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# ДИСКУССИОННАЯ ПЛОЩАДКА

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## THE TRADITION OF THE ACADEMIC TEACHING OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALISATION: AN INTRODUCTION\*

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In the article the author considers the future of the academic teaching of philosophy in the contemporary world of globalization. The theme is much more difficult as it seems to be. It can be considered from the different point of views. For example, we can engage in a critical study of cultural context of our tradition of the academic teaching of philosophy (and in this case our analyze will a particular part of more general consideration of European tradition of the university education) or we can propose the ways alternative for our tradition. Any way we will have to take our traditions to the tribunal of our present life in order to answer the question whether they are still relevant and whether we can still live from them today. But it is also useful to consider us ourselves and our present life from another side, and namely from our traditions, and allow them to be that tribunal, which makes a decision about what we are today.

**Key words:** philosophy, university, academic teaching, globalization, intercultural context, traditions

### INTRODUCTION

The V. International Congress for Intercultural Philosophy [16. P. 29—40] calls us together today, under the theme “Interculturality, Gender and Education”. Our goal, as was agreed during the previous congress in Bangalore, India, is that we may engage in a critical study the academic teaching of philosophy, as well as, propose alternative

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\* Данная статья представляет собой запись доклада, прочитанного Р. Форнет-Бетанкурром на V Международном конгрессе межкультурной философии, проходившем в 2001 г. в г. Бангалор (Индия). И хотя этот доклад был произнесен более чем 15 лет назад, поднятая в нем тема трансформации традиции академического преподавания в современном нам мире глобализации и межкультурного взаимодействия и сегодня не потеряла своей актуальности, а слова Р. Форнет-Бетанкура в свете произошедших с тех пор событий и изменений приобретают новое звучание, находя в них свое подтверждение, в силу чего редакция и считает возможным сегодня предложить вниманию читателей текст данного доклада (*Прим. ред.*).

ways that will allow, specifically, “the reconstruction of our philosophical traditions and curricula, stemming from the challenges posed by the intercultural and gender debates”, as is highlighted in the convocation to this Congress. It is, therefore, the theme, or better still, the task that we have on hand. It may be noted however, that we cannot deal with the issue of academic teaching of philosophy, nor the problem of the curricular revision of philosophy, without speaking first, on one hand, of the university and/or higher education institutions in our respective contexts. I intentionally say, “on one hand” because, it seems to me, that the critical approach to the topic of the Congress, further implies, on the other hand, of the need to speak equally, of the societies and states where we live and in which many of us are functionaries or employees. There are three reasons, in my opinion, which substantiate the need to account for this aspect of the debate on the theme that brings us together. A summary of these follows.

First: The academic teaching under scrutiny from a critical perspective, is regulated mostly by study plans which core contents not only reflect the “scientific culture” of the hegemonic society of yesterday and today, but also point towards maintaining the epistemic conditions necessary for the perpetuation of knowledge, or more adequately expressed, of the ideal of knowledge that the hegemonic society markets as universal.

Second: The universities or higher education institutions, insofar as they are the immediate specific context, the frame within which the task of teaching philosophy is exercised and where decisions on knowing, and the traditions of (philosophical) knowing are made, which are, in turn, being transmitted to the current and future generations, lead us directly to the “social issue” that is implicated in the topic of this congress. The universities or higher education institutions where we teach, whether state or private, are usually a part of the so-called public administration of states (or dominant power groups), which are, at the same time, echoes of the social, political, economic and cultural interests of the hegemonic society.

Third: The targets of teaching, that is, the persons who are professionally involved in teaching, because they have been recognized by the prevailing academic system as capable or apt to exercise that faculty, are often functionaries that, as is specified in the authorized definition we are referring to, carry out a public post under those competent authorities, precisely in order to ensure the “good functioning” of a particular sector of the public sphere, designed by the hegemonic society. Therefore, these persons have a job, in the end, which is part of the “social contract”, that still is a point of reference so as to legalize and validate the hegemonic practices in the most varied sectors or fields of our contemporary societies.

Ensuing from the above, I pose, that we must engage in the task of examining the contents and practices of philosophy teaching, by developing a debate that, in its argumentation, will account for the double contextual horizon in which the study programs of philosophy are inscribed by their own history of gestation and institutionalization. As I have tried to demonstrate, this is the particular academic context of the university institutions and the main socio-political context of the hegemonic society and of the power interests of its bearers and administrators.

Although we cannot present a detailed account, from the framework of an introduction, I will shed a few ideas that I feel are important for the debate in this first aspect

of the theme that brings us together, so that the discussion will bear in mind the double context I am referring to. From the starting point of a unified vision of the problem, I propose, first of all, the perspective of focusing this debate on the relation and interconnection between the teaching plans, university and society, as a problem which reflects, not the crisis of particular social systems, but mainly the structural scandal of the prevailing social contract, and particularly, the social contract built on the basis of those social systems. Therefore, the critical examination of the teaching of philosophy and of curricular philosophical traditions is a task, which if assumed contextually, confronts us with the challenge of designing, on the basis of a new international social contract, a new intercultural educational contract.

I believe, in fact, that the contextual analysis of this issue may show that it is not enough to reform the study programs we have, that it is not enough to broaden the European idea of university — not even in its more noble formulation, the kantian-humboldtian! [25, 22, 32, 24, 33] —, nor is it enough to create margins of tolerance in contemporary society, which many euphemistically call “World Society”. Or, to say it in a more concrete and specific manner, it is not solely a question of reducing the Eurocentricity that still characterizes the core structure of academic philosophical formation or play down the burden of hegemonic ways of knowing produced in the west as a phenomenon adjunct to its imperial enterprise (2); nor is it sufficient to make flexible the criteria for acknowledgement and/or academic and scientific certification of knowing imposed by the European university; nor is it enough to project multicultural societies that integrate differences, on the basis of the legal framework of the social contract which is today hegemonic.

Why? Because the critical examination of academic education, philosophical in this case, from the vindications of the intercultural project, which is in fact a contextual project and because of this, gender specific or, more precisely, inter-contextual and inter-gendered, should and can detect the voids, the absences and the silences in the educational system of the hegemonic society. But precisely, the radical nature of the alternate visions resides in that they are *visualized* as other points of view of the epistemic hegemonic social system, and not simply as deficiencies which can be corrected within the dominant order by reforming the structures through adjustments in their functionality.

Consequently, in fact, what the intercultural, contextual and gender analysis visualizes is not voids in the study plans that the august and honorable European tradition of “universitas magistrorum et scholarium” has globalized from very early on, a tradition following the famous expression used by Innocent III, in his document dated 1208, directed to the “Studium generale parisiense”; or the “city counsel for teachers and scholars” that Alphonse X The Wise, nor to correct deficiencies in the current university or in the practices and policies of systematized exclusions carried out by the contemporary hegemonic society. Because, if it detects all of the above in the education system, in the university and in current society, it is because it *visualizes* alternative universes of knowing and of human livelihood; universes that cannot be simply added on to the western, androcentric order of the hegemonic society; for, as alternative worlds as such, they vindicate the right to un-colonize the presuppositions of education and human livelihood

and to elaborate a new cultural contract which, based on dialogue, interaction and interchange, may be the starting point for the reconstruction of the higher education programs. But also, and above all, for an ecumenical recreation of universality, that overcomes the horizon of tolerance, because it grows through the practice of conviviality and peace.

Second, I propose the idea, on a more concrete level, to discuss the challenge of inter-culturing philosophical ways of knowing, as well as ways for their transmission and learning (3). Not only as an archaeological task of recuperating silenced or colonized memories, but in the sense of a prospective project of interchange and interaction of live traditions that today, claim their enfranchised right, not merely as honorary members or decorative “overseas” figures, to exercise active participation in the decisions made over their inherited ways of knowing, over the sense and use of these ways of knowing, as well as over the production and investigation of the new ways of knowing that educational institutions of a rightfully global, and not colonized by any hegemonic knowledge or power, should teach, transmit and foster, in order for the following to happen:

First: The university institutions, and in particular the faculties of philosophy, should cease to be centers for westernization.

Second: That an epistemological and social equilibrium is brought about, which is necessary in the world in order for each people to live in conviviality with others as an exercise of mutual and open intercultural “making” (or doing) (4).

Third: So that the students are not confronted in their classrooms with “the text” (which is predominantly European), but with their own contexts and ways of knowing in which they have grown, and are depositors. This involves contextual learning, but above all, it implies that they are an active part of that “city council” for learning those old and new ways of learning, because of the fact that, as a dimension of the anthropological condition of the students, their respective contexts and traditions make them sources of knowledge and not mere recipients of knowledge (5).

Fourth: That the ideal of education as the formation of the human person and the role of the educational institutions within that process, could be re-formulated interculturally, through the sharing of knowledge heritages and projects for the production of ways of knowing, that take charge of the historical challenges posed today by the globalization of neo-liberalism, particularly as it concerns education, and at this precise junction when they are subjected to be converted into specialized centers of professional formation. And (consequently).

Fifth: That the study programs and research projects that are interculturally agreed to, leave behind the tricky paradigm of “modernization” of peoples and cultures [7, 18, 20, 36, 40, 35] and transform themselves into what they always should have been, an instrument for the universal or cosmic humanization of human beings.

Before posing the third idea for focusing the debate of the first aspect mentioned, I would like to add that I am aware of having posed this second idea bearing in mind, above all, the vindications of what in synthesis can be called “the colonial difference” [30]. And, I have done this because the history of colonization by Europe and the United States, in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania, precisely in what concerns the consequences of an education that better serves the colonial interests [3. P. 17—32; 29; 41.

P. 16—30; 12; 6], is not an issue of the past. Particularly today, in the so-called globalization times of the planet, colonialism reactivates its reserves of presence and effectiveness in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania. I further believe that this mobilization of the effective presence of colonialism throughout the planet, is explained, without any doubt, through its means to control economy, finances, natural resources, international organisms, as well as through its unreachable military supremacy.

But I also believe that these reasons should not allow us to forget that colonialism present in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania, is equally explained, and maybe this is the fundamental reason for its obstinate presence, because, in addition to being — and I insist on this point — an economic-politic-military system, it is an anthropological condition or state. In Africa, Asia, Latin America and Oceania, to say it in these terms, the “gender” of the colonized exists and persists, which is, in my opinion, a consequence, precisely, of the prevailing systems of education and transmission of knowledge. This is what Jean Paul Sartre, whom I bring forth to support my argument, criticized with relentless irony, when saying that the “great accomplishment” of the European colonization had been the hellenization of the Asians, and the creation of the new species of black grecolatins”. But, I also remind you that this is the phenomenon that Edmund Husserl [23. P. 14] and Martin Heidegger [21. P. 98—99] designated as the “Europization of the globe and human genre”, which they understood, with not much critical judgment and less intercultural sensibility, to be, not a result of colonialism, but more as an expression of the singularity of the of the entelechy inherent to the European human type [23. P. 320].

This has been, therefore, the reason for the emphasis placed on the presentation of the second idea for this debate. But the emphasis of my argument does not mean that the discussion of this aspect of the theme of the congress should downgrade to a second level the vindications of the oppressed memories and of those differences leveled by society and hegemonic cultures in their own contextual development centers: Europe and the United States of America.

In other words, what has been said from the point of view of “colonial difference” is equally valid for guiding the debate in the European and American contexts, because here also, it is a question of reading history against the grain [2. P. 697]. In any case, I pose the third idea to contribute to the direction of the debate on the first aspect of the theme that calls us together.

It deals with the following: The intent of re-contextualizing (6) the study programs and/or to reconstruct the traditional ways of knowing from the intercultural perspective, is a task that from my vantage point, has to be undertaken with full awareness that the search for alternative forms of institutions through which education is channeled, and specifically philosophical formation, represents an innovative transformation process, which, in addition to the advances already mentioned, should find one of its pathways in the effort of the “city council of teachers and scholars”, includes as a substantial and integrated part, the explicit bond with the alternative social movements, both local and international, that today constitute important loci of anti-hegemonic community ways of knowing.

I believe that the discussion of this perspective could be useful to re-contextualize the idea of social insertion of education and/or philosophical formation, and obviously also, for the clarification of this question that I find to be decisive in understanding the underpinnings of the theme of this congress: Where, what and with whom can we learn what we should know today, so that today and tomorrow we will know how to better live in the world and therefore the world lives better.

On the other hand, the theme of this V. International Congress for Intercultural Philosophy, suggests the revision of our philosophical traditions from the challenges posed by the historical world of today. I interpret this suggestion as an invitation to take our traditions and the needs that we believe we have to our present day tribunal. From this suggestion then, I see in the theme of this Congress a second aspect whose formulation seems equally important for the debate: the type of relationship that we should or we want to maintain, in general, with what we call our traditions. Allow me then to make a brief observation on this other aspect of the theme of the Congress.

The direction of the suggestion that the theme of the program makes, I believe is clear. It is, as I have said, to invite us to take our traditions to the tribunal of our present life or, as Ortega y Gasset would say, “to a tribunal of vital urgencies” [34. P. 398], so they may answer the questions of today; we may then be able to know if they are still the “rent” from which we can still live today (7).

It is undisputable that this critical revision of our traditions has to be done, and most of what has been said up to this moment points in that direction.

However I think that it is important to also consider the issue from another side, that is, to see ourselves as what we are today, from our traditions, and allow them to be that tribunal before which we appear in order to account for what we are. With this change of perspective I, evidently, do not want to feed any traditionalism, nor the nostalgia of the poet, who in deep pain, sings: “qualquiere tiempo pasado fue mejor” (“any past time was better”) [26. P. 116].

My interest in this change of perspective is mostly to call attention to the timeliness of seeing ourselves within our traditions, as if before a mirror that does not merely reflect what we were, but in that image we see there is above all a memory that can guide us in what we must still accomplish. Therefore, it is not a question of returning to tradition. It is a question of being aware of the fact that in the context of a hegemonic knowing interested in globalizing the myth of modernity as a synonym of wellbeing, a precipitated severing of many of the values transmitted through our traditions, could leave us “disinherited”, without reserves, and without the strength to contradict hegemonic knowing.

Revise traditions, yes; but in a way that does not carry us to a weakening of the values in which the best of our cultural contributions are condensed for the realization of the plenitude of humanity, nor to the loss of the names we have given to things, nor, much less, to the neutralization of our capacity to name things in the so called globalized world [4; 1. P. 120—121]. In this sense, our intention would be an interactive revision of the past through which we can relate to our traditions, not only to improve them from the adjustments of the challenges posed today, but also to cultivate what are transmitted as our qualities or virtues [19. P. 71].

Lastly, I present a brief observation of the current political framework in which this V. International Congress for Intercultural Philosophy is taking place.

If the previous Congress held in Bangalore, took place under the impact of the terrorist acts of September 11, 2001, and the threat of the war against Afghanistan, that soon became a sad reality, today we celebrate this V. Congress in a global political situation, no less grievous than before: The will of the current administration of the Government of the United States of America, to go to war against Iraq. This “advertised war” (“Guerra anunciada”), greatly determines our global context today.

And I ask: is it advisable in these times of war, to speak of “ideas” for the (philosophical) education of humanity and, wager as we did in Bangalore (8) for a dialogue of “ideas”? And I answer without any reserve with a “yes”, motivated not by any occult vocation towards martyrdom, but by the conviction that the best defense against terrorism and also against that other deaf war that millions of human beings, and nature suffer daily as a structural result of the hegemonic system, is the mutual education of the values of justice, conviviality and peace, believing in what Jose Marti named “the utility of virtue” [28. P. 17] (9).

#### NOTES

- (1) The documentation of the first three Congresses can be found in [13—15].
- (2) As an exemplar illustration of this process, note the significant phrase written by Antonio Nebrija during a decisive year for the imperial western design (1492!) which says: “language has always been the helpmate of the empire” (“siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio”) [31. P. 97].
- (3) I insist that the “interculturalization of knowing, always implies, for me, those moments of contextualization and gender specification, because what we usually refer to as “cultures” or “cultural traditions” are contextual and gender differentiated historical processes.
- (4) I must note that I pose the term “making” (or doing) — from the verb “to make” (in Spanish) — but in its reflective form, as a possible alternative to the concept of “intercultural competence” (or qualification), which is often used, particularly in German speaking countries, and although not to doubt the good intentions of those who use the term, I believe that it pays tribute to the “spirit” of the epoch (Zeitgeist), that is, to the spirit of hegemonic knowing within it. I believe therefore, that among other things, this spirit wants to evidence the presupposition that, because everything is ruled by marketing laws, there is a struggle to be competent in..., in order, of course, to better compete. So, we would have to *be competent* in interculturality, so that in times when specific competencies (or expert fields) are claimed as the only way to gain way in the markets, we “interculturalists” would also have a field or an issue within our “competence”. Because of the “spirit of the epoch”, within the concept of “intercultural competence”, but over and above because I think that it is not a question of expertise, but a question of “making” (doing), and to transform the world interculturality in order to contradict the spirit of hegemonic knowing, I prefer to speak of intercultural *making* (or doing) [5. P. 125—168; 38; 39].
- (5) In this sense, it seems to me, that it is important and suggestive, both the critiques to the current educational system, as well as the alternative perspectives posed and developed by Amaldo Este based on the issue of education in Venezuela [8—10].
- (6) I speak of “re-contextualization” because I consider that all knowing or cultural tradition, no matter how abstract or global that it may seem to us today, has been generated in and from a particular context.
- (7) In the context of the European crisis of the 30’s, Ortega y Gasset wrote: “We believed that we were heirs of a magnificent past and that we could live from that rent... Suddenly we feel dis-

inherited, without traditions, poor... We have the impression that the traditional ways are not useful in solving our problems..." And he disconcertingly posed the question: "Are we able to live from our classics?" [34. P. 396—397].

- (8) The text of the declaration against war by the participants can be found in [16. P. 277—278].
- (9) Worthy of mentioning, in this context is that recently, at the conclusion of the International Conference: "For the equilibrium of the World" held in homage to the 150 anniversary of Jose Marti's birth, Fidel Castro insisted that the great battle for a dignified future for humanity, "will be won in the battlefield of ideas"; it is precisely here that the need "to plant ideas to plant consciousness". See his discourse in *Granma*, January 30, 2003, pp. 4—5.

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## **ТРАДИЦИЯ АКАДЕМИЧЕСКОГО ПРЕПОДАВАНИЯ ФИЛОСОФИИ И ГЛОБАЛИЗАЦИЯ: ВВЕДЕНИЕ**

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В статье автор размышляет о будущем академического преподавания философии в современном мире глобализации. Эта тема является гораздо более сложной, чем может показаться на первый взгляд, и может быть рассмотрена с разных сторон, например, мы можем попытаться критически осмыслить культурный контекст имеющейся традиции академического преподавания философии (в таком случае наш анализ неизбежно окажется частью более общего рассмотрения европейской традиции университетского образования), а можем предложить альтернативные пути сложившейся традиции академического преподавания философии. В любом случае мы будем вынуждены отдать наши традиции на суд нашей современной жизни, дабы быть в состоянии ответить на вопрос, являются ли они до сих пор состоятельными и можем ли мы руководствоваться ими в нашей современной жизни. Но полезно проделать и другую операцию, а именно посмотреть на нас сегодняшних и на нашу современную жизнь с позиции наших традиций и позволить им быть тем судом, который решит вопрос о том, кем мы сейчас являемся.

**Ключевые слова:** философия, университет, академическое преподавание, глобализация, межкультурный контекст, традиции