
The Promise and Problems of Intercultural Philosophy

Murray Hofmeyr

Department of Philosophy, University of Venda

Abstract

In this paper I sketch the main elements of Heinz Kimmerle's conceptualisation of intercultural philosophy: a new concept of difference that makes possible a new take on "different and equal", which is the foundation for real dialogue. I interrogate the concept of culture in intercultural philosophy, and argue that for the South African context sufficient emphasis must be placed on power relations as they impact on cultures and the legacy of a history of cultural domination. I try to show that Kimmerle's notion of the equality of cultures implies that a particular context is taken seriously as a valid instance of the human condition, and in that sense it is of equal status with all other situations. All "localities" are linked in some way or another. It thus belongs to adequately conceptualising the thoughts and feelings of a specific locality that the need for dialogue should be reflected. A philosophy that negates these shifts would be disqualified as inadequate. The fact that it seeks dialogue is indicative of the experience of an aporia. It is lack, incompleteness, which is universal. I also tentatively propose "contextual philosophy" as a more appropriate name for intercultural philosophy in South Africa.

Introduction

The first part of this paper is a description of the main elements of intercultural philosophy as conceptualised by the German philosopher Heinz Kimmerle, who taught at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam since 1976, and since his retirement in 1995 heads the Foundation for Intercultural Philosophy and Art in Zoetermeer, The Netherlands. His interest in intercultural philosophy has developed as a result of a research project on what he prefers to call the philosophies of difference (generally referred to as postmodern philosophy). The theoretical and highly abstract phase of this project was followed by an inquiry into the consequences of the new concept of difference for cultural difference – as a kind of test case. The notion of cultural difference within the framework of the philosophy of identity

(Western philosophy from Plato to Hegel) has had a destructive legacy. The challenge was to show that the new concept of difference makes possible a conceptualisation of "different and equal" against the trend of the processes of globalisation to force everybody and everything into line. These efforts led to the formation of the Dutch-Flemish Society for Intercultural Philosophy, and the institution of a special chair at Erasmus University for Foundations of Intercultural Philosophy, with Heinz Kimmerle as its first occupant.

With nobody else in the Society interested in Africa (maybe symptomatic of the situation at the time in European academia outside the discipline of African Studies) Kimmerle devoted the last intensive period of his professional career to African philosophy, and the intercultural dialogue between Western and African philosophers. In 2003 Unisa awarded him with an honorary doctorate for his contribution in this regard. He has spent academic semesters at various African universities as a guest professor, including a stay of six months at the University of Venda in 1997. As has been his habit throughout his career (see, for instance, Kimmerle 1978), he motivated a group of scholars here to embark on a research project. The publication that resulted from this initiative, which under the leadership of Norman Duncan also became an exercise in academic authorship development, is titled *Discourses on Difference. Discourses on Oppression* (see Duncan 2002). The present paper is a kind of sequel to my contribution to this volume titled "Discourses on cultural difference and liberation?" (Hofmeyr 2002).

In the above-mentioned chapter I rely mostly on Derrida's concept of difference, and on Kimmerle's (2000b) book on philosophies of difference. In the mean time I have come into the possession of a little-known book by Kimmerle (1985) in which he has published a series of aphorisms penned in 1980 on Nihilism and the thinking of difference. Here we have in a nutshell the new concept of difference, with which I start my exploration of intercultural philosophy as conceived by Heinz Kimmerle. It is followed by a discussion of the equality of cultures, and of his alternative to a linear progress view of cultural history. I also address his alternative to the binary opposition of cultural relativism and universalism. The first part of the paper culminates in a description of Kimmerle's most recent thinking on intercultural philosophical dialogues, in which his interpretation of the dialogues of Socrates as described by Plato plays an important role.

The second part of the paper addresses certain issues raised by intercultural philosophy from a South African perspective. In order to emphasise the historical context of our discourse on culture I explore Bulhan's concept of cultural in-betweenity as derived from Frantz Fanon. The appropriate definition of culture against this background is then addressed, and subsequently the tricky issue of the equality of cultures. Here I use Charles Taylor's analysis and the distinction he makes between a politics of

dignity and a politics of respect to situate Kimmerle's concept of "different and equal". In the last section I compare intercultural philosophy with what is known in South Africa as contextual theology and ask whether the term "contextual philosophy" would not be more appropriate to describe the agenda of intercultural philosophy for a "multi-cultural" situation like ours.

Intercultural Philosophy as conceived by Heinz Kimmerle

A new concept of difference

Kimmerle (1985:71) situates the new concept of difference within the discourse of Nihilism. Nothingness is the result of negation. In the history of western metaphysics it is the not of the one, which it can be in two ways: as the annihilation of the one, and as its transformation into other things. To think difference involves being other without being antagonistic. Antagonisms where they exist should not be hushed up. At the same time mere otherness should not artificially be declared antagonistic. Antagonisms exist within a unity. Being other is a opening up to multiplicity.

The expression "the abyss of nothingness" means that nothingness is an abyss for a kind of thinking that wants to bring everything into a system. That which does not fit into the system falls into nothingness. For the thinking of difference nothingness loses its terror, as the presupposition that everything must fit the system is given up. The one meaning is superseded. This implies superseding the Western-European tradition of philosophy in which even two were always one too many. One alone, or the one and only could give tranquility and security – nothing remains outside, nothing falls into nothingness. But this was extremely difficult and tiring, as the unity was a unity of opposites, the unity of the one and the many, with many remaining outside the one.

To think difference anew means thinking the difference of the different and not as difference within the unity. And difference does allow unities, while remaining different. Being is the ongoing production of differences, without giving them meaning, and thus nothing. The way into nothingness, however, is now no longer falling into an abyss, but becomes the way into multiplicity without one highest unity. All meaning is preliminary meaning. We have taken leave of ultimate meaning. Preliminary meaning is enough for us. Yet, it remains difficult to be modest at this point.

Is this modesty, this not being demanding when meaning is concerned, finally a weakness of thinking? asks Kimmerle (1985:75). Difference is and remains. Unities become and disappear. Before the unities, between them, around them, after them (those who were) is difference. Difference is the many without unity. But the many are also one,

many times one. To be one, a unit, does thus not necessarily mean to be a unity. And: the units must be well organised in the sea of multiplicity. Multiplicity does not equal chaos. We cannot return to the fertile mythological chaos of the beginning. But the between us, between individuals and communities, can become the space for a fertile chaos. This is the in-between Kimmerle is looking for, that has become the *inter* of intercultural philosophy. It is the precondition for *real tolerance*. Within the framework of identity-thinking tolerance remains a lie and an instrument and a form of repression. Thinking difference is the condition for the possibility of true tolerance. This allows the other to be other without granting her the position of being other from a standpoint of the majority. Kimmerle eventually drops the term "true tolerance" in favour of the concept "respect", and it must be kept in mind that the English word "respect" is a translation of the German "Achtung", which has the weight of Kant's philosophy of freedom and human worth behind it.

Kimmerle (1985:76) refers to Lyotard's concept of the "patchwork of minorities". This image allows both – difference and oneness(es). A quilt displays a great variety of colours and patterns, but also contains systematic set pieces. Its design is not the product of arbitrariness, nor of the conscious mind, but of fantasy, aesthetic sensitivity and judgment. The multiplicity is the encompassing space and relativising in-between of meaningful unities, which must be preserved as best as possible.

Kimmerle's (1997, 2000b) special interest is to continue thinking difference in an effort to overcome the ethnocentricity of philosophy since the Enlightenment. Enlightenment philosophy sees world history as a unitary development that finds a climax in the European culture of the eighteenth century. This way of seeing characterises philosophy as identity-thinking. It results in the myriad arguments by thinkers like Kant and Hegel as to why non-European cultures have not produced history or philosophy. This identity-thinking, in which difference is always thought of in terms of the original identity, must be countered with a concept of difference where difference of cultures expresses a difference that is not reducible to unity.

The equality of cultures

On the basis of the new concept of difference Kimmerle emphatically presupposes the equality of cultures. He (1996:10) defines culture as the organisation of a human community that enables it to maintain and sustain itself in the midst of other cultures and of nature. The crux of his view of cultures is the equality of cultures. Kimmerle (1996:10) bases his conceptualisation of "different but equal" on the following statement: "all cultures that still exist today [are] equally old, while they have maintained

their existence... from the origins of humanity until today. That they are equally old then also means that they have each in its own way fulfilled the role or task of a culture and thus have equal rights.”¹

This means, as a formulation of adequate conditions for the transferability of Western concepts to non-Western regions: if the concept “multiverse of cultures” is taken seriously, one culture can take over something from another only if both agree to it on their own accord. “Equally old” implies equal validity and being of equal status.

The somewhat unusual grounding of equality in cultures being equally old might appear less unusual if one presupposes as background here Hegel’s philosophy of history. For Hegel the true was the viable, and that meant that each historical period had to formulate its own truth. But there is progress in history, and new periods with their viable truth represents higher levels of the coming to self-consciousness of the world spirit. Hegel’s own time he viewed as the culmination of this process of progressive self-consciousness, which the spirit finds in reflecting on the concrete expressions it generates in history. The fuller the coincidence of spirit and concrete expression (embodiment), the greater the self-consciousness, the recognition of the self in the other. The goal is the removal of otherness. The goal is identity. To say that all (surviving) cultures are equally old thus means that the idea of progress is dropped, while the idea of process is maintained. Applying this position in an intercultural philosophical context, Kimmerle (2000a:15) advocates “more emancipation which is not necessarily combined with modernization of the Western style.”

Shifts

What Kimmerle (1997:101) has in mind becomes clear in his preference for the concept “shifts” (“Verschiebungen”) over “progress” to denote changes that occur in the evaluation of other cultures on the part of Europeans. To evaluate an earlier culture from a later point of view constitutes “shifts, in which a greater adequacy is reached with regard to the evaluation of other cultures in terms of the total world situation”. Critique from an intercultural perspective of the most adequate of the previous positions also should not be seen as progress, but as a more adequate way of evaluating other cultures: “That means that an evaluation ‘from an intercultural perspective’ is seen as the most adequate with regard to the contemporary situation of the world.” It does not mean intercultural philosophy is uncritical. Being adequate with regard to a specific situation simultaneously implies a critical evaluation of it. Philosophy and art, “with regard to the crux of their expressions, know ... no progress, but mere shifts, a becoming other, that is conditioned by their relation to the general situation of the world.”

Kimmerle (1995:118) proposes an alternative to development thinking. To him Nietzsche's concept of the eternal return of the same is an attempt to think change without direction and without a goal. The concept of change is the more general concept underlying the concept of development. Change does not have to imply development. Nietzsche's concept, however, presupposes a self-affirmation of life that has left the question about meaning far behind. It might still be too difficult for us. It may be easier and currently more acceptable to conceptualise change without direction according to the model of a dynamic equilibrium. This model imposes an alternative view of nature, one that is directed towards sustainability. Dynamic equilibrium is the opposite of the development model of thinking. It is dynamic in that it adjusts itself continuously. Development goes hand in hand with forward planning and future possibilities of action. Dynamic equilibrium is an attitude that reckons with and reacts to nature and the laws of social processes.

Globalisation and regionalisation; universalism and relativism

Kimmerle (2002a:19) finds it strange that the phenomenon of the double movement of globalisation and regionalisation is almost completely absent from the ongoing work of official western university philosophy. The tendency to limit "real" philosophy to Europe has been interrupted here and there, but by no means overcome. Even in the UNESCO-initiated *Encyclopédie Philosophique Universelle* the title "philosophy" (singular) is reserved for the Western world ("Philosophie Occidentale"). Eastern "philosophies" (plural) are characterised as "Pensées Asiatiques". The third category ("Conceptualisation des Sociétés Traditionnelles") is even further away from philosophy proper. This "conceptualisation" looks back, and would seem to be done with the help of Western scholars (see Kimmerle 2002c:1-2). A reason for this state of affairs might be the realisation that serious attention to the thinking done in other cultures would entail a revision of the very concept of philosophy and its history.

The debate in cultural anthropology and ethnology about universalism or relativism might be seen as a way in which the issue of globalisation and regionalisation is being addressed in western academic discourse. Cultural relativism as conceived by Franz Boas wants each culture to be understood in terms of its own standards. This notion is opposed by those who insist that mutual understanding and comparison between different cultures presuppose cultural universals. Kimmerle (2002a:20) warns that the way universals are formulated often reveals their being determined by Western culture. His proposed solution to the dilemma of universalism versus relativism is to presuppose cultural universals and to anticipate them, while

acknowledging that they are not concretely formulated and thus not nameable (or specifiable).

The universally valid determinations *are not concretely at hand*. This is Kimmerle's point, based on a new concept of difference. That is why intercultural philosophical dialogues are his preferred medium for articulating the commonalities and differences of the philosophies of various cultures; and hence the importance of clarifying the conditions of intercultural philosophical dialogues.

Kimmerle's alternative to the cultural relativism/universalism debate first deserves further clarification. He argues that in order to grasp the equal status and enduring difference of cultures in clear concepts, the particular and universal determinations of being human must be contrasted with each other. He (2000b:203; 2002a:20) refers to the Ghanaian philosopher K. Wiredu who identifies three "supreme laws of thought and conduct" that are universal: The law of the excluded third; the principle of induction; and in ethics the categorical imperative ("Act in conformity with that maxim, and that maxim only, which you can at the same time will to be a universal law"). These universals are contrasted with the particulars of his specific culture (the Akan) in the areas of religion and morals, conceptual issues, and the interpretation of democracy and human rights. Such investigation often leads to the discovery that presumed universals were actually cultural specifics, especially with regard to European concepts of values that through colonialism have been accepted by Africans as universals. It is thus important to formulate the universal determinations adequately, as well as the mixture of both universals and particulars which makes intercultural philosophy possible.

Kimmerle (2000b) proceeds from the assumption that each formulation of universal determinations is done in a specific language, and is thus presented in a particular cultural colouring. For example, Wiredu's third "supreme law" is formulated in the language of Kant ("categorical imperative"). Kant bases this claim to universal validation on the assumption that the categorical imperative is a law of pure reason. As such, like the categories of time and space, it is a so-called transcendental. Transcendentals are general and necessary laws of reason *per se* that are not affected by linguistic and cultural particularities. They are thus the conditions for the possibilities of objective, scientific, valid knowledge. Kimmerle argues that this claim has become indefensible in this form, as a result of the conditions of contemporary thinking. Thinking has become conscious of its determination by language.

This insight gives Kimmerle (2002c) occasion to distance his concept of intercultural philosophical dialogues from Habermas and Apel's notion of communicative rationality. He argues that they still accept the presuppositions of transcendental philosophy. They agree that reason can

no longer claim general validity with regard to the substance or content of thought and conduct. Yet they insist on the necessary and general *procedural* validity of rationality. In communicative rationality rational argumentation/discourse remains the final validation for each and every truth claim. If someone begs to differ, s/he will just have to formulate his or her point as a rational argument, according to the Aristotelean dictum of the force of the better argument. According to Habermas' basic concepts the "equal respect for *everybody* ... covers not only people of the same kind, but also the person of the other as other" (quoted in Kimmerle 2002c:11-12). Kimmerle (2002c:12) says this approach does not do justice to the structural or radical strangeness of the other: "It amounts to the fact that I prescribe [to] the other that he or she has to share with me my way of reasonable argumentation. This means obviously that the other cannot tell me anything, which I as a person of reasonable arguments could not have told me myself." Intercultural philosophy as conceived by Kimmerle insists on the radical or at least structural strangeness of the other. From a western point of view the most radical others are members of cultures without written forms of communication and tradition.

Kimmerle proposes an alternative to Habermas' approach, on the basis of the insight into the close link between thinking and the language in which it occurs. *This implies that universals or transcendentals cannot be formulated, nor articulated, discursively.* If procedural rationality no longer qualifies as a universal, says Kimmerle (2000b:207), only one option remains: "to presuppose universal determinations of being human that cannot be formulated nor in any other way articulated discursively." The question then arises: how does one think something that cannot be formulated? Kimmerle suggests one possible answer to this question by making use of Derrida's notion of the future. Justice, democracy, friendship, and genuine philosophy are not given anywhere and can thus not be described as phenomena. Yet, they are coming. Kimmerle insists: this quasi-messianic expectation of these universals is one possible way of dealing with them in thought, without articulating them.

He also refers to Jan Hoogland's concept of an "enigmatic" universalism (Kimmerle 2002a:20). Enigmatic universalism proceeds from universals that remain unknown and unnameable (the true, the good, the just) although they are contained in existing forms, and can be unlocked to a certain extent through a comparative approach. Kimmerle explains what this means by referring to the model of language. All human beings have language, but the languages of the various peoples are different. There is no universal language to which all languages can be related. It is nevertheless possible to learn other languages and to translate from one language into another, to enable the mutual understanding of all people.

The emphasis is then on the concretely different in which the formally general is to be expressed. The latter can and must be sought in the midst of the particular and different.

Another word for universal in German is "durchgängig". The universals would then be the result of continuous passages through ("Durchgänge"), continuously traversing the different and particular. These "going throughs" (crossings, negotiations, navigations, going overs) can happen as intercultural philosophical dialogues.

Intercultural philosophical dialogues

Kimmerle (2000b:207) explicates the nature of dialogues as conceived from the point of view of intercultural philosophy. Intercultural philosophy is dialogical philosophy, or dialogue-philosophy. And it aims at the practice of dialogues between all cultures. This includes the conviction that all cultures have their specific type or style of philosophy - also those that have primarily oral forms of communication and tradition. (Kimmerle 2002b). Therefore, the criterion for whether a culture has a philosophy that deserves to be treated equally to the philosophy of other cultures is no longer the possession of a written history, as in the comparative philosophy of Ulrich Libbrecht (1995; 1999). In every culture will occur situations of an impasse, in which its members have to ponder the reasons for its existence and thus become self-reflexive.

In the Western philosophical tradition it was Socrates who introduced the dialogical way of doing philosophy. He is a philosopher who did not write. Dialogue-philosophy and oral communication seem to belong together. An analysis of Socratic conversations as described by Plato should reveal the characteristic aspects and constitutive elements of dialogues. For this Kimmerle relies heavily on the work of Gernot Böhme (1988).

1. In dialogue-philosophy truth has the character of an event, which occurs during the exchange of different thoughts. Written philosophy must remain committed to the event character of philosophical truth.
2. Philosophical knowledge is not the property of any one person. The competence of the leader of the dialogue lies in the ability to ask the appropriate questions. Kimmerle (2002c) differs from Böhme's interpretation according to which Socrates, on the basis of his superior philosophical experience, dominates the dialogues. The "Socratic inverse" rather means that Socrates, by assuming the position of not knowing, tries to create the maximum possible equality between him and his partners in dialogue.
3. The partners in dialogue create knowledge in an intersubjective encounter. Knowledge has a meaning that transcends the individual. It appears in dialogical conversation. Again Kimmerle deviates from the interpretation of Socrates as the pedagogue (see Jaspers 1960:17; Fortunoff 1998). The way he leads the conversation has more to do with a method of cooperation in finding answers to philosophical questions.

4. The aporia, and resultant embarrassment and confusion, is the decisive factor in the dialogue. It is caused by the rejection of presumed knowledge. It is not about giving fixed answers, but about exposing yourself to questioning. The kind of knowledge that matters is not knowledge of something, but a form of consciousness, a becoming conscious of oneself.
5. Dialogue as a way to knowledge has two elements, giving reasons and accepting reasons. The latter appears to be passive, but is actually the active element in that it constitutes a possible consensus through approval or agreement.
6. Dialogue is a kind of interaction that minimises existing unequal relations of power. Socrates, by virtue of having thought through the issues comprehensively, is more competent than his partners in dialogue. But he assumes the equal status of his partners. The equality exists in spite of the difference in level of competence. The equality is created through a radical reversion in the conversation that serves the common goal, the search for knowledge. Socrates does not merely tolerate his partners in dialogue. He respects them. Without their contribution and the role they play in the dialogue the common goal would not have been reached. The mixing of the equal status and the different roles (giving and accepting reasons) creates the characteristic tension of these dialogues.
7. A transformation occurs in these dialogues of a love relationship between Socrates and his young companions to love for truth and a common search for it. Respect implies a cool distance between those with equal status but different roles. The relation between the partners in dialogue is according to Kimmerle (2002b; 2002c) better expressed in the Kantian notion of "Achtung" than in respect. Acknowledging the dignity of the other expresses the feeling of this relationship better. The feeling in "Achtung" is in Kant the feeling that accompanies an attitude of reason. In Kant this feeling is directed exclusively to the moral law. As a rational emotion, "Achtung" is the only emotion or feeling that can and may motivate morally good actions. Kimmerle (2002b; 2002c) has the impression that in the course of a dialogue the relationship of love between Socrates and his partners is transformed into this kind of rational feeling towards each other.

On the basis of what is said about the theory and practice of intercultural philosophy as dialogue-philosophy and of these elements of the Socratic dialogues, Kimmerle identifies the following aspects of dialogue-philosophy:

1. Intercultural dialogues are guided by a methodology of listening. As method this implies more than just courtesy and respect. It means to understand provisionally, tentatively. It means not immediately to give what is heard a definite place within one's own horizon of understanding, and the preparedness to revise what one thought one understood.
2. The main aspect is the simultaneousness of equality and difference, without which dialogues would not be possible. Tolerance is not an adequate concept to work with here. Tolerance means that one decides not to make use of your higher position, to treat an inferior as an equal, although she is not. The partners in dialogue deal with each other on the basis of complete equality, informed by the equal status and value of all philosophies.
3. Openness with regard to the expected results of the dialogue is linked to a preliminary interest in the topic on the part of the participants. The topic is in-between the participants in the dialogue. Around it power relations come into play, which are

to be minimised. The result of the dialogue is not determined by the superior position of a particular participant. The result appears in and through the contributions of all partners in the dialogue. Furthermore, dialogues, as fundamentally open, can also fail. Even if a participant fails to understand the position of another, respect remains on the basis of trust. "Achtung" is limited only by the principle of "Achtung" itself. Only those deserve "Achtung" who show it to others. The partners in dialogue are open towards the possibility that their own position would be shown to be false or in need of modification. This openness is informed by the insight that no philosophy is absolutely true, and that all philosophies are subject to improvement or modification.

4. The partners in dialogue proceed from the assumption that the other(s) has/ve something to say to them that they would in no way have been able to say of their own accord. This assumption goes hand in hand with the refusal to acknowledge any authority external to the dialogue (e. g. procedural rationality) as a contributor to the result of the dialogue. The goal of intercultural philosophical dialogues is not to reach agreement in everything, but in each case to formulate the agreements and disagreements.

Questions From a South African Perspective

One of the legacies of "separate development" is that cultural difference is a contested topos in the Southern African discourse. Many colleagues I have talked to find it incomprehensible that anybody would seriously use the words "cultural difference" and "equality", as in "different, but equal" in one breath. Of course I then try to explain that a new, liberating concept of difference is involved, only to be reminded of how new attempts at securing Afrikaner exclusivity also refer to just such a new concept of difference. At the same time cultural sameness is also suspect, because it is mostly imposed, and its propagators often do not critically reflect on the ethnocentricity of presumed universals, that white is actually also a colour and English a language.

Intercultural philosophy is a philosophy of the in-between, also in this case. It does not want to uncritically appropriate European definitions, and simultaneously does not want to shun the questions posed by the historicity of the African situation (see Higgs & Smith 2002:106-108). In the search for an appropriate description of the nature of the in-between where intercultural philosophy is situated, I rely on Bulhan (1985), who has described the psychology of oppression, with reference to the work of Franz Fanon.

Cultural In-Betweenity

Bulhan (1985:9) addresses the problem of the "content of the assumed universals in human psychology, given a multiplicity of cultures and diversities of experiences." He says every person is in certain respects like all other persons, like some persons, and like no other person. It is just not clear "exactly what each of us shares in common with *everyone*, with *some*

people, and with *no one*". Even more serious from his perspective is the historic imposition of Eurocentric "reality" upon those whom Europeans and their descendants dominate, giving rise to what he calls "a scandal of global dimensions in which ... the discipline of psychology remains enmeshed". Everyone familiar with discourses in the African context can attest to the experience that "[d]reams of equality and dignity have not come true and old wounds continue to fester". Bulhan (1985:211) refers to Fanon's early article "The North African syndrome" in which it is revealed how the medical profession misdiagnoses "the profound and elusive afflictions of the oppressed". The vague and confusing ailments of North Africa are neither imaginary nor insoluble. They are the afflictions of tormented, persecuted, and oppressed persons. The psycho-existential crises are a result of cultural dislocation, economic exploitation, and a web of dehumanising stereotypes.

Bulhan (1985:193) presents a theory of identity development that he claims is derived from Fanon. He calls it "cultural In-Betweenity". This theory must answer the twin questions:

- How does a Black person defend herself against assaults on her identity experienced from Whites?
- By what means are the "pieces" pulled together, or "another self" forged?

Bulhan makes use of a paper Fanon delivered in 1956 on the topic "Racism and Culture". Fanon ([1956]:1) sketched the "fragmented and bloody history" of the coloniser's shift from the denial of culture on the part of the colonised, to the recognition of a native culture in a hierarchy of cultures, and finally to the concept of cultural relativity.

The culture eventually recognised is "mummified": "we witness the setting up of archaic, inert institutions, functioning under the oppressor's supervision and patterned like a caricature of formerly fertile institutions" ([1956]:3). The result is the absence of cultural confrontation. Eventually, in accordance with changed needs of the system of production, the techniques of exploitation are refined and camouflaged. Cultural relativity, says Fanon, continues racism in the form of the verbal mystification of the culture of the other.

The leading idea here is that racism is a cultural element, part of the "behaviour patterns arising from the encounter of man with nature and with his fellow-man" (Fanon [1956]:2). Racism is thus part of a greater whole, "the systematized oppression of a people."

How do the members of the oppressed group respond to this process? Fanon distinguishes three stages that Bulhan (1985:193) has applied in his theory of identity formation:

Assimilation / Capitulation: The "inferior" race imitate the oppressor in an attempt at deracialisation, and thus at gaining the status of being regarded as fully human. Imitation means internalisation of the attitudes

and convictions of the "superior" group vis-à-vis the "inferior" group, and thus implies self-hate and self-denial. This is a desperate affair: "Having judged, condemned, abandoned his cultural forms, his language, his food habits, his sexual behaviour, his way of sitting down, of resting, of laughing, of enjoying himself, the oppressed flings himself upon the imposed culture with the desperation of a drowning man" (Fanon [1956]:6). But she soon discovers that she will never shape up, that racism will remain as long as there is exploitation. The alienation proves to have been futile.

Revitalisation: The second stage is the return to original positions, called "revitalisation" by Bulhan (1985:193). It implies a reactive repudiation of the dominant culture and an equally defensive romanticism of the indigenous culture. But the culture returned to, must be cultivated - it is dying. The remaining embers are kept alive by anonymous traditionalists. "To the anonymity of the traditionalist [the former émigré] opposes a vehement and aggressive exhibitionism" (Fanon [1956]:7). Her passion is informed by the craving for forgiveness. She experiences a state of grace. Her aggressiveness is the mechanism that must ward off the paradox between "intellectual development, technical appropriation, highly differentiated modes of thinking and of logic, on the one hand, and a 'simple pure' emotional basis on the other" ... "This falling back on archaic positions having no relation to technical development is paradoxical. The institutions thus valorized no longer correspond to the elaborate methods of action already mastered". Revalorisation does not mean re-conception, being "grasped anew, dynamized from within. It is shouted". But even though paradoxical, the stage of revitalisation represents an intense struggle with the culture: "The logical end of this will to struggle is the total liberation of the national territory. In order to achieve this liberation, the inferiorized man brings all his resources into play, all his acquisitions, the old and the new, his own and those of the occupant" (Fanon [1956]:8). And the struggle for liberation differs from the struggle of conquest in being devoid of racism.

Radicalisation: Bulhan (1985:193) describes the third stage as a synthesis reached between the dominated and the dominant cultures and an unambiguous commitment toward radical change. Both dominated and dominant cultures are transformed as a new culture emerges, with unique aspects not found in either of the two other cultures. Fanon stresses the opening up of the previously rigid culture of the dominant group to the culture of people "who have really become brothers. The two cultures can affront each other, enrich each other." He concludes: "universality resides in this decision to recognise and accept the reciprocal relativism of different cultures, once the colonial status is irreversibly excluded" (Fanon [1956]:9).

The "cultural In-Between", says Bulhan, is the region of cultural contact, confrontation and mutual influence. The dominated and dominant

cultures coalesce with considerable regularity and intensity. In the process the one modifies the other and each in consequence loses its original character. The inhabitants of the zone of cultural In-Betweenity can at any time go in any of the three original directions, with one or another being dominant at any given time.

I have brought Fanon and Bulhan into the picture on account of their use of the concept culture in connection with the historical, socio-economic and political reality of domination and with the experience of being dominated. As I have shown above, Kimmerle knows that intercultural philosophy must always take this into account. When he speaks of the equal status of all cultures and thus of their philosophies it implies a protest and a counter to this "scandal". And yet, the problem of domination and unequal economic and social conditions remains. It affects the culture of the dominated, so that one cannot really speak of "African culture" without keeping in mind that this is a culture of the dominated. I refer to Fanon's emphasis on transformation in the zone of cultural In-Betweenity in order to explicate Kimmerle's insistence that intercultural dialogues are not about making the differences disappear, but about creating a new, third position that is different from both starting positions. There is nothing neutral about the culture of the oppressed, nor about the culture of the oppressor. Both must be changed into something new.

The definition of culture

On the European philosophical scene, at least the small corner of it known to me, Heinz Kimmerle represents a fresh breeze on account of his acceptance of the lack of validity of the old universals. But I want to add: the ongoing reference to universals, which we expect from the future will not entail false universality. It is practised as concrete "Durchgänge" or crossings, and must listen especially to those who have been silenced even within their own "cultures" (see Hofmeyr 1996). Kimmerle conceives intercultural philosophy as critical theory. Dialogues are aimed at mutual understanding and learning from each other, but also, and through the former, at transformation. As Deleuze and Guattari (1994:108) formulate: "We do not lack communication. On the contrary, we have too much of it. We lack creation. *We lack resistance to the present.*" The "counter-cultural" dimension of the intercultural must be emphasised. The reserves for resistance within a culture, or within sub-cultures of a culture, must be sought and strengthened.

I agree with Fernet-Betancourt (2000:13) that cultures are not ends in themselves. They are "reserves of humanity" and as such merit respect and recognition unconditionally. This is an ethical imperative. They only have value in so far as they allow the subjects to be subjects, or, in Kimmerle's

terminology, to survive, and I am sure he does not mean mere, crude survival. Fernet-Betancourt (2000:13) says: "the ultimate meaning of this ethical requirement is not rooted in assuring the preservation or conservation of cultures as static entities transmitting absolute ontological values; rather, it is the guarantee of the personal, free realisation of those subjects acting in them."

Culture is thus the reserves of a tradition of origin that can be appropriated as a point of support for identity-formation. Identity is "understood as a permanent process of liberation that requires a task of constant discernment in the interior of the cultural universe with which each person identifies" (Fernet-Betancourt 2000:14; see also Fernet-Betancourt 2002). Cultures are not already in themselves the solution to the problem of an alternative to neo-liberal globalisation (= homogenisation). Yet, without taking cultures seriously in their respective visions of the world, an effective alternative will evade us. Cultures are not the solution, but the path to a solution, by presenting various perspectives of the world that concern everyone. To this I want to add that the only concern is not enrichment. Equally valid is allowing people a sense of belonging.

Is there thus such a "thing" as (a) culture? Please note that I am not asking: do cultures exist? (see Van Binsbergen 1999). I agree with Shepperson and Tomaselli (2001:45) that there rather is "a set of related forms of behaviour, conduct and action which constitute the *project of culture*." They follow Peirce's speech act theory in looking for the verb in the noun culture. They also make another valid and related point: the concept of culture originated in the environment of specifically European problems that were the result of the emergence of modernity. It has been exported, as has been the concepts democracy and imperialism, among others – a mixed bag. Thus, "every claim to cultural independence, the democratisation of culture and similar issues, is derived from the export of a very specifically modern context of meaning."

Heinz Kimmerle addresses the manner of this export. Its histories were often violent and destructive. Intercultural philosophy is aimed at curtailing the suffering. Please note: it is the spread of modernity that makes possible the dialogue in the first place. But that does not necessarily imply that the dialogue is taking place. With regard to African participants, the view is still strong that they are now where Europeans were long ago, that they are looked at as others who are behind in time, belonging to "developing" nations, still to reach fully "developed" status. Therefore Kimmerle's insistence on the equality of cultures.

The equality of cultures

Charles Taylor (1994) has illuminated the tricky issue of the equality of

cultures. He traces the origin of the ideal of being true to myself, of authenticity, back to Rousseau and Herder. According to the latter each of us has an original way of being human, each person has her own "measure". This view eventually shifted into a moral position – in order to be truly human, I have to do it my way. Herder also applied this notion to the culture-bearing entity of a "volk", or a people. Taylor (1994:79) sees this as an offshoot of the decline of hierarchical society, in which we receive our identities from our social positions. The ideal of authenticity undermines socially derived identification.

Taylor argues that this ideal of generating one's original way of being from within is a misconception generated by the monological tendency of mainstream modern philosophy. The dialogical character of human life, discernible in the fact that language acquisition goes hand in hand with identity formation, has become invisible in the process. This process of identity formation is closely linked to the recognition given or withheld by others. On a social plane withholding recognition is widely seen as a form of oppression: "The projection of an inferior or demeaning image on another can actually distort and oppress, to the extent that the image is internalized" (Taylor 1994:81).

Against this background Taylor distinguishes between two types of politics: a politics of dignity and a politics of difference. Both are politics of recognition. The politics of dignity, replacing the politics of honour of the pre-modern era, is a politics of universalism, emphasising the equal dignity of all citizens, and thus their equal rights. The politics of difference recognises everyone for her unique identity. But recognition does not mean the same in each case:

With the politics of equal dignity, what is established is meant to be universally the same, an identical basket of rights and immunities; with the politics of difference, what we are asked to recognize is the unique identity of this individual or group, their distinctness from everyone else. The idea is that it is precisely this distinctness that has been ignored, glossed over, assimilated to a dominant or majority identity. And this assimilation is the cardinal sin against the ideal of authenticity.

(Taylor 1994:82)

The politics of difference, as one variation of the politics of recognition, in conflict with the other, the politics of dignity, operates on the basis of the premise that all cultures deserve equal respect. Taylor (1994:98), in a formulation that reminds of Kimmerle's argument for the equality of cultures (all existing cultures are equally old), finds something valid in the presumption of the equal worth of all cultures. The claim of the presumption is that all human cultures that have animated whole societies over some considerable stretch of time have something important to say to all human beings. But the

presumption is merely a starting position, a kind of hypothesis, which must now be verified through the study of all cultures. This study implies that the degree of difference must move away from being absolute, so that it enters my range of appreciation. Taylor uses Gadamer's term of the fusion of horizons to denote a process that allows for the development of new categories of comparison and for a transformed set of standards, enabling me to recognise worth where formerly I have seen none.

The demand for recognition of difference, however, is more radical than that, and this claim Taylor finds problematical. What is demanded is that cultures must be recognised as of equal worth in principle, before any investigation has been done. Taylor (1994:99) objects that if the judgement of value is to register something independent of our own wills and desires, it cannot be dictated by a principle of ethics. Taylor (1994:100) finds it patronising, and says other cultures want respect, not condescension: "A favorable judgment made prematurely would be not only condescending but ethnocentric. It would praise the other for being like us."

Is this critique applicable to Kimmerle's insistence on the equal status of cultures and their philosophies? The first issue to settle is whether Kimmerle in fact does make the further, more radical claim, if we grant that the first claim, or presumption, has merit. Does Kimmerle claim the equal status of all cultures as a matter of principle, as a statement that does not have the status of a hypothesis and thus is not in need of verification or falsification? I propose that there is something more radical in Kimmerle's position than a mere "presumption" of equality, as a point of departure for an investigation. The "Achtung" in intercultural philosophical dialogues has to be practised with regard to every partner with the only, but strict exception that this partner has himself "Achtung" for others.

Kimmerle's conceptualisation of the equality or equal status of cultures is based in his definition of difference. This, he claims, allows him to move beyond the binary oppositions of universalism versus particularism. Universal determinations cannot be articulated discursively. This means that the continuous passages through the different and particular must first take place before determinations adequate for the contemporary world context can be formulated. Kimmerle's proposal for the method of these passages is intercultural philosophical dialogues. The participants in these dialogues are recognised as representing cultures that are of equal status. This does not mean that African culture(s), for instance, is/are equal to Western-European culture(s) in all aspects (and vice versa). Kimmerle (2002a:22) does not rule out progress and highpoints of development. But these must be determined concretely in their particular areas, and with regard to both their positive and negative aspects. Scientific-technological progress does not of necessity imply progress or superiority in the area of the specifically human questions.

The equality hypothesis does say that a particular philosopher, if she is worthy of that name, offers an adequate appraisal of the thoughts and feelings of her time and place and proposes adequate alternatives. The place and time is not really compared to any other in terms of worth. Is it a better place and time, or worse than another? What indeed would be the criteria to decide that? The place and time is not judged, but taken seriously as a valid instance of the human condition, and in that sense it is of equal status with all other time-places all over the globe, and throughout history. And because all time-places are linked in some way or another, and progressively so as the result of the information technology revolution, it belongs to adequately conceptualising the thoughts and feelings of a specific time-place that the dimension of the inter, and the impossibility of articulating universals, and the need for dialogue, should be reflected. If a particular philosophy should negate these shifts in reality, it would be disqualified as inadequate. The fact that it seeks dialogue is indicative of the experience of an aporia. I would then suggest that the formulation "equal validity of cultures" could with good effect replace the contested equal status hypothesis.

Kimmerle (2002a:66) refers to Heidegger's realisation of the veiled nature of truth, and the resulting humility of his thinking, that is related to the self-limitation of intercultural philosophy: none of the philosophies, all determined by culture, has a monopoly on absolute truth. A new concept of philosophy would entail the view that philosophy stands in a fundamental relationship with being human and with human culture as such. The extension of European philosophy over all of humanity requires regionalisation as a counter movement to globalisation. Kimmerle (2002a:67) refers to Senghaas' observation that all cultures in the process develop internal conflicts which lead to self-reflexivity. Becoming self-reflexive in conflict and emergency situations of a culture is the birth hour of philosophy in the history of that culture. According to Hegel (quoted in Kimmerle 2002a:67) such crises are caused by contradictions between what members of a culture desire from life and what they are offered by the institutions and structures of their society. Such situations occur in the history of all communities. A cultural community that exists in conflict with itself has to think again about the foundations of its existence and future in the midst of other cultures and nature. Philosophy originates in such a culture when these questions are pondered with the tools of thinking. When this happens, this philosophy will be knowable for philosophers from other cultures. There are no differences of rank between philosophies of different cultures. The equality of philosophies is determined by the fact that a philosophy worthy of that name reflects the questionability of its situation and investigates solutions with the characteristic means of reason.

The knowability of philosophies from a culture to philosophers from other cultures must be considered along with Kimmerle's (1994:158) earlier statement that African Philosophy cannot yet be adequately grasped in its specificities – especially not by a non-African. Does this imply that Africans are in principle not knowable to Europeans and vice versa, and that my "position" is thus immune to critique by the "other"? It is important to consider the context of Kimmerle's remark. Posing the question what philosophy can contribute to the struggle against neo-Colonialism, Kimmerle (1994:156-157) draws attention to the fact that this field is controlled by politicians and businesspeople, and philosophy should not pretend to be better at politics and business than their practitioners (as neo-Marxist philosophers would have it). Philosophers should do their own thing, and that is to critically analyse the ways of thinking of their time, as presupposed also by politicians and businesspeople, and to suggest alternative ways of thinking. Kimmerle differs from Marx's view that philosophy is not politically effective on account of being part of the superstructure. He cites as an example of a possible influence of philosophy on politics, business, science and technology, with their focus on optimal development, the insight that philosophy knows no development. Neither does art. It is of the same value at any time. Philosophers from Africa and the Western world could therefore cooperate on the basis of complete equality. Kimmerle's (1994:158) own contribution to this cooperation is aimed at no more than freeing the way to and the perspective on African Philosophy for a Western-European audience.

Another example is given in the context of intercultural philosophical dialogues. They challenge politicians and businessmen to make their interaction with partners from other cultures more dialogical, however in the framework of existing differences of power. Against this historical background he insists that African Philosophy cannot yet be adequately grasped in its specificities, not by Africans, and especially not by non-Africans.

In order to stress the importance for intercultural philosophy of the effects of the history of colonialism and domination, I refer to Kimmerle's (1996:19) positive use of the work of FM Wimmer (1990) who wants to reflect on the forms of thinking of the Western-European tradition as they were developed *before* the colonial phase of their history, in order to reveal the deformation of the way of seeing that has contributed to the European superiority complex. Wimmer ascribes all differences between people living in different regions of the world to culture, and the fact that even philosophers have participated in looking for the cause of differences in race, leads to his insistence that the Eurocentric approach to philosophy be regarded within the context of racism. The assessment of the other as savage, exotic or heathen that characterises European-Western thinking

from the start until the nineteenth century, is devoid of the fundamental respect for the other that must be presupposed for intercultural philosophy. This has gone from bad to worse in the colonial period, before the process of the global convergence of cultures in the post-colonial period has placed the concept of an intercultural philosophy as something new on the agenda of philosophical discussion. Intercultural philosophy as conceptualised by Kimmerle, Wimmer and others thus addresses the problem of on the one hand a tradition of domination and oppression based in "othering" and exclusivist discourses on difference, and on the other hand the domination implied in a presumed sameness when the criteria of sameness are defined from the point of view of the powerful culture, the one that drives the processes of globalisation.

Kimmerle (2002a:68) applies the early Hegel's "historical view of philosophical systems" to the cultural differences between philosophies. He says the cultural differences do not concern the specifically philosophical. The specifically philosophical is the same in the most diverse cultural frameworks. That is why it is knowable by philosophers from other cultures. This argument, oriented to the aporia in each culture as the starting point of philosophy, reminds of a recent speech of the American sociologist Daniel Bell in which he says with regard to the great religions and their corresponding cultures:

The second [dimension of culture] is the set of meanings that arise when individuals face the existential dilemmas that ineluctably confront all human beings and groups; the fact of death, the responses of grief, the nature of tragedy, the definition of courage, the character of obligation. The answers vary, because that is the *history* of human cultures, those that arise from the different experiences that shape life – work on the soil or in the forests, in the mines or the seas, or with machines or the mind. The answers vary, but the foundational *questions* are invariably the same. And that is why human groups and cultures can talk to one another across space and time.

(Bell 2001/2:7-8)

The sought universal is thus the human, if we accept the existentialist interpretation that nothingness belongs essentially to being human. The universal is lack, and thus open. We must just always accompany all talk of the questionability of being with the warning as expressed by the French rock group "Troublemakers", in a song that goes more or less as follows: "Everybody says they do not know what is going on, because nobody wants to know what is going on. They all fear the revolution. As for us, we want the revolution." We must beware of the mystification of lack, especially when we undertake dialogues with and on a continent where lack is first and foremost lack of food, lack of security, lack of opportunities, not as something natural, but as historically produced.

Contextual philosophy?

I have above used the term time-place instead of culture. In the South African context still, and probably for the foreseeable future, the terminology of intercultural philosophy generates misunderstandings that are not to the point. Intercultural philosophy as conceived by Heinz Kimmerle is something different altogether from what people hear when the term is used. I therefore propose to continue with what Kimmerle calls intercultural philosophy, but under the name of contextual philosophy.

This term resonates with contextual theology. In the Final Declaration of the First Assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) that took place in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania in 1976, theologians from Asia, Africa and Latin America stated as follows:

The theologies from Europe and North America are dominant today in our churches and represent one form of cultural domination. They must be understood to have arisen out of situations related to those countries, and therefore must not be uncritically adopted without our raising the question of their relevance in the context of our countries. Indeed we must ... reflect on the realities of our own situations and interpret the Word of God in relation to those realities. We reject as irrelevant an academic type of theology that is divorced from action. We are prepared for a radical break in epistemology which makes commitment the first act of theology and engages in critical reflection on the praxis of the reality of the Third World...

Theology is not neutral. In a sense all theology is committed, conditioned notably by the socio-cultural context in which it is developed. The Christian theological task in our countries is to be self-critical of the theologians' conditioning by the value system of their environment.

(quoted in Witvliet 1984:27)

Witvliet (1984) interprets the reference and objection to an "academic type of theology" in terms of Western theology's rootedness in an idealistic and rationalistic scientific way of thinking which carries the pretension of universal validity. In reality this amounts to absolutising a particular context that goes hand in hand with marginalising and despising the experience of others. Contextual theology challenges this way of thinking, as well as the dualism of theory and practice in Western theology. "Contextuality is focussed on the whole: it is that form of theology which sees the otherness of the other (the Other), and in so doing at the same time recognizes its own social and cultural limitations. It represents a way of doing theology which is not afraid of the tension between particularity and universality, between history and eschatology" (Witvliet 1984:28).

Contextual philosophy also proceeds from the assumption that all philosophy is contextual. Western philosophy from Plato to Hegel has not

realised this. Hence its ethnocentrism. Secondly, contextual philosophy takes the whole of its context into account, including culture. Culture may be a more or less important factor in a particular context, compared to another. But socio-economic factors as they relate to culture, and vice versa, are also explicitly taken into account. Kimmerle's argument for dropping the word "progress" in favour of "shift" is exactly the argument contextual theologians have been making for some time now. Whether a particular philosophy is a "good" one, or a better one than another, is not decided in terms of where it finds itself on the scale of progress (the criteria of which are being dictated by Western science – by the powerful), but in terms of the adequacy and relevance of that philosophy with regard to its particular context - which always remains embedded in the general world situation.

Contextual philosophy has its roots squarely in critical theory. Kimmerle also conceives intercultural philosophy as critical theory, in that it wants to contribute to reducing suffering and terror. Contextual philosophy would see culture critically as sometimes (often) contributing to suffering and terror, especially in cases where a culture enforced by tradition and its agents is not adequate to the demands of a particular context. Contextual philosophy would strengthen the emergence of a new culture, not discarding the old, but treating it as a resource, transforming it in the process (see Fernet-Betancourt 2000).

Contextual theology sees the "epistemological break" with traditional Western theology in its being a theology "from below". Its interlocutors are the poor and the marginalised. By proposing the name contextual philosophy I want to explicate the dimension of an alternative way of knowing determined by context. I want to link on to what Kimmerle says about universals, that they are (yet) unnameable. In his critique of Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectics of Enlightenment* Habermas (1983:522) describes his predecessors' dilemma in terms of the inability of instrumental reason to formulate concepts that would express the perspective of the object of knowledge – manipulated, violated, deformed nature. He proposes substituting the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness with that of the philosophy of language that implies inter-subjective communication aimed at reaching consensus under the ideal circumstances for dialogue. This dilemma is one of epistemology. Contextual philosophical dialogues are not only important on account of a greater potential for solving the problems faced today on a planetary scale, but our very ability to know adequately is at stake. In a recent book the Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski (2001:321-323) says Africa has from the start been visited by the worst human types: robbers, fortune seekers, slave traders, mercenaries. Colonial control has merely given this situation a different face. One of the consequences is that European colonial languages have never developed an adequate language to describe Africa:

Naturally, respect for other cultures, the desire to learn about them, to find a common language, were the furthest things from the minds of such folk As a result ... the world's cultures – instead of becoming versed in one another's ways, drawing closer, permeating one another – became mutually hostile or, at best, indifferent.

...

The cultural monopoly of crude know-nothings had a further consequence: European languages did not develop vocabularies adequate to describe non-European worlds. Entire areas of African life remain unfathomed, untouched even, because of a certain European linguistic poverty. ... The richness of every European language is a richness in ability to describe its own culture, represent its own world. When it ventures to do the same for another culture, however, it betrays its limitations, underdevelopment, semantic weakness.

In the quoted passage finding a common language and the development of vocabularies adequate to describing the African experience are two sides of the same coin. In South Africa such vocabularies do exist – in the form of the other official languages. One of the major tasks of the philosophy of the *inter*, whether as intercultural or as contextual philosophy, is to promote article 6 of the South African constitution.

My proposal regarding the name of the kind of philosophy I have in mind is tentative. One objection might be that the dimension of the *inter*, of in-betweenity, and the emphasis on dialogue is lost in the name contextual philosophy. I want to remind of the original meaning of contextual. The dictionary meanings of *context* are:

- The part of a text or statement that surrounds a particular word or passage and determines its meaning.
- The circumstances in which an event occurs; a setting.
- The discourse that surrounds a language unit and helps to determine its interpretation.
- The set of facts or circumstances that surround a situation or event; as in "the historical context".
- That which surrounds, and gives meaning to, something else.

These meanings, all relevant for the meaning of "contextual philosophy", are derived from the Latin *contextus*, the past participle of *contexere*, which means to join together (com- + texere), or to weave (American Heritage Dictionary). "To weave" has convinced me that contextual philosophy is an appropriate term. It immediately reminds of Kimmerle's (1985:76) use of Lyotard's "patchwork of minorities". This image, he says, allows both – difference and oneness(es). The design of a quilt is not the product of arbitrariness, nor of the conscious mind, but of fantasy, aesthetic sensitivity and judgment. The multiplicity is the encompassing space and relativising in-between of meaningful unities, which must be preserved as best as possible.

Conclusion

In this paper I have sketched the main elements of Heinz Kimmerle's conceptualization of intercultural philosophy: a new concept of difference that makes possible a new take on "different and equal", which is the foundation for real dialogue. I have interrogated the concept of culture in intercultural philosophy, and have argued that for the South African context sufficient emphasis must be placed on power relations as they impact on cultures and the legacy of a history of cultural domination. I have tried to show that Kimmerle's notion of the equality of cultures implies in the first instance that a particular context is not judged in terms of criteria foreign to it, but taken seriously as a valid instance of the human condition, and in that sense it is of equal status with all other situations all over the globe, and throughout history. And because all "localities" are linked in some way or another, and progressively so as the result of the information technology revolution, it belongs to adequately conceptualising the thoughts and feelings of a specific locality that the dimension of the inter, and the impossibility of articulating universals, and the need for dialogue, should be reflected. If a particular philosophy should negate these shifts in reality, it would be disqualified as inadequate. The fact that it seeks dialogue is indicative of the experience of an aporia. It is lack, incompleteness, that is universal.

In conclusion I tentatively propose "contextual philosophy" as a more appropriate name for intercultural philosophy, in the light of the heavy baggage carried by the concept "culture" in South African. This term not only resonates with contextual theology in taking into account the socio-economic situatedness of all thinking (to which culture belongs), and shares the commitment to liberation, and the struggle against racism, but also carries with it the original meaning of context – to weave, or join together, from different and equal units, an in-betweenity, or inter.

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Endnotes

1. All translations are mine.