paulin J. Hountondji, “Scientific Dependence in Africa Today”, *Research in African Literatures* 21 (1990), pp. 5–15; p. 8.

9
Ibid.

10
Ibid., p. 10.

11
Ibid., p. 11.

12
Ibid., p. 12.

the South. The internal space of scientific discussion and debate is non-existent or very poorly developed in and between our countries. Inter-African governmental and non-governmental institutions have been established in an attempt to correct this situation. But much remains to be done, and such efforts must be evaluated in the light of the dependency relationship I have outlined in this paper.”¹³

Five elements, a consequence and a further contribution to scientific and theoretical malnourishment in Africa at once, outlined above, speak for themselves. They present serious issues; some of them can easily be – though perhaps in a lesser degree – found in countries that have only recently become “developed” ones. But what is shockingly interesting is that, though we face great hermeneutical gaps between African, Latin American and Indian traditions, the problems – at least some of them – which those forms of thought face are predominantly *the same*. Only to sketch briefly: when tackling with the Indian literary production we will see that, according to N. Sen, we are dealing with exactly the same phenomenon described here in the context of Hountondji’s thought as “*Adjusted audience*”. This is a very likely indication that problems which Third-World philosophical and literary production face are similar everywhere, despite mentioned huge differences in hermeneutical outlooks. Further, this is a credible sign that local productions do not depend on culturally-relativistic factors but are a consequence of integration into a “world-system”, the system that structurally predetermines particular local positions and outlooks. To jump ahead a bit more – similarly, Hountondji’s idea of *better communication among Third-World scholars*, mentioned above, bears ample resemblance to Dussel’s idea of *South-South dialogue* (to be visited soon). On the face of those short observances of proximity of the problems that Third-World philosophies have to deal with, it seems appropriate to conclude this sketch of African theoretical production with one more of Hountondji’s theses:

“... Beyond mere parallelism (of theoretical and economic activity – T. G.), I argued that both activities could be seen, in the last analysis, as identical. Scientific activity is but a specific mode of economic activity in the wider sense of the word, that is, the overall process of the human transformation of nature including production, consumption and exchange of goods. In the usual narrower sense, economics is concerned only with material goods and therefore with such activities as agriculture, industry and commerce. But, in the wider sense, it is concerned with both material and non-material goods. Science, as we said, is the production of a specific kind of statements: non-material goods. It is, therefore, part and parcel of economy in the wider sense.”¹⁴

III

Only natural would now be to proceed with E. Dussel, a renowned Latin American philosopher, and with a short review of Latin American philosophical situation. Not only because the nice example of Brazil was visited recently, but also because the fifth Hountondji’s element of scientific dependence, mentioned above – *communication among Third-World Scholars* – clearly resembles the Dussel’s idea that southern countries should strive to “South-South dialogue” between thinkers from Africa, Asia and Latin America. But before we start to expound on this similarity and Dussel’s idea of *trans-modernity*, which once again testifies for one of the claims of present paper (that all developing countries face similar fate as regards the status of philosophical activity despite huge differences in their subsequent hermeneutical outlooks), it would be appropriate to outline Dussel’s experience of Latin American philosophy in the context of larger picture of global philosophies.

The exposition of some of the greatest ideas of this thinker, in a paper entitled *Transmodernity and Interculturality*,¹⁵ opens with a startling personal experience:

“The philosophy that we studied set out from Greeks, in whom we saw our most remote lineage. (...) Moreover, the ideal philosopher was one who was familiar with the precise details of classical western philosophers and their contemporary developments. (...) It is difficult to evoke in the present the firm hold that the European model of philosophy had on us (...)

(...) Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, and Scheler were the key figures. This was a substantialist view of culture, without fissures and chronological from East to West, as required by the Hegelian view of universal history.

With my trip to Europe – in my case, crossing the Atlantic by boat in 1957 – we discovered ourselves to be ‘Latin Americans,’ or at least no longer ‘Europeans,’ from the moment that we disembarked in Lisbon or Barcelona. The differences were obvious and could not be concealed.”¹⁶

This discovery led Dussel to make a tireless effort of searching for identity of Latin American philosophy and culture in general. But the flow of his early adventures was recognized only about ten years after the first quest: it lied in an obsession to integrate every century in a view of World History which would reveal the origin, development and content of Latin American culture.¹⁷ Then:

“Since the end of the 1960s, as a fruit of the emergence of *critical* Latin American social science (particularly ‘Dependency Theory’), as well as the Emmanuel Levinas’ lecture *Totality and Infinity*, and perhaps initially and principally as a result of the popular and student movements of 1968 (worldwide, but fundamentally in Argentina and Latin America), a historical rupture was produced in the field of philosophy and consequently in philosophy of culture. What had been previously considered the metropolitan and colonial worlds were now categorized (...) as ‘core’ and ‘periphery’. (...) This was not merely a terminological question but a conceptual one, which allowed for the rupturing of the substantialist conception of culture and for the discoveries of

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Ibid., p. 13.

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P. Hountondji, “Producing Knowledge in Africa Today – The Second Bashorun M. K. O. Abiola Distinguished Lecture”, p. 3. In this full-blooded Marxist-Althusserian outlook, which seems to be supported by empirical facts, we need not only sense *negative, disrupting* observations. If economic activity is not only parallel to theoretic/philosophic/literary one but is actually identical with it, then the sheer hope remains, that, *vice versa*, tackling with ideas and improving the “state of knowledge” will also help to improve material conditions of the peoples that nowadays face impoverishment. Moreover, schooling and – why not – teaching philosophy could visibly improve such conditions over a period of time; albeit some investment is needed to conduct both, it is still much smaller than *prima facie* investment in technological infrastructure that has also been imported, thus still further propagating dependence; such raw functionalistic approach usually also commits a fault of implementing foreign technology *without* previously establishing a context of skilled workers or without providing some mechanisms with which to level out the nega-

tive social effects. It might seem that this is a far-fetched idea, but the fact is that some “southern” countries have acknowledged the role of philosophy for betterment of their societies: a nice example here is Brazil which in its *legislative directive* of The Ministry of National Education, *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação*, put down the idea that: “at the end of secondary schooling students must master, among other things, the philosophical and sociological knowledge needed for the exercise of citizenship”, in: *Philosophy: A School of Freedom*, UNESCO Report on Philosophy, 2007, UNESCO, Social and Human Sciences Sector, p. 78. The document is accessible at <http://philosophy-toolbox.org/resources/unesco-report-on-philosophy/>.

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Enrique Dussel, “Transmodernity and Interculturality”, *Poligrafi (International Edition)* 41/42 (11/2006), pp. 5–40.

16
Ibid., pp. 5–6.

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Cf. *ibid.*, p. 10.

fractures (internal to each culture) and between them (not only as an intercultural ‘dialogue’ or ‘clash’, but rather more strictly as *domination* and *exploitation* of one culture over others).¹⁸

The substantialist idea of rupture-free cultural filaments was thus broken, and a picture of world cultures, defined by their socio-economic position in a ‘world-system’ (which firstly came as a *colonial system* with the Spanish discovery of Americas and later, with industrial revolution, further anchored Europe at its “center”) came into existence.¹⁹ The message was clear: we don’t deal with the unfolding of the uniform World History, where each traditional culture will sooner or later enter the *secular stage*,²⁰ but instead we face diversity of positions in a world-system, defined by its “peripheral” regions, emanating from the “center” which upholds its position due to its domination of other cultures.

Because of this “new setting” and its implied cultural asymmetry, the concept of *intercultural dialogue* and “overlapping consensus” became problematic. Not only a call for continuing the “South-South dialogue”,²¹ but also a demand for a *transversal* intercultural dialogue was thus raised by Dussel. The idea of such enterprise is, as mentioned, quite appropriate answer to above listed problematic of one of the Hountondji’s steps of scientific extroversion in Africa, a *communication among Third-World Scholars*, and “transversal” here:

“... connotes that movement from the periphery to the periphery. From the feminist movement to the antiracist and anti-colonial struggles. These ‘Differences’ enter into dialogue from the perspective of their *distinct* negativities, without necessity of transversing the ‘center’ of hegemony. Frequently, large metropolitan cities have subway services that extend from suburban neighborhoods to the center; however they do not offer connecting service between the suburban subcenters themselves. This is an analogy for what occurs in intercultural dialogue.”²²

That critical and intercultural dialogue should proceed from a so-called *trans-modern* perspective. *Trans-modernity*, as characterized by Dussel, tries to:

“... indicate the radical novelty of the irruption – as if from nothing – from the transformative exteriority of what is always *Distinct*, those universal cultures in the process of development which assume the challenges of Modernity, and even European/North American Post-modernity, but which respond *from another place, another location*. They respond from the perspective of their own cultural experiences, which are distinct from those of Europeans/North Americans, and therefore have the capacity to respond with solutions which would be absolutely impossible for an exclusively modern culture.”²³

Different cultures have learned to respond to the challenges of European Modernity in their own ways. But the most important thing is to acknowledge that their position cannot be “Post-modern”, since they were never “Modern”, as this last word is applicable only to European and North American position, determined in part by socio-economic world order which, at a certain point in time, gave birth to the Enlightenment. Dussel thus claims that those cultures are simultaneously pre-modern, contemporary to Modernity and to Trans-modernity as well. Vedic or Chinese cultures, for instance, could never be post-modern in the European sense, but they are rather something very different as a result of their distinct roots.²⁴

Be that as it may, at the end of this condensed outline of the Latin American cultural position in the global context, as perceived and lived by E. Dussel, it should be clear that those who tried to pinpoint Latin American identity were led to similar issues concerning world-scale *asymmetries* as P. Hountondji observed them in the case of African knowledge production. Still further: one of the answers on how this asymmetry is to be, at least partially, leveled out is quite similar in both cases – by a *transversal* communication.

IV

We will now turn to our last “local” perspective on theoretical production – the case of literary production in India. In a paper entitled *Challenging the Canon*,²⁵ N. Sen speaks about the situation of “post-colonial” literature in India. Of particular interest for Sen is the relationship between literary production written in English and works composed in regional Indian languages (Bhasa). Even though we all tend to dream about World Forum of literature where all literature of the world would be able to find equal recognition, our dreams are, writes Sen, soon dispersed when we look at the reality:

“... one also realizes that it is difficult (to have such a Forum – T. G.) given the inequalities of the regions, the politics of publication and the power structures of languages.”²⁶

Tackling with language issues (that can easily remind one on previously mentioned Hountondji’s observances about the status of African theoretical production), Sen claims that – not too surprisingly – *Bhasa* languages are discriminated against English. This discrimination in the past happened to be closely related to political domination viz. imperial expansion.²⁷ Some Englishmen – like Thomas Macaulay – even claimed that:

“Who could deny that a simple shelf of good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia?”²⁸

Despite the fact that *Bhasa* languages are recognized as having equal “rights” as English, the common day *lingua franca* has a privileged position in minds of the people; it is the language of the elite. But, though Indian languages suffered discrimination, this still wasn’t so severe as in other English ex-colonies (part of the reason is Indian huge population and very old traditional culture; moreover, many colonies didn’t possess any scripts or written language in general when the Englishmen came). There English dominates in state administration, “national” powerful media and in higher education and researches.²⁹

However, in the world’s literary playground a shift of perspective is to be seen: what was once marginalized suddenly became quite fashionable – and this is what we call “post-colonial literature”. Authors of different minorities (at least in the sense of the scope of literary production) have become popular and sometimes even spokesmen of their people. However, there is a catch to it – Sen writes:

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Ibid.

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Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 10–23.

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Cf. *ibid.*, p. 12.

21

See: *ibid.*, p. 11 and footnote 20.

22

Ibid., footnote 56 (p. 39).

23

Ibid., p. 24.

24

Ibid.

25

Nandini Sen, “Challenging the Canon”, *Poli-grafi* 47/48 (12/2008), pp. 125–134.

26

Ibid., p. 125.

27

Ibid., p. 126.

28

Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India (1885–1947)*, Macmillan India Ltd, Delhi 1983, in: *ibid.*

29

Ibid., p. 129.

“There are two problem areas which are part and parcel of the Post Colonial baggage. Primarily, there is a lack of theoretical perspective. Most of the Theoretical perspectives used are Western. And so we see the raw material being taken to the West, packaged there and being sent back to the peripheries for consumption. There is an effort being made to create an Indian aesthetic of ‘Rasa’ and ‘Chanda’, but as of now no significant analysis has been made using this tool. The lack of critical tools significantly increases the extent to which works from across the globe are dependent on the Western theoretical framework.

The second and more problematic area lies in the politics of translation and appropriation of the Bhasa author by the internationally acclaimed critic. This kind of translation and interpretation very often results in a kind of literary vandalism. A strange nexus is formed when the author represents the subaltern, who in turn is interpreted and represented globally by the critic, who posits the most significant Post Colonial question: ‘Can the subaltern speak?’³⁰

Yet again we face the situation quite similar to what we have observed with Hountondji – the lack of “processing”, i.e. *theoretical* stage in the process and, once more, the problem of “audience”. The Bhasa author becomes exactly what Hountondji has announced for African scholar – a raw material for data collection, only to be imported to the foreign audience. Actually, the similarities between what Hountondji has said about African theoretical production and what Sen here speaks about literary one are so interwoven that here we won’t expound on them at length – the elements of theoretical and literary malnourishment, which appear to be the same all over the “developing” countries, are so structurally similar that it suffices if we can observe them in this paper only under section II where they are developed out of Hountondji’s thought at some length. Instead, we will now turn our attention to Sen’s idea of “challenging the canon”, the idea which is explicitly present in the title of the cited paper.

For Sen, challenging the existing canon should be primarily focused on challenging the rigid canon(s) entrenched in the old universities. By challenging them some new materials could be included into the lists of “who should be read”, thereby opening up new, even liberating, perspectives. But this is in no way an easy task:

“... in the business of ‘Firing the Canon’, we seem to have come full circle. On the one hand there is no escaping the existing Canon – how can we do away with Shakespeare, Dryden and Keats? They are the Masters! While on the other hand, the Counter Canon is becoming more and more strongly entrenched in its marginalization of large chunks of the new literatures that it has included. And the all important ‘Centre’ is still the deciding factor as to who should be read and who should not.”³¹

But, though the business of “firing the canon” is a difficult one, hope – a gleam of hope – still remains. One way – the most important one – of how to tackle with it is to encourage students to explore the literature on their own, without prescribing them texts in student curricula, or, at least, with constantly adding new titles to syllabi. The universities have as well opened up a bit and this also gives some hope that things might change. One of bright examples for Sen is the Delhi University:

“Only in constantly challenging the Canon can we keep reworking it. Universities have opened up. Interdisciplinary studies have now become the order of the day. In Indian Universities stringent syllabi and the examination system can not be wished away, but it is heartening to see that a few steps, albeit small have been taken to open up the Canon. In Delhi University today, undergraduate students who earlier struggled with foreign names and locales now study Indian authors and participate in debates on Partition which has affected most of their families in the past, and therefore exists in the realms of a lived reality.”³²

V

In a brief overview of African, Latin American and Indian theoretical philosophical and literary production in the context of global picture, which was attempted in this essay, one distinctive mark immediately comes to mind: that, in spite of different hermeneutical outlooks, huge cultural gaps, geographical distance, different economic positions and various social traditions, all “developing” countries face similar problems; this is a thesis that was advocated, as well as illustrated, in a number of times through this paper. The attempt was made even to claim, citing Hountondji, that the peculiarities of theoretical production *mimic* those of economic; or still, *a fortiori*, that they *are the same process*.

However, while describing the process of such production and dealing with all those peculiarities, some useful ideas came to mind such as how to, perhaps, try to change the theoretically (and simultaneously economically) malnourished populations. That is natural; since if we became intimately aware of the nature of the processes which are going on, we will at the same time discover what conditions their structure and, thereby, also, what could be done to change it. Not surprisingly, even here at least one idea seemed to be much the same with two authors: Hountondji’s idea of enhancing the communication between Third-World scholars and Dussel’s idea of *transversal* intercultural dialogue. But there is also another similarity to be mentioned now: the one between Sen’s “challenging the canon” and Achebe’s *balance of stories*.

*Home and Exile*³³ is a book by Achebe, popular African writer, which speaks about personal experience of the writer when facing the power of narratives. For Achebe, literature could function as a way of denigrating a culture. But on the other hand, it can also have an emancipatory effect. Achebe’s main idea in the last chapter of his book, tellingly entitled “Today, The Balance of Stories”, is a process of “re-storying” the peoples. He writes thus:

“... my hope for the twenty-first (century – T. G.) is that it will see the first fruits of the balance of stories among world’s peoples. The twentieth century for all its many faults did witness a significant beginning, in Africa and elsewhere in the so-called Third-World, of the process of ‘re-storying’ peoples who had been knocked silent by the trauma of all kinds of dispossessions.”³⁴

Being a superb writer with a full stock of witty ideas, Achebe opens the last chapter by a proverb which one researcher has told him: “Until the lions produce their own historian, the story of the hunt will glorify only the hunter.”³⁵ Initially, Achebe wanted to use this proverb to celebrate the beginning of the reclamation of the African story. But soon something appeared to be wrong with it; at least Achebe thought so. What is disturbing in it – though its originality cannot be denied – is, once again, recourse to the metaphor of power which the figure of lion presents. Instead of “fighting back” with this aura, Achebe turns to Rushdie’s idea of “writing back to the Empire”. The re-storying is now illustrated by a rather simple, though still powerful, metaphor of British imperial post-office and child’s experience of witnessing a post office being erected in the middle of his native village. Royal Mail was, however, a

30
Ibid., p. 130.

31
Ibid.

32
Ibid., p. 132.

33
Chinua Achebe, *Home and Exile*, Anchor Books, New York 2001.

34
Ibid., p. 81.

35
Ibid., p. 73.

post office that included vast areas into mutual communication, thereby offering a chance to be perhaps heard. Yes, it is true, this interrelationship was far from being symmetrical:

“The two sides never see the world in the same light. Thus, the British might boast that they had the first empire in history on which the sun never set; to which an Indian would reply: Yes, because God cannot trust Englishman in the dark!”³⁶

But nevertheless, the hope for the World Forum of literatures, characterized by Sen, in which the “re-storying” of the people could begin and the *balance of stories* would take place, is a living hope that remains. In optimal conditions it would include the idea of a *transversal intercultural dialogue* with its emphasis on “South-South” direction – a destination that is today still hardly reachable if one doesn’t travel *through* the “Center”.

Let us conclude this paper by another excerpt from Achebe’s book. It is a telling one and its atmosphere I perceive as somehow similar to the one conveyed with the findings of this paper – it is neither exclusively colored by depressive nuances, nor wholeheartedly optimistic; it is like a modest, unassuming thought, throwing some light at the end of a road, on which we set our foot:

“He (Tai Solarin, in 1950s – T. G.) took a parcel to the post office for dispatch to his people in Nigeria. A lady at the counter took it from him and weighted it. To do the calculation for postage she looked again at the address and said: ‘Nigeria... Nigeria... Is Nigeria ours or French?’ To which Solarin, a very austere man, replied: ‘Nigeria is yours, madam’. To even inconsequential minions of imperial rule, subject peoples were all ‘invisible’, along with their sometimes unpronounceable homelands.

But changes have begun to occur. That exchange between Nigerian, Tai Solarin, and the British postal worker could not happen today and, if it did, Solarin would have been glad of the educational opportunity to tell the good lady that, for good or ill, Nigeria was neither hers nor French but his.”³⁷

Tomaž Grušovnik

Odmaknuto gledište

Globalizacija unutar filozofije

Sažetak

Razmatrajući pitanje globalizacije u kontekstu filozofije, tekst kreće u pomalo neočekivanom pravcu: ne promišlja o značenju i posljedicama procesa kojeg nazivamo ‘globalnim’ nego umjesto toga nastoji istražiti kakav je utjecaj globalizacije na filozofiju te teorijsku i literarnu produkciju. Umjesto pokušaja da odmah »misli globalizaciju«, tekst nastoji pokazati »što je globalizacija učinila mišljenju«.

Za ilustraciju toga nastojanja uzet će se u obzir tri glavna područja koja treba istražiti: Afrika, Latinska Amerika i Indija. Ta su područja izabrana jer predstavljaju reprezentativne regije tzv. »Trećeg svijeta« ili »Globalnog Juga«. Osnovna ideja, preuzeta od P. Hountondijija, jest da filozofska i teorijska produkcija oponašaju onu ekonomsku, a fortiori, zapravo predstavljaju isti proces, što je prikazano na mnoštvu primjera. Nadalje, tekst nastoji pokazati da se usprkos velikim razlikama u hermeneutičkim gledištima, geografskoj udaljenosti i sukcesivnoj tradiciji, cijela filozofska/literarna produkcija »Trećeg svijeta« suočava sa sličnom sudbinom, što može biti posljedicom njena strukturalnog pozicioniranja u suvremenom »sustavu svijeta«.

Autori koji dolaze iz »perifernih« područja teorijske produkcije ne suočavaju se samo sa sličnim problemima, nego, kako je u tekstu pokazano, također dijele slične ideje o tome što se može učiniti kako bi se minimalizirala i izjednačila neravnoteža i asimetrična pozicija njihovih kultura.

Ključne riječi

globalizacija, Dussel, Houtondji, transmodernost, transverzalnost, međukulturni dijalog, afrička filozofija, latino-američka filozofija

Tomaž Grušovnik

Aus der Distanz betrachtet

Globalisierung in der Philosophie

Zusammenfassung

Der Verfasser betrachtet die Frage der Globalisierung im Kontext der Philosophie und schwenkt in etwas unerwarteter Richtung ab: Gegenstand seiner Untersuchungen sind nicht Bedeutung und Folgen des als „global“ bezeichneten Prozesses, sondern die Art und Weise, in der die Globalisierung die philosophisch-theoretische und literarische Produktion beeinflusst. Anstatt also umgekehrt „die Globalisierung zu reflektieren“, möchte der Verfasser zeigen, „was die Globalisierung dem Denken angetan hat“.

Um sein Bestreben zu veranschaulichen, verweist er auf Afrika, Lateinamerika und Indien, drei Hauptbereiche, die es zu untersuchen gelte, da es sich um repräsentative Regionen der sog. „Dritten Welt“ oder des „globalen Südens“ handle. Der von P. Hountondji übernommene Grundgedanke lautet, dass die philosophische und übrige fachliterarische Produktion der Wirtschaftsproduktion nacheifere; a fortiori stellen sie ein und denselben Prozess dar, was anhand zahlreicher Beispiele veranschaulicht wird. Des Weiteren soll gezeigt werden, dass trotz großer Unterschiede in den hermeneutischen Positionen, trotz der großen geografischen Entfernungen und sukzessiven Traditionen die gesamte philosophische und literarische Produktion der „Dritten Welt“ ein ähnliches Schicksal erlebt. Dies kann nach Ansicht des Autors eine Folge ihrer strukturalen Positionierung innerhalb des zeitgenössischen „Weltsystems“ sein.

Autoren aus „peripheren“ Bereichen der philosophisch-theoretischen Produktion sehen sich nicht nur ähnlichen Problemen gegenübergestellt, sondern teilen, wie im Text nachzulesen ist, ähnliche Gedanken darüber, was getan werden kann, um das Ungleichgewicht zwischen den Kulturen und die asymmetrische Position ihrer eigenen Kulturen zu minimieren und abzuschaffen.

Schlüsselwörter

Globalisierung, Dussel, Hountondji, Transmoderne, Transversalität, interkultureller Dialog, afrikanische Philosophie, lateinamerikanische Philosophie

Tomaž Grušovnik

Une vision à part

La mondialisation au sein de la philosophie

Résumé

Alors qu'il examine la question de la mondialisation dans le contexte de la philosophie, le texte prend une direction quelque peu inattendue : au lieu de réfléchir sur la signification et les conséquences du processus dit « global », il tente d'établir comment la philosophie ainsi que la production théorique et littéraire sont à leur tour affectés par la mondialisation. Au lieu de « penser la mondialisation » d'emblée, le texte tente de montrer ce que « la mondialisation a eu comme effet sur la pensée ».

Afin d'illustrer cet effort, trois régions seront prises en compte : l'Afrique, l'Amérique Latine et l'Inde. Ces régions ont été choisies car elles sont représentatives du « Tiers monde » ou des « Pays du Sud ». L'idée principale, inspirée par P. Hountondji, est que les productions théoriques et philosophiques imitent la production économique ; a fortiori : elles représentent le seul et même processus. Ce point est illustré par de nombreux cas. Ensuite, le texte tente de montrer que, malgré les différences importantes des approches herméneutiques, de la distance géographique et des traditions successives, toute la production philosophique et littéraire du « Tiers monde » fait face au même destin, ce qui pourrait être une conséquence de son positionnement structurel dans le « système mondial » contemporain.

Cependant, les auteurs issus des champs « périphériques » de la production théorique ne sont pas seulement confrontés à des problèmes similaires ; ils partagent en outre des idées similaires concernant ce qui peut être fait pour minimiser la position asymétrique de leurs cultures et rétablir l'équilibre.

Mots-clés

mondialisation, Dussel, Hountondji, transmodernité, transversalité, dialogue interculturel, philosophie africaine, philosophie latino-américaine