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Elise Coquereau

**The Emergence of Cultural Otherness in Philosophy and the
Problematics of Intercultural Hermeneutics**

Master's Thesis

Supervised by: Prof. Hans Rainer Sepp

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this Master's thesis is my own work and that the bibliography contains all the literature that I have used in writing the thesis. I declare herewith that I have only used this Master's thesis to gain a master's degree in the universities of the consortium as part of the Erasmus Master Mundus programme „German and French Philosophy in the European Context“ (EuroPhilosophy). I also give my consent that this Master's thesis can be accessed by public for the purpose of study in a relevant library of Charles University in Prague and via the electronic database of academic degree theses of Charles University in accordance with the copyright law.

In Prague on

Name and Surname

“We later civilizations... we too know that we are mortal.

We had long heard tell of whole worlds that had vanished, of empires sunk without a trace, gone down with all their men and all their machines into the unexplorable depths of the centuries, with their gods and their laws, their academies and their sciences pure and applied, their grammars and their dictionaries, their Classics, their Romantics, and their Symbolists, their critics and the critics of their critics... We were aware that the visible earth is made of ashes, and that ashes signify something. Through the obscure depths of history we could make out the phantoms of great ships laden with riches and intellect; we could not count them. But the disasters that had sent them down were, after all, none of our affair.

Elam, Ninevah, Babylon were but beautiful vague names, and the total ruin of those worlds had as little significance for us as their very existence. But France, England, Russia... these too would be beautiful names. Lusitania too, is a beautiful name. And we see now that the abyss of history is deep enough to hold us all. We are aware that a civilization has the same fragility as a life. The circumstances that could send the works of Keats and Baudelaire to join the works of Menander are no longer inconceivable; they are in the newspapers.” (Valéry, 1919a)

Paul Valéry

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Abstract

This work questions the concept of method in the field of Intercultural Philosophy. It analyzes the problems of the different paradigms of thought of various philosophical traditions in adapting themselves to the contemporary concerns of understanding cultural otherness. Engaging intercultural hermeneutics to literature, through phenomenological approaches, Indian philosophies and hermetics, it aims at presenting a critical analysis of existing intercultural theories, in order to establish, from their criticisms and their combinations, a possible path (as *praxis*) towards the cultural other, constituted by dynamic relations and mutual recognition.

Key words: Intercultural philosophy, cultural otherness, Indian/Western philosophies, (cultural) hermeneutics, hermetics, literature, methods, traditions, understanding/experiencing.

Zusammenfassung

Diese Arbeit fragt nach der Methodik im Bereich der interkulturellen Philosophie. Sie analysiert die Probleme der verschiedenen Denkmodelle unterschiedlicher philosophischer Traditionen, damit diese Modelle, als Paradigmen verstanden, den heutigen Bedenken zum Thema Fremdheit angepasst werden können. Von interkultureller Hermeneutik über Literatur und phänomenologische Ansätze bis hin zu indischer Philosophie und philosophischer Hermetik beabsichtigt sie die Darstellung einer kritischen Untersuchung bestehender interkultureller Theorien, um von der Kritik und der Kombination derselben einen möglichen Weg (als *praxis*) zum Fremden zu ermöglichen, ein Weg, der auf eine dynamische Beziehung zu eben diesem Fremden und eine beiderseitige Anerkennung abzielt.

Schlüsselwörter: Interkulturelle Philosophie, Fremdheit, Indische/Westliche Philosophien, (Kultur)Hermeneutik, Hermetik, Literatur, Methode, Tradition, Verstehen/Erfahrung.

Contents

Declaration	i
Acknowledgments	iii
Abstract	iv
Zusammenfassung	iv
1 Introduction: the problems of thinking an inter-cultural tradition and the emergence of cultural otherness	1
1.1 The complexity of the initial situation of Interculturality	1
1.1.1 The explosion of the concept of Interculturality	1
1.1.2 The problem of the intercultural tradition	2
1.1.2.1 The use of philosopher with problematic eurocentric assertions	2
1.1.2.2 Which tradition can be possible for the thought of an “inter”-history?	6
1.2 Indian and European xenologies	9
1.2.1 The relative other	11
1.2.2 The dominated other	14
1.2.3 The polycultural Other, or the cultural otherness	17
1.3 What is intercultural philosophy?	20
1.3.1 Attitude and praxis	20
1.3.2 To “interculturalize” philosophy	23
1.4 One way to intercultural philosophy	26
2 Interculturality as interpreted by hermeneutics	30
2.1 The concept of “analogous hermeneutics” as an intercultural method; analogy as a connective figure of difference	30
2.1.1 Ram Adhar Mall’s structure of overlap	30
2.1.1.1 <i>Between</i> “total identity” and “radical difference”	30
2.1.1.2 The overlap under the form of an analogy	35
2.1.2 Application: “Metonymic reflections on Shamkara’s concept of Brahman and Plato’s seventh epistle”	38
2.1.2.1 From the model of the “Identity-Overlap-Difference” to its application under the form “Positivity-Metonymy-Negativity”: Explanations	39
2.1.2.2 A metonymic comparison	40

2.2	“Cultural hermeneutics” (Kulturhermeneutik) as a criticism of intercultural hermeneutics	45
2.2.1	From the intercultural hermeneutics of R.A. Mall to the cultural hermeneutics	45
2.2.1.1	What is “Cultural Hermeneutics”?	45
2.2.1.2	The divergence of the concept of “understanding”	48
2.2.2	The bodily dimension of the understanding of cultural otherness	51
2.2.2.1	A bodily hermeneutics	52
2.2.2.2	The bodily phenomenon	57
3	Beyond hermeneutics: limits, combinations and external considerations. On the extension of the debate to a plurality of intercultural methods	61
3.1	The problem of the hermeneutic circle. Can hermeneutics go beyond its own limits?	61
3.1.1	Gadamer’s hermeneutic circle. How can we interpret the hermeneutic inheritance?	62
3.1.2	To recentre the circle through interculturality	65
3.1.2.1	<i>Samsara</i> and the figure of the circle	65
3.1.2.2	Centre as an alternative model	67
3.1.2.3	On the side of sciences	70
3.1.2.4	From the hermeneutic circle to the hermetic centre	72
3.2	On the needs and possible intercultural methods from Indian philosophy	74
3.2.1	Traditional structures of Indian philosophy and their modern/post-modern reinterpretations	75
3.2.1.1	Composition and tradition in classical Indian Philosophy	75
3.2.1.2	Re-appropriations, re-interpretations, or how to think Indian Philosophy today?	78
3.2.1.3	Remarks on the difference between “Indian Philosophy” and “Philosophy in India” today	80
3.2.2	Intercultural leads and models within Indian philosophy	80
3.2.2.1	Philosophy as <i>samvada</i>	80
3.2.2.2	The Jaina standpoints (<i>nayas</i>)	84
3.3	Towards Hermetics: H.Rombach	87
3.3.1	Plurality of Worlds	87
3.3.2	Seeing versus Understanding	92
3.3.3	Rightness Versus Improvement: Meliorisation	96
3.3.4	Forms of continuous movements	99
3.3.4.1	Idemität	99
3.3.4.2	Concreativity	102
4	Beyond philosophy? A glance at literature as a possible synthesis for a philosophical intercultural method	106
4.1	Literature as an answer to the dilemma between hermeneutics and hermetics	106
4.1.1	Does literature operates as a “text” (figure of meaning) or as a “picture”?	106

Contents

4.1.2	Hermetics and Hermeneutics	108
4.1.3	Metaphors and figures of speech in an intercultural perspective	111
4.2	Application: <i>A barbarian in Asia</i> from Henri Michaux: The encounter with India	113
4.2.1	The complex status of cultural otherness in H.Michaux' work	114
4.2.2	An ethnographic novel?	117
4.2.2.1	Anthropological dimension	118
4.2.2.2	To write cultural otherness: from anthropology to literature	119
4.2.3	The failure of Asia, the failure of Europe, or the failure of an "in-between" the journey?	125
4.2.3.1	The failure of Europe	126
4.2.3.2	The failure of civilizations: the figure of the Barbarian	128
5	Conclusion: On the need of Intercultural Philosophy	132
5.1	Elements for the elaboration of an intercultural philosophical method	132
5.2	Interculturality today: looking at the past to create a radically new present	135
5.3	The question of the method	136
	References	138
	Glossary of Important Sanskrit Terms	146

1 Introduction: the problems of thinking an inter-cultural tradition and the emergence of cultural otherness

1.1 The complexity of the initial situation of Interculturality

1.1.1 The explosion of the concept of Interculturality

In the last twenty years the concept of “Interculturality” has emerged as a prominent theme in various fields of sciences, though its operative uses differ considerably from one field to another, from one perspective to another and from one application to another. Interculturality means most probably something else if we consider the problems of immigration concerning the access to health in an European country (social and medical interculturality) and something considerably different when we take up the case of western businessmen learning how to communicate correctly with another culture (in order to maximize profits) to negotiate for example in Asia (intercultural management). In both examples, the same concept will be used, and is appropriate in a certain way, reflecting the idea of an interaction between two cultures (or more). However, it seems obvious that such a minimal definition cannot be kept, given the fact that history has been made out of different kinds of these interactions, colonialism and slavery being possible modes of interactions, very far from any ethical reflection concerning the status of the Other. The developments and the multiplication of the use of this concept, and sometimes its misuses should really be questioned by philosophers who must bring themselves to reflect, to order and to legitimate the thoughts of interculturality, which is setting itself up as its own domain.

However, it is not the silence of philosophy towards this new challenge of intercultural applications in various fields that raises problems but, on the contrary, the emergence *within* philosophy itself of different and variegated propositions, methods, thoughts and definitions. This creates philosophical competitions and debates concerning what is intercultural philosophy, rather than elaborating one intercultural philosophy that would be able to reflect on other domains. Philosophy seems less to order and orientate definitions and frames of thoughts for the use of the concept of interculturality in general than itself create confusions by bringing into the debates competing points of view. Of course, it is the very essence of philosophy to discuss, in order to avoid dogmatism, and the idea of dialogue or polylogue (Wimmer, 2004) is central here. This obviously is not an attempt to reduce nor to abolish it. However, we should be aware of this initial confusion. Actually, it seems that this necessary idea of a dialogue, or the one of a polylogue, aiming at a better understanding of cultures, does not always apply to the field of intercultural philosophy itself (probably due to its very new situation and recent birth). What we mean is

that, if the idea of conversation or polylogue is presented as an answer for intercultural problems, the different propositions for intercultural philosophy do not always practice this dialogue, and if different theories are presented, known and spread, it does not imply that intercultural propositions reflect on each other, or influence each other. To say it differently: there is a lot of intercultural theories and authors, but few analyses that would constitute a second literature, that is to say, a second order reflection about them (studying for example R.A Mall, F. Wimmer, H. Kimmerle, B. Waldenfels, etc.). From this complex situation of profusion in different fields and within philosophy of different propositions, in which we are located today, we would like to focus on a methodological approach that would consider not only the various propositions, but also the problems of thinking intercultural philosophy. We would therefore stress not only on the idea of competition, or the singular development of theories that are independent one from another, but more importantly on the process of responding to each other, of constructing a personal methodological reflection and dialogue between them, which would take the most discerning and pertinent points in order to determine what is intercultural philosophy by means of asking the most essential question, *how to think intercultural philosophy*.

1.1.2 The problem of the intercultural tradition

1.1.2.1 The use of philosopher with problematic eurocentric assertions

But this is going too fast and will be developed little by little. We would like to start with an account of the context - more specifically its problems - of the birth of intercultural philosophy. By addressing the background of this field, especially its historical development and the difficulties that it implies, we want to make explicit the current state of affairs and the nature of this new orientation of philosophy, as well as its reasons to have emerged, which we think are crucial. The reason for the profusion of various and competing intercultural analyses is the impossibility of finding one particular tradition leading to it. It is therefore possible to understand the emergence of theories as the consequence of the fact that no philosophical tradition enables a direct inheritance of intercultural philosophy. There are some trends, some influences, that lead philosophers to adopt for instance a phenomenological or a hermeneutic approach of interculturality, according to their own traditions, and explains the diversity of developments; however, there is no immediate philosophical inheritance. Moreover, the different philosophical traditions quite often bring the problems with themselves. Interculturality has never been until our very contemporary time - whether it is the case even now can still be questioned - a major, or even a simple concern of philosophy. The very prefix "inter" that one can find first in intersubjectivity and intercorporeity is the contribution of phenomenology during the 20th century (Husserl and Merleau-Ponty before all). If we take France as an example, the concept of difference, which became so prominent in the French philosophical tradition, surprisingly did not lead to any systematic or formal reflection about the cultural problematics that it brings, and any contribution if at all has been independently made by philosophers who were themselves directly concerned by other cultures, such as F. Jullien or J.F Billeter, related to sinology. The contemporary melting-pot offered mainly a political axis focused on the problems of immigration, in particular concerning the mixing of religions, and considers still mainly today the cultural other in the negativity of the *foreigner* (*l'étranger*) and the problems that his presence

requires in France. In general, the varieties of cultures disappear in the consideration of a global *alien* and the problems of his *integration*, i.e. the disappearance of his difference in the same nation. On the contrary, German philosophy, which has not originally been influenced by this stimulating concept of difference but had a strong tradition of closure to the cultural other with the famous positions of Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger and Gadamer (to which subsequent reference will be made), and the historical ideology of the construction of nation, has obviously become a fertile centre for interculturality and enthusing developed this new concept.

This problematic historical context - contemporary globalization and the post-colonialist situation - however leads to consider intercultural philosophy as a philosophical breakdown that entails leaving aside the traditional points of reference offered by the classical philosophy aforementioned. This does not mean that we have to banish every philosopher, but rather that we should be aware of the hermeneutic situation concerning the understanding of the Other, and be aware of their difficult assimilation to intercultural theories.

Let us use a famous example : Husserl is very much used in intercultural theories, in particular by B. Waldenfels who sets him as a paradigm for his “responsive” approach of the alien. His use of Husserl is so frequent and obvious that we do not really think it is necessary to prove it, although we can quote as an example the “Preface to the French Edition” of *Topographie de l'étranger, Etudes pour une phénoménologie de l'étranger. 1* (Original title : *Topographie des Fremden. Studien zur Phänomenologie des Fremden 1.*, text not translated in English), when he explains the historical absence of the alien in the history of Western philosophy, and its appearance with Husserl:

“ If we leave aside few isolated precursors such as Kierkegaard or Nietzsche, things have changed, gradually and partially, at the turn of the 20th century. We must mention Edmund Husserl who played a role of pioneer in phenomenology, but also far beyond it. By suspending the obviousnesses of our life in the world and in the community, he felt on an experience of the alien which made him question the alien *as alien*, in his absence, his inaccessibility and his incomprehensibility. He discovered not only an alien self [moi], but also an alien world and the alienness of oneself's own body [soi corporel propre]. These are fertile ideas that have little by little exerted their influence, first in Scheler, Heidegger and Plessner.”¹

Husserl appears very clearly in Waldenfels' mind as the first intercultural philosopher, or more exactly, as the first philosopher speaking about the alien². Our point here is not to give a

¹Personal traduction. Original text : “Si on fait abstraction de quelques précurseurs isolés comme Kierkegaard ou Nietzsche, les choses changent, peu à peu et de manière partielle, au tournant du XX^e siècle. Il faut évoquer Edmund Husserl qui a joué un rôle de pionnier dans la phénoménologie, mais aussi bien au-delà. En suspendant les évidences de notre vie dans le monde et dans la communauté, il est tombé sur une expérience de l'étranger qui l'a contraint à interroger l'étranger en tant qu'étranger, dans son absence, son inaccessibilité et son incompréhensibilité. Il a ainsi découvert non seulement un moi étranger, mais aussi un monde étranger et l'étrangeté du soi corporel propre. Ce sont des idées fécondes qui ont peu à peu exercé leur influence, d'abord chez Scheler, Heidegger et Plessner.” (Waldenfels, 2009, p.10)

²We should note here an important element concerning the thought and the use we make of B. Waldenfels. We consider him as a philosopher of the “alien”, the “Other” *in general* ; his “Other” is not always and necessary defined as a *cultural* “Other”, and if we use his important and subtle theories that he himself sometimes applied to intercultural contexts (since he participates in this academical debates by himself and some articles or texts are published in collective works directly focussed on intercultural studies, we do not think that using

1 Introduction

complete analysis about this theory. We would just like to remark that such an assertion concerning the role of Husserl in intercultural studies should not appear that obvious when we consider some problematic remarks of Husserl himself. One can of course make use of his fundamental phenomenological contributions, but to make him the intercultural “pioneer” is maybe to forget or to neglect the role of Husserl in Xenology, who also wrote, next to theories about the alien, some polemical cultural statements that are nowadays dated and condemned, such as:

“Historical mankind does not always divide itself up in the same way in accord with this category. We feel this precisely in our own Europe. There is something unique here that is recognized in us by all other human groups, too, something that, quite apart from all considerations of utility, becomes a motive for them to Europeanize themselves even in their unbroken will to spiritual self-preservation; whereas we, if we understand ourselves properly, would never Indianize ourselves, for example. I mean that we feel (and in spite of all obscurity this feeling is probably legitimate) that an entelechy is inborn in our European civilization which holds sway throughout all the changing shapes of Europe and accords to them the sense of a development toward an ideal shape of life and being as an eternal pole.”(Husserl, 1970, p.275)³

The mention of such an assertion that is said to be “probably legitimate”, although of course written without any justification of something however highly polemical and absolutely not logically derived from any philosophical argument, points to us in a glance the implicit European feeling at that time. These thoughts, implicitly *a priori* and founded in an abstract ideology that was generally accepted, is still a risk in philosophy nowadays, and still somehow exists, however in a subtler way. Using Husserl in intercultural philosophy is of course possible, and should not be reproached as such, but requires an awareness that would keep us out of his prejudices, which were actually the prejudices of his time, that only few philosophers succeeded in escaping. We believe it is important, not for the need of blaming Husserl, which is certainly useless now, but to avoid to keep some concepts penetrated by unspoken pejorative connotations, deeply kept in a general and vague consciousness.

Beyond Husserl, the whole lexical field of the *foreigner* is for many languages a location of various subtle xenophobic connotations and designations. There is of course the obvious

him in that way is a misinterpretation of his theories), we should not forget that his personal researches aim at the phenomenon of the alien or the Other that is not necessarily defined in relation to a particular culture. It explains therefore partially why he uses without problems and with great praises Husserl, who thought the alien or the Other but despised other cultures than the European one. Both sides of the question were not necessarily related to each other for him (which is not our case, and we strongly differentiate ourselves from this point of view here) and maybe the alien and the culture do not have to be always connected for B. Waldenfels.

³Original text: “Die historische Menschheit gliedert sich nicht in immerfort gleicher Weise gemäss dieser Kategorie. Wir erspüren das gerade an unserem Europa. Es liegt darin etwas Einzigartiges, das auch allen anderen Menschheitsgruppen an uns empfindlich ist als etwas, das, abgesehen von allen Erwägungen der Nützlichkeit, ein Motiv für sie wird, sich im ungebrochenen Willen zu geistiger Selbsterhaltung doch immer zu europäisieren, während wir, wenn wir uns recht verstehen, uns zum Beispiel nie indianisieren werden. Ich meine, wir fühlen es (und bei aller Unklarheit hat dieses Gefühl wohl sein Recht), da unserem europäischen Menschentum eine Entelechie eingeboren ist, die den europäischen Gestaltenwandel durchherrscht und ihm den Sinn einer Entwicklung auf eine ideale Lebens- und Seinsgestalt als einen ewigen Pol verleiht.”(Husserl, 1976a, p.320); French Edition (Husserl, 1976b, p.353-354)

1 Introduction

negative terms, such as “barbarian” or “savages”, but even the “alien” and the “foreigner” (French: *l'étranger*) can be slightly tinged with concealed prejudices⁴. Therefore, we want to provide here a quick account of the lexical field employed in this work, with particular reference to B.Waldenfels. He is indeed arguing against the use of *alterity* concerning the *radical other*, i.e. the concept of a cultural other in our contemporary context that we want to establish and study here, and establishes the following point: the other is until the 20th century understood in the sense of an *alter*, which is in a primary etymological meaning always related to the same (this history of ideas will be developed in the next part). The “alter” enables only a binary relation: the one and the other. We think that there is a difference only by contrast to ourselves, by *delimitation* whereas the alien for Waldenfels is understood in the sense of *inclusion and exclusion*: “what is alien does not simply appear different, rather it arises from elsewhere. The sphere of alienness is separated from my sphere of ownness by a threshold.”(Waldenfels, 2007, p.7) However, if this distinction between *Andersheit* and *Fremdheit* is strongly effective and clear in German from a lexical point of view and the use of language, it is not the case for English and for French for example, as Waldenfels himself has to concede. He himself uses *otherness* more frequently than *alienness* in his English writing above quoted, as *alienness* in English has this ambiguity of extra-terrestrial and can be understood in a negative way. Though we acknowledge Waldenfels’ remarks, which are well-founded, we follow his own betrayal in English language, using sometimes the alienness, especially when we refer to Waldenfels’ theories, but without restricting ourself from the use of *otherness*, or *the Other*. It is thus also the case in French: *altérité culturelle* (cultural alterity), though it refers in the lexicon to *alter*, is not necessarily understood as such, and can be used in a broader intercultural meaning; *l'Autre* can even sometimes in philosophy be used without the possible negative interpretation of the connotation of *l'étranger*. We therefore choose to adapt our use to the language, though we should be aware of the conceptual binary model inherited from the latin use and concept. Preferably, we will use the term *cultural other* to specify our understanding of the other in a cultural context.

But let us come back to the historical context of the emergence of what we will call a cultural other. It is nowadays less the direct content of Husserl’s philosophy, or others as problematic as Hegel or Heidegger, than the considerable influence they had afterwards that could, and probably is still a danger and an obstacle to make any philosophy “intercultural” in its openness of attitude. In the reception of those philosophers, and following their misleading interpretations, one continues affirming the Hegelian hierarchy under the ideologies of “progress” or “modernity”, or the so-called polemical question to know whether Indian or Chinese or any other thoughts than western can be “philosophy”, because the word reflects a concept that is originally Greek⁵. It is in

⁴For detailed analyses about the various signification of the German word “*fremd*” and its complexity for a use within intercultural philosophy, one could check (Waldenfels, 2007, p.4-6).

⁵This is an explicit reference to this highly problematic assertion from Heidegger, often used against him by intercultural philosophers like R.A Mall, what can easily be understood: “Der Satz : die Philosophie ist in ihrem Wesen griechisch, sagt nicht anders als : das Abendland und Europa, und nur sie, sind in ihrem innerstend Geschichtsgang urprünglich ”philosophisch.” (Heidegger, 2003a, p.7) Eng : “The statement that philosophy is in its nature Greek says nothing more than that the West and Europe, and only these, are, in the innermost course of their history, originally ”philosophical.” (Heidegger, 2003b) We should also note that we will not enter in the details of this question, already so many times studied by various philosophers. We consider in this work that Indian philosophy is a philosophy, and we can only disapprove and regret the fact that every philosopher working on Indian philosophy has to start by justifying this fact. In case of doubts, one can open almost every book concerned with Indian philosophy and will find various and multiple justifications in the

fact more the simplifications operated after those philosophers - W. Halbfass for example studied this phenomenon for Hegel in particular⁶- than their own development that raised an exclusion of India in particular, but of any non-Western area in general. Hegel was indeed ambiguous towards India, but less Manichean and more expert than the following argumentations between the 17th and 19th centuries made him become⁷. This persistent exclusion can be attributed in more than one way to the probable involuntary consequences of such philosophers. If it would have been or if it would be commonly accepted by all that some of these discourses are dated and errors of philosophers who could not escape their cultural (including historical) context, then probably there would not be any problem to use blindly those theories. But as it is not the case, one should stay aware about the hermeneutic context in which those “giants” and their enormous influences were located, and consequences they bring with them in the field of intercultural philosophy.

1.1.2.2 Which tradition can be possible for the thought of an “inter”-history?

The cases of Husserl, Heidegger and Hegel are paradigmatic with regard to the difficulties of the understanding and the continuation, or the pursuit, of a tradition in an intercultural context. In point of fact, in a field comprising the thought of an “inter”, an “in-between”, it is indeed difficult to think about a tradition. For, which tradition could we ever use? Is it even possible to speak about *tradition* when we want to locate ourselves between cultures, that is, between traditions? Can we merge traditions to create theoretically, i.e. in a way artificially, another tradition? And therefore, which attitude should we adopt concerning our philosophical traditions? Given the necessity of inscribing ourselves within this *in-between* space, which is both *virtual* - no in-between space can exist as such, we are always in a determined space - and still always in successive movements of *actualization* and re-actualization - any pure cultural space that has only his own tradition and nothing from outside is an ideology -, the question of the tradition and the philosophical position is extremely difficult, and perhaps even questionable in itself. However, it is not possible to avoid any reference, or to escape any embodiment, any way of being inscribed or of belonging to a tradition. How then would it be possible to convert this “closure in a determined tradition” into an openness and a world of cultural possibilities, or following R.F Betancourt’s concept, a “cultural disobedience⁸”?

introduction or other articles, from S. Radhakrishnan and the Neo-Hindus to J.N Mohanty, J.Bronkhorst and E.Deutsch.

⁶To summarize quickly the above paradox: “The willingness to concede India an “actual” philosophy as well, an attitude which Hegel occasionally gave utterance to during his later years, generally received little notice, and an essentially restrictive view of the history of philosophy emerged which was to eventually dominate nineteenth and early twentieth century thinking and which explicitly excluded the Orient, and thus India, from the historical record of philosophy.”(Halbfass, 1988, p.146); for a complete account of the exclusion of India and the Hegelian influence and simplification, cf Ibid. p. 145-159.

⁷W. Halbfass quotes a lot of philosophers from that period, who reject strongly and in an extreme way the possibility of any foreigner input into European philosophy (W.G Tenneman, A. Schwegler, J.F Fries, J. Burnet, S.G Martin, etc. -the list is long-). Let us just quote one of them as an example: “No Asian people (...) has lifted itself to the heights of free human contemplation from which philosophy issues; philosophy is the fruit of the Hellenic spirit.” (F. Michelis), in Ibid, p.152.

⁸R.F. Betancourt writes: “C’est ainsi qu’en quatrième lieu la philosophie (interculturelle) considère la “désobéissance culturelle” comme une référence fondamentale en vertu de laquelle chaque individu doit pouvoir choisir sa culture “à lui”. Certes, chaque être humain s’inscrit dans une culture donnée, mais il ne la subit pas comme une dictature qui lui impose de façon totalitaire sa manière d’agir et de penser, ni comme une prison dont il est impossible de s’échapper. Car, dans ce que nous appelons culture, la dignité humaine passe par le fait d’en

1 Introduction

One possible way of merging different traditions can be understood with W. Halbfass, who analysed the *encounter* between Europe and India, that is, the mutual understanding, the hermeneutic attitude from Europe (in the change of its borders throughout history) towards India, and the one from India towards Europe: here, the tradition of the “inter” is replaced by the history of understanding each other, the reciprocal look (Halbfass, 1988). The in-between space is situated in the moving space of the relations of understanding, in the dynamics of the considerations that are located within a culture and look at another one, and is able to reverse this process, becoming equal and reciprocal. It is not a tradition with regard to methodology, about which historiography and hermeneutics are the most concerned, but one can see a sense of tradition in this dimension of tradition of looking at the other, the inheritance of the act of considering each other and of the mutual encounter through a historical and conceptual account, which brings a lot of crucial informations about our actual way of understanding the alien. We will come back about the details of Halbfass’ rich development in his study of Indian and Western Xenology. Here is for now just an attempt to think of possible methods of a hypothetic intercultural tradition.

Another possible path, one that has been hitherto widely employed, consists in the multiplication of philosophical traditions. It means to accept being located in one particular tradition but to prevent its closure, which appeared or appears most often in the phenomenon of *centrism*. For instance, eurocentrism consists here in looking only within and at one tradition and consequently, neglecting others. But we want here to focus less on the historical problems of the tradition and eurocentrism than on the positive and creative ways of thinking an intercultural tradition. This multiplication of possible ways to enable a plurality of choices can be thought by means of the process of the *adjustment* (*Ausgleich*) of different traditions. This is of course a reference to Scheler, who can be considered as one of the actual pioneer of an intercultural proposition of thinking, and who would deserve a complete analysis; let us however focus here only on his idea of balance between traditions. Scheler writes:

“A veritable cosmopolitan philosophy of the world is in progress – at least the basis for a movement is in progress, which not only historically registers, but also at the same time factually proves and shapes to a lively element within the own thinking the highest axioms of existence and life of Indian philosophy, Buddhist forms of religion, Chinese and Japanese wisdoms – which all for us have been completely alien for a long time.” (Scheler, 1995, p.160)⁹

être sujet et agent à la fois. L’être humain se construit au travers de la culture dans laquelle il vit pendant que, dans le même temps, il la construit et la reconstruit par un constant effort d’appropriation. (Fornet-Betancourt, 2011, p.138)” Personal English Translation : “Fourthly, (intercultural) philosophy considers thus “cultural disobedience” as a fundamental reference whereby each individual must be able to choose his “own” culture “for himself” [sa culture à lui]. Each human being is certainly inscribed in a given culture, but he does not undergo it as a dictatorship that imposes on him its way of acting and thinking, nor as a jail from which it is impossible to escape. Because in what we call culture, human dignity goes through the fact of being at the same time a subject and an agent of this culture. Human being is constructing himself through the culture in which he is living, while at the same time, he is constructing and reconstructing it through a constant effort of appropriation.”

⁹Personal translation. Original Text : “Eine wahrhaft kosmopolitische Weltphilosophie ist im Werden - zum mindesten ist die Grundlage für eine Bewegung im Werden, die auch die uns lange völlig fremden obersten Daseins- und Lebensaxiome der indischen Philosophie, der buddhistischen Religionsformen, der chinesischen und japanischen Weistümer nicht nur historisch registriert, sondern gleichzeitig sachlich prüft und sie zu einem

1 Introduction

We should notice that Scheler also mentions the adjustment of Europe on Asia, in particular the technological and economical methods of production (“technischen und ökonomischen Produktionsmethoden”, Ibid.). It is therefore a true adjustment that should prevent any excess. This idea of movement of balance is central to intercultural thinking and appears in many different ways. Intercultural philosophers often look at a medium way found in the auto-adjustment of different complementing traditions whose final aim would be the ideal of harmony between different traditions and cultures. This should not be misunderstood as uniformisation, which is one of the dangers of the globalization and a perversion of this adjustment; it aims rather at keeping mutual differences and particularities but in a relation that is harmonious and balanced in virtue of a movement that can include and connect all traditions.

This idea is developed slightly differently but certainly with the same aim, in the sphere of discourse (which can remind us the rationalization of discourse hoped and aimed by Habermas whose movement can be also understood with the idea of an adjustment of different opinions aiming at the triumph of reasons) with the idea of dialogue or polylogue. Wimmer’s idea of a polylogue comes precisely from the need of multiplying the references and the cross-roads between traditions in order to avoid any centrism. He writes:

“Questions of philosophy - questions concerning the fundamental structures of reality, the knowledgeability, the validity of norms - have to be discussed in such a way that a solution is not propagated unless a polylogue between as many traditions as possible has taken place. This presupposes the relativity of concepts and methods, and it implies a non-centristic view to the history of human thinking. At the very beginning there can be formulated a negative rule: *never accept a philosophical thesis from authors of a single cultural tradition to be well founded.*” (Wimmer, 1996, p.15)

We find that using only negative formulation or using it at first is slightly too weak to define the framework of intercultural philosophy, as he is also doing it in his later essay.¹⁰ This defect applies also to R.A Mall - (Yousefi & Mall, 2005, p.126-129) and in English (Mall, 2000a, §19-32) -, who often presents a definition of intercultural philosophy by a list of points of what is and what is not intercultural philosophy, which at the end looks more like a descriptive enumeration than a conceptual definition. We believe that it is not because we want to keep the multiplicity and the openness in the characterisation of intercultural philosophy that we cannot try to positively, clearly and conceptually define what is and what should be intercultural philosophy. That will bring us to our own clarification of the concept later on. First, we would like here to underline

lebendigen Element im eigenen Denken gestaltet.”(Scheler, 1995, p.160); for a detailed analysis, one can check: (Mall & Hülsmann, 1989, p.98-117), (Sepp, 1996) and (von Alemann, 1994) (collective work).

¹⁰We refer to the following passage, which again starts by the negative definition: “Zunächst und vor allem ist interkulturelle Philosophie eine Frage der Praxis, wofür eine Minimalregel in zweifacher Weise formuliert werden kann. In negativer Formulierung lautet die Regel: *Halte keine philosophische These für gut begründet, an deren Zustandkommen nur Menschen einer einzigen kulturellen Tradition beteiligt waren.* / Positiv formuliert lautet sie: *Suche wo immer möglich nach transkulturellen “Überlappungen” von philosophischen Begriffen, da es wahrscheinlich ist, dass gut begründete Thesen in mehr als nur einer kulturellen Tradition entwickelt worden sind.*”(Wimmer, 2004, p.51). Personal translation: “First and foremost, intercultural philosophy is a question of practice, for which a minimal rule can be formulated in two ways. Negatively formulated, the rule goes as follows: *do not mistake a philosophical thesis for well justified, if its development only involved people from one single cultural tradition.* / Positively formulated: *Wherever possible, look for transcultural “overlaps” of philosophical concepts, for it is probable that well justified theses have been developed in more than one cultural tradition.*”

different ways of constructing an intercultural tradition that would be relocated, from one single tradition to a multitude. It is presented as a way to protect itself from any centrism or any prejudice that a single tradition would keep towards the others, by need of defining itself: the exclusion of other traditions in a particular tradition comes indeed in general more from the need to unite oneself than from a pure will to destroy the other; it is less concerned with the other cultures in its use or reduction of them than in the movement of creating its own understanding, its own interpretation and its own philosophy in reaction, in defense or against the others.¹¹ One can see here also a possible explanation for the different hierarchical cultural models offered in the history of philosophy, for instance with Hegel.

There would certainly be other ways of suggesting a tradition in an “inter” space, but this account enables us to see the breakdown and the problems that are brought with this new field of intercultural philosophy. There is no direct tradition, no immediate reference and one needs to keep one’s eyes open on the problem of centrism and prejudices carried along with the history of philosophy, and in particular Western philosophy.

1.2 Indian and European xenologies

The understanding of the birth, that is the justification of the existence of intercultural philosophy, can only be complete when we study the Xenology¹² of cultures. It seems obvious that if the thought of the Other would have been included since the beginning of philosophy, intercultural philosophy, in its dimension of claiming the recognition and equality of any philosophy and cultures, would have been useless, and would probably never have been born. It is therefore because of the difficulties of a mutual recognition and tolerance towards the Other that philosophers, and especially those who were not from the West, started to protest. We can find revendications in the writings of Betancourt in particular, in some of Mall, Wimmer, and in general, in the “founders” , if there is, of intercultural philosophy, let us say in the first philosophers to use and defend that term, obviously against eurocentrism and the hegemony of Western philosophy¹³.

¹¹One can see the last part of (Halbfass, 1988, p.378-442) for a detailed reflection about this matter, i.e. the way the understanding of the Other culture says more about one’s own culture than about the actual object of one’s reflection, the Other. “The changing attitudes towards India and the various manifestations of interest in the Indian tradition are also expressions of European self-understanding, self-affirmation and self-criticism. They accompany and reflect basic developments in European thought and life.” [Ibid, p. 437]. This is a syndrome also well known in literature : Montesquieu for example, in his *Lettres persannes (Persian Letters)* uses a process called “procédé de l’oeil neuf”. He describes the Persian culture with a naive eye, literally “new eye”, which is said to be truer, as it is not modified by habits and customs that makes one loses one’s own cultural awareness. But it is also very famous that Montesquieu aims less at the understanding of another culture, which is anyway imaginary settled, than at the criticism of his own culture, protected from censorship by the construction of his imaginary Persia.

¹²We acknowledge the fact that in the common use, the concept of “xenology” can be understood as the science of “extraterrestrial life”, and that the Oxford dictionary for example defines it mainly in reference to science fiction. This can obviously not be the case here. We justify this choice by the etymology, since originally ξένος means any foreigner (it can be addressed to an enemy as well as a friend located outside of the πόλις), and thus we follow the use of B. Waldenfels (for example, “the Paradox of xenology” (Waldenfels, 2007, p.16)) and W. Halbfass (for example, “Traditional Indian Xenology” (Halbfass, 1988, p.172)) to whom we refer in this part. Xenology means here the “science of the foreigner” .

¹³The references are not exhaustive but are considered as pertinent examples to justify our point. Let us quote some examples from the aforementioned philosophers related to our problems of tradition regarding the position of the Other: 1)R.F. Betancourt: “Nous suggérons une conception *historique* de la culture. Loin de tomber du

1 Introduction

We would like now to precisely set the limits of this work: we will consider here the domain of interculturality in relation to Europe and India, and that only. We have before also made use of and will further too include intercultural philosophers who are specialist of other areas of philosophy, in order to construct some theories of intercultural philosophy, in its particular structures, questions and foundations. That is, references will be made to any intercultural philosopher related to the definition and the construction of an intercultural philosophy *in abstracto*, in the purely formal and systematic aspect of it.

Let us come now to the relationships between India and Europe¹⁴, from a hermeneutic approach of philosophical interest and understanding. To simplify, we could speak about three major phases in their mutual approach: the first approach departs from the Antiquity up to the first colonies' contacts with the British, as the broadest period defined by episodic contacts, which were *grosso modo* occasional exchanges and influences in a general framework of mutual indifference and distinct dynamics. The second begins near the end of the 16th century and characterizes the Western conquest of the world: domination in various aspects and colonisation, or global reduction of the other, from political, human and scientific sides. The final approach emerges during the 20th century, with the growing consciousness of the plurality of cultures, the general context of Westernization of the world as well as the concern and the awareness of it, the "intercultural turn" (Stenger, 2006, p.42) and the complex situation of a mutual understanding.

These phases can appear arbitrary and we certainly do not want to challenge the historians or the historiography concerning those relations. They are understood, rather, as general movement of mentalities and attitudes towards the others, whose aim is to present flexible phases of the movement of Indian and Western consciousness towards each other. We want to use them as tools in order to explain the relevance of the question of the cultural otherness, especially with regard to the cultural emergence of the Other. Let us justify those successive phases with the help of S. Radhakrishnan: "Till about A.D 1500 there was considerable similarity between the

ciel, les cultures se développent dans des contextes déterminés comme des processus ouverts au sein desquels préexistent déjà la relation et le contact avec l'autre (nature ou divinités) et avec les autres (familles originaires du même village ou communautés voisines). Les cultures sont des processus limites. Cette notion de frontière, comprise comme une expérience fondamentale de mouvement continu, ne renvoie pas seulement au fait de délimiter un territoire propre, de tracer une ligne de séparation entre ce qui nous appartient et ce qui revient aux autres (...). La frontière s'établit et se développe au sein même de ce que nous appelons notre propre culture. L'autre n'est pas exclu de ce qui nous appartient, mais il en fait partie."(Fornet-Betancourt, 2011, p.31-32) Personal translation: "We suggest a *historical* conception of culture. Far from falling out from the sky, cultures are developing themselves in determined contexts like open processes, in which the relation and the contact with the other (nature or divinity) and with the others (native families from the same village or a neighbouring community) pre-exist already. Cultures are processes of limits [processus limites]. This notion of border, understood as a fundamental experience of a continuous movement, does not only refer to the fact of delimiting one's own territory, to draw a separation's line between what belongs to us and what goes to the others (...). The border is established and developed within what we call our own culture. The other is not excluded from what belongs to us, but he is a part of it." ; 2) R.A Mall: "The genesis of Europe is a history of continuous absence of the other because its own projection does not let the otherness of the other come within view. (...) The Europeanization of humanity is itself a myth, because a good philosophy, culture, and religion are not the exclusive possessions of a single tradition. It goes beyond the orient-occident dichotomy. Furthermore, it must be seen that the phenomenon of Europeanization of the world also transforms Europe." (Mall, 2000b, p.120-121); 3) For F.M Wimmer, cf. the aforementioned quote.

¹⁴We would strongly recommend the major book of Halbfass concerning the hermeneutic and historical mutual approach of India and Europe. Our part will not be a summary, as we are trying to thematize and rather give a systematical account in relation to intercultural theory, but many references are made, and could be extensively developed; it is for us a necessary tool for an account of the understanding of these two cultures. We should precise here however that the separation in phases does not come from this work. (Halbfass, 1988)

East and the West. But diversity has now arisen owing to the rapid growth of technology. History in these four centuries became European history; the rest of the world was colonial history. (Radhakrishnan, 1955, p.107)¹⁵ This dichotomy tallies our first and second phases. We now need to express the next phase, that is the breakdown with our contemporary situation, which can be expressed and justified with the help of G. Stenger, and the idea of a *Weltalter* (Scheler, 1995), i.e. an era becoming worldwide more than historical (by ages), concerned by the plurality (under the form of multiculturalism or interculturality), or in general with a *geographical* or *spatial* conception of the world¹⁶. Stenger writes:

“My thesis now is that another turn is announcing itself by what one could call the "world turn". Also this one has a long history, but not until the course of the 20th century it became explicit. The world turn absorbs the other turns, but frees them from their one-sidedness. (...) The "intercultural turn" is absorbed methodically by the "turn of the plurality of worlds".(Stenger, 2006, p.44-45)¹⁷”

From these assertions that we make also ours, we would like to give an account of the details of these stages.

1.2.1 The relative other

The state of general indifference in the first phase holds for both sides. The Greeks had more curiosity towards India, which means both a positive influence as well as an affirmation of their own superiority. The Orient played a role that Halbfass defines as “ambivalent”, precisely in this openness that distinguished them from other civilizations of their time, being doubled by a use of the alien to define themselves and to identify their own philosophical specifications (Halbfass,

¹⁵The reference made to S. Radhakrishnan does not exclude him to be a part of this hermeneutic history, as an actor with singular goals for the mutual relation between India and Europe. Let us quickly remember and precise his own context of speech: Extraordinary scholar (Professor for example in Kolkata and Oxford), president of the UNESCO and finally President of the Indian Republic, he is a Neo-Hindu philosopher, and one of the most famous in the West. With the use of the English language and Western terminology, he made himself an intercultural spokesman, in order to defend the modernity of Hinduism. Halbfass writes: “Radhakrishnan was also deeply hurt by the European verdict that Hinduism was ethically deficient and incompatible with social and scientific progress. Like Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan was not satisfied with rejecting this criticism. Instead, he derived his demand for social reform from it, but also tried to neutralize it by showing that Hinduism, specifically Advaita Vedānta, was not only compatible with ethics, social improvement and international understanding, but capable of providing them with a firm metaphysical basis and framework.”(Halbfass, 1988, p.251-252)The texts of Radhakrishnan, though they are undeniably philosophically reliable and a considerable contribution to Indian philosophy, must be understood in the context of his will of denunciation of the West and fight for the recognition of the equality and modernity of Indian philosophy, which sometimes bring along the correlative defect of political associations and unjustified emphasis that are not always relevant for us here.

¹⁶Cf also B. Waldenfels: “La géographie se voit accorder un poids particulier aussi bien à l’intérieur de notre propre culture qu’entre les cultures, alors qu’habituellement l’importance échoit unilatéralement à l’histoire.” Personal Translation: “Geography is given a particular weight within our own culture as well as between cultures, whereas usually the importance unilaterally falls to history.” (Waldenfels, 2009, p.12)

¹⁷We do not differentiate here both “world” and “intercultural” turns, as we think their dissociation, if it may be necessary within Stenger’s philosophy, can be here understood as different steps of a single phase in this global presentation. We think that the understanding of the “world” as opposite to a global cosmos is the reason leading to a possibility of understanding pluralities of worlds, what develops G.Stenger. Both are here correlated and the first is necessary for the second. Personal translation. Original text: “Ein weiterer Umbruch nun, so meine These, kündigt sich in dem an, was man den “world turn” nennen könnte. Auch dieser hat eine lange Vorgeschichte, er ist aber erst im Laufe des 20. Jahrhunderts explizit geworden. Der world turn nimmt die anderen turns auf, löst sie aber aus ihren Vereinseitigungen. (...) Der “intercultural turn” wird methodisch vom “turn der Pluralität der Welten” aufgefangen. (Stenger, 2006, p.44-45)

1988, p.5). But for India in particular, he subsequently adds that before the campaign of Alexander the Great (327-325 BC), India was in this broad and vague sphere of the Orient only a “peripheral phenomenon” [Ibid., p.10]; one cannot find any specific concept or speculation about it. Most of the references during the classical time did not succeed in giving a real approach of the Other; that is, the Other was always reduced to a particular culture’s dominant categories, language, and philosophy. The first significant work about India appeared during this time, written by Megasthenes (*Indika*). In late antiquity, references and interests extended for example to Pythagoras and Plotinus, the most famous in that regard. One can at that time find traces, which can however not be confidently determined, about a possible influence of the Orient in general, and maybe of India.¹⁸ The phenomenon of *syncretism* of late Antiquity can therefore be found in its limitations, once the Greeks have settled their own philosophy: “The Hellenic confidence in philosophy, theory and the autonomy of human reasoning gave way to a greater readiness for accepting sacred tradition and divine inspiration. In a sense, the curiosity of the classical period turned into readiness for self-transformation.” [Ibid, p.20] Influences occurred in virtue of self-confidence.

These shortcuts in the history point to a “relative kind of alienness” (Waldenfels, 2007, p.3). There is no sense of a *radical alien* in the history of philosophy before the 20th century, and especially in the Antiquity, or as B. Waldenfels says it: “in Aristotelian terms: only an alien for us is accepted, but not an alien in itself.” [Ibid.] If we explain it in terms of order, following him, the cosmos is at that time “like a great house (*oikos*) overcoming the distinction between the own and the alien: after all, it is our house and we inhabit it jointly.” [Ibid.]; a house that domesticates the alienness, in a way that the other can only be understood in reference to me (the alter, the ego) or in reference to a limit, a border: the *βάρβαρος* is the one who does not speak the same language, the *ξένος*, the one who does not belong to the geographical space of the community. In any case, the Greeks took themselves as the degree-zero, as the centre, for the understanding of the other and extended the other in a distinguished space from them under the same cosmos, therefore not a chaos. The other is included within the Same in that *over-concept of the whole*. Over-concept of the whole denotes the absolute horizon or cosmos that includes all possible cultures. It orders every relative differences between cultures, communities or persons within itself and prevents any escape from a global and universal conceptual scheme, metaphysical, physical and ontological common World. Everything that exist or does not exist is included in a cosmos and nothing can exceed it. It is therefore above any object, human, idea or concept as the first implicit *a priori*.

Concerning India, Halbfass starts with a fundamental fact about their attitude towards the alien: “Traditional Hinduism has not reached out for the West. It has not been driven by the zeal of proselytization and discovery, and by the urge to understand and master foreign cultures. It

¹⁸For a complete development, we refer to Halbfass (Halbfass, 1988, p.2-23); Radhakrishnan gives also his own account of the influence of India on the Greeks, emphasizing on the contacts and relations through the Orphic and the Eleusinian mysteries with Empedocles, Pythagoras and Plato “who all accept the doctrine of rebirth, fall from a high estate, the present condition of purity and bliss by means of ascetic practices. The affinity of thought between this tradition and the Upaniṣads need not imply any identity of origin.” (Radhakrishnan, 1955, p.51) His enthusiasm to prove the influence from India to Greece may not be adequate, and we prefer the cautiousness of Halbfass, who does not deny punctual contacts and interest towards the Orient without affirming strictly any strong reference to India that one can hardly find in most of the cases.

has neither recognized the foreign, the other as a possible alternative, nor as a potential source of its own identity.” (Halbfass, 1988, p.172) This represents to us the main difference that characterizes India and Europe and their respective attitude towards the alien. Halbfass adds: “Again and again, Indians have been exposed to the experience of foreigners and “outsiders”; again and again, non-Indians have interfered with the course of Indian history.” [Ibid, p.174] The main motive for a definition, concept or argumentation of the Other in India is to us their situation of *answering* the West. India constituted and constructed an Other in reference or reaction to the West (or the alien in general), while Europe built a conception of the Other to affirm itself, which had as main consequence that India responded by using European categories while Europe did not really need to learn the language, culture or concepts of the Other, staying on his own foundations.

This first general situation of a necessary dialogue and this essential disinterestedness was followed by a complete exclusion of the other in the traditional Indian Xenology. Given the complex structure of the Indian society, its closedness based on a strict social system of the caste and its dependance to the laws of *dharma*^{*19}, any inclusion of a foreigner becomes highly complicated and problematic. In the Vedic and Brahmanic period, Indians defined themselves as Aryans directly against outsiders. It is beyond the scope of this work to provide a comprehensive account of the complicated status of the foreigner that can be found in Halbfass again [p.172-196], however it will suffice to underscore the difference between the idea of the foreigner in a Greek and a Hindu sense with Halbfass:

“A comparison with the classical Hellenic notion of the “barbarian” (βάρβαρος) can help to illustrate the xenological peculiarity of the Hindu concept of *mleccha* [foreigner in its negative connotation]. Even as objects of hate and contempt, the barbarians are, so to speak, mirrors in which the Greeks reflect their own identity. They have, as foreigners and manifestations of “the other”, an undeniable stature and concreteness, against which the Greeks assert and define themselves.(...) The concept of *mleccha*^{*} represents a much more radical type of exclusion and utter disregard.

The Indocentrism developed in “orthodox” Hindu thought transcends by far what is ordinarily called “ethnocentrism”. It is not simply an unquestioned perspective or bias, but a sophisticated theoretical structure of self-universalization and self-isolation. Seen from within this complex, highly differentiated structure, the *mlecchas* are nothing but a faint and distant phenomenon at the horizon of the indigenous tradition. (...) The “otherness” is a negative and abstract one; it does not contain any concrete cultural or religious challenge. Classical Hindu thought has developed an extraordinary wealth of schemes and methods of religious and philosophical subordination and coordination, of inclusion, hierarchization and concordance of world-views. But in that process, it has developed a complex, internally differentiated framework of orientation, a kind of immanent universe of thought, in which the con-

¹⁹The Sanskrit terms, when introduced for the first time, that needs further explanations because of their importance or singularity are followed by an asterisk*. Please see the “Glossary of Important Sanskrit Terms” at the end of this study.

trast of the “indigenous” and the “foreign”, of identity and otherness, seems a priori superseded, and which is so comprehensive in itself that it is not conducive to any serious involvement with what is different and apart from it -i.e, the “other”, in its otherness. [Ibid, p.187.]”

This does not cover exhaustively the announced period, which would be too long to interpret fully and continuously, but we want to take it as a paradigm of what occurred in general during the first phase, that is: a global indifference mentioned above, interspersed with episodic contacts, mostly from the Greeks, and a conception of otherness that stays either within the general framework of a whole called “cosmos”, or which is so weak that it is almost completely absent, and at least insignificant in the whole closed system. That means that if one can see an idea of the foreigner, it is a “relative” one, and the otherness is not even conceptualized as such.

1.2.2 The dominated other

With the expansion of the Western world, the other became a *dominated-other*, a reduction of the other to the Same: he is firstly a vague presence on a soil or a territory out of which the colonizer can get some wealth; he is then an Other that should be brought to the Same (but still considered as different or inferior), with the great ideology²⁰ of modernization or education; he can be finally a source of knowledge, but this one leads only to another kind of reduction, with the example of Indology. At any level, the other is dispossessed from its Otherness as such, as a radical difference that signifies the multiplicity of worlds or an equal distinction between cultures. The Other is fought, excluded or restricted; its alienness is a problem or a threat.

The period of colonisation, the motives and results are in general highly complicated, and in the case of India, the feelings are mixed; we will consider globally the situation and the evolution of the concept of the alien, the cultural other. Regarding the question of an understanding, the situation stays ambiguous; on the one side, and for the case of aforementioned case of Indology, this direct contact has led to the first systematic work of translation, or knowledge about India and of consideration of the alien by Indian philosophers. The reverse side of it however is a restriction of India to its Sanskrit language, its exclusion from the world of reason and philosophy to the religious sphere only. From the Indian side, although it is the first evidence of an emergence of the other as Other, and the beginning of a dialogue with the West, it has been made mainly on the modus of inclusion.²¹It sought therefore to absorb the alienness in its own discourse in such an excessive way that philosophy became increasingly more “European” in the sense of language (mainly in English), concepts (with the use of “philosophy” for example as the main concept) and Western academical categories and tradition of thinking.

²⁰G. Orwell describes very well in the realm of literature how well spread is this ideology, and the ambiguity of the feelings of both Western and non-Western (Burmese and Indians) towards it, which means sometimes a bigger respect of this “white man” supremacy (as ideology) from the non-Western than the Western inhabitants.(Orwell, 2009)

²¹About the ambiguity of this concept of “inclusivism” and its difference to the concept of “tolerance”, we refer to Halbfass (Halbfass, 1988, p.403-418); inclusivism can be found as well in Buddhism, Hinduism and Neo-Hinduism as in Christianity and can be briefly defined as follows: “The other, the foreign is not seen as something that could be added to, or combined with, one’s own system; instead, it is something a priori contained in it.[Ibid, p.411]”

1 Introduction

Let us look more closely at the intellectual movement of indology, which shows in an interesting way the ambivalence of the status of the alien from the European side. Mall concludes about this subject with these words:

“Eliade uses the term *second renaissance* referring to the discovery of Buddhism, the Upanishads, and the Sanskrit language in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. Although the hopes and promises of European discovery of Asia were very high, it really was a failure. The reason for this failure, as opposed to the grand success of the first renaissance, lies in the fact that it primarily remained a philological oriented field of work and research for the indologists and was not taken seriously by philosophers, theologians, and historians. Even an indologist like Max Müller, to whom India owes so much, could not avoid his bias regarding the superiority of Western philosophy and Christian religion.(Mall, 2000b, p.17)”

There is actually something remarkable and singular in the way Europe has been fascinated and put real efforts in the discovery of India, which simultaneously left the latter apart from any scientific discussion. Philological datas were collected and a lot of work, translations at the first place, arose from it, which excluded India at the same time with stronger and more lasting consequences than did the first phase of general ignorance. The great enthusiasm in conjunction with an admiration created a feeling of exoticism, that is a fascinating and charming feeling of difference always considered from a very detached point of view, which does not bring any actual contact or exchange, and factual knowledge without any integration and without any change in the way Europe understood himself, reinforcing its own superior thought. This point of effective encounter between Europe and India, or more exactly the encounter of Europe towards India was one-sided and served more to build an other who was still understood as a part of the same order, restricted to it and treated on a hierarchical basis: the alien is an inferior alien thought on a vertical scale and hierarchy, he does not represent any multiplicity of cultures located one next to each other and able to communicate equally²² on a horizontal level. W. Halbfass summarizes the *Missionary* approach as such:

“The missionaries have performed pioneering, detailed work in several areas. But primarily, in spite of or perhaps precisely because of their “prejudice” and dogmatic limitations, they have also helped to define and clarify the central problems involved in approaching and understanding that which is alien: They, or at least their out-

²²This schema of horizontal structure is the aim of several intercultural philosophers and what distinguishes the last phase with this one. The idea of a polylogue of Wimmer reflects this movement: “A ↔ B and A ↔ C and A ↔ D and B ↔ C and B ↔ D and C ↔ D.(Wimmer, 2004, p.69)”, where the idea of superiority or vertical exchange (according to the model of “teaching” or “using” the other) is replaced by communication between cultures; this horizontal structure can be found also in Mall’s idea of a “four-fold hermeneutic dialectic”: “First is the way in which Europeans understand themselves. Second is the European understanding of non-Europeans. Third is the way in which non-Europeans understand themselves, and fourth is the way non-European draw a picture of Europeans.(Mall, 2000b, p.3)” There again, against a unique hermeneutics, which was the case during the colonisation or the missionary attempt to “understand” Indian texts by following a vertical organisation of cultures (with the paradigm of the Hegelian schema) a horizontal, mutual and diverse movement is developed, which takes all cultures in consideration. This is not the only way of thinking interculturality however, and we will see in particular with H. Rombach (*cf III. 3.*) how a verticality can raise against the horizon of Gadamer understood in a spatial configuration. These two schemas do not necessarily exclude each other but they present different modellings of intercultural relations.

1 Introduction

standing exponents, embody a desire to understand whose singular power and problematic nature arise from their deep and uncompromising *desire to be understood.*" (Halbfass, 1988, p.53)

Contact was thus made in order to convert Indians to Christianity, as a primary and essential goal which implied before all the duty of making from the other the same. Indian philosophers answered to that point and later on, to this effective contact with the colonisation, and the exclusion of India from the field of science; Rammohan Roy and the following Neo-Hindu philosophers addressed themselves therefore to the Western world, with its language and concepts, but used the same concepts as a mean or as a tool to understand India and to define the Indian nation. If they directed themselves to the other, the other was again in India a concrete presence or necessity, not really for the other in itself, but for the need and concrete challenge of trying to define one's own country where the other is ruling.

"We are not simply dealing with Western "influences" upon Rammohan's thought, or with his understanding and evaluation of foreign, Western ideas, but also, and perhaps more significantly, with ways in which the foreign came to be adopted as a means of self-understanding and self-presentation and how Rammohan's thought thus achieved its peculiar cross-cultural ambiguity. [Ibid, p.203]"

Indian philosophers did not despise Western works; on the contrary, they did not hesitate to use the missionary works, or the Western philosophers (Hegel who had strongly influenced the exclusion of India from the field of history and philosophy, was one of the most studied Western philosopher in India (Halbfass, 1988, 84-99 and 217-246)), or the indologists. But even if the situation in India was very diverse, between tradition and modernity in the Western sense (between the choice of opening themselves to the West and their technology, or to isolate themselves from this part of the world) with various interpretations and propositions, reinterpreting Indian philosophy and Western theories was not made mainly by curiosity towards the alienness, but as a response to Western initiative and presence to reinforce their identity or to fight against Western prejudices. The alienness once again in India was absorbed into the own identity. With the shock of the "modernization" brought by the British, Neo-Hindu looked in their own tradition and reinterpreted their own traditional philosophy to adapt it to the new rules, or to respond to the West. To conclude,

"The fascination with science and technology was already great with Rammohan Roy; Kesab Chandra Sen and Vivekananda attempted to meet it with models stressing the mutual complementing of East and West. On the other hand, some Europeans were convinced that introducing European scientific thought into India would pave the way for the reception of Christianity (...). However, this strategy was not very effective. The Hindu reaction consisted in viewing Western progress as being independent of Christianity as well as in attempts to show that the Indian tradition does not merely provide a potentially equal or superior substratum for such achievements, but was actually their historical basis. [Ibid, p.246]"

1.2.3 The polycultural Other, or the cultural otherness

The last phase of this consideration of a foreigner is still in process, and cannot be considered as finalized. This is precisely the goal of intercultural philosophy. It is the location of our work, as much as it has been made possible as a reaction and a consequence of the two previous phases. The political end of the colonisation as well as the economical explosion of colonized countries such as India did not put an end to all prejudices of other philosophies and cultures. Quite the contrary. These lasting resistances, for example in the form of an ideology of the “white supremacy”, or as the difficulties to admit other kinds of philosophies in the academical or common framework, or any other form of inequality studied in particular by post-colonialist philosophers, are not only still present today, but are the most insidious residues. They are thus spread into the world-wide realm of imagination and commonly accepted ideologies, and therefore they not only affect the outlook of the non-Western world towards the West, but they are also mostly accepted by the non-West, which makes any change more difficult.

Any serious attempt of intercultural philosophy takes form within this complexity and against this perfidious forms of domination. It presupposes according to us that we take in consideration the historical changes of the concept of the other, which became “a radical other” (Waldenfels, 2009, p.48). The closed idea of a Greek *cosmos* collapsed, as a general, absolute and universal conceptual framework. It has left us with a field to re-investigate and to re-order. We find here a resonance of this transition or breakdown with the periods described by H. Rombach: the first period that we called “relative other” with the help of Waldenfels corresponds more or less to the model of the *substance* that goes to the thought of *system* during the second period (though the accent that we wanted to stress is slightly different, concerning strictly the other understood as reduction of his otherness) and the *structure*²³ at the end. The two first periods were concerned with ordering the particular *inside a whole*, and this One was always transcendent, including the particular and superseding it at the same time. On the contrary, we consider in this last period a structural way of conceiving the world that enables *a plurality of worlds*, as “the whole is nothing different than the individual. It is the inner essence of each individual, which belongs to this whole, if this whole is a vivid community.”²⁴ This model enables the *radical Other*²⁵ to enter into the consciousness and the world of philosophy: as long as the other was understood

²³We will follow the following definition of Rombach for the structure: “Die Struktur ist, ganz anders als das System, durch Autogenese gekennzeichnet, durch den Selbstaufbau, der seinen Durchbruch, seine ekstatische Selbststrukturierung, seinen Höhepunkt und seinen Untergang hat. Diesen Prozess nennt man gemeinhin “Leben”, er ist aber nicht nur die Geschehensform der “Lebewesen”, sondern des “Seienden” insgesamt. Es gibt “totes Sein” nicht, alles lebt, und alles organisiert sich in autogenetischen Prozessen der Selbstgestaltung, Selbststeigerung und Selbstvollendung.” (Rombach, 2003, p.16) Personal translation: “Unlike the system, the structure is characterized by auto-genesis, by the self-organisation, which has its breakthrough, its ecstatic self-structuring, its climax, and its downfall. This process is called commonly “life”, but in fact it is not only the form of the event of “living beings”, but of “beings” in total. There is no “lifeless being”, everything lives and everything organises itself in auto-genetic processes of self-figuration, self-elevation, and self-perfection.”

²⁴Personal Translation. Original Text: “Das Ganze ist nichts anderes als das Einzelne. Es ist die innerste Wesenheit jedes Einzelnen, das zu diesem Ganzen gehört, wenn dieses Ganze eine lebendige Gemeinschaft ausmacht.” (Rombach, 2003, p.11)

²⁵In order to distinguish between the different conceptions of the otherness, we use the *Other* as the intercultural, ethical and radical Other that we want to defend in this thesis. On the contrary, the *other* is the relative other understood in the universal cosmos in relation to oneself, in the sense of “alterity” described by B. Waldenfels. The other is therefore an other related to the same, whereas the Other is beyond any global order and reduction to the same.

1 Introduction

within an order as a whole, a three-fold relation only could be developed: the other was either a friend, an enemy or an ignorance (which is actually the limit of the existence of the other, already disappearing.). He could be integrated, assimilated under certain conditions (with the example of the metic in Ancient Greece, a foreigner living in the familiar), reduced and fought (colonisation) or left apart in his world, as long as he did not come closer enough to be a threat. There was no Other as such in its radical alienness, as there was a single whole order. We should admit here that this structure has been elaborated in the West by a Western philosopher, namely Rombach; we think however that it can be applied to intercultural philosophy including also the other parts of the world. This would be an “inter” concept concerning the mutual understanding and reading, following the last developments; it means that it may not always work if we study directly and only some points of the Indian culture. However on a global scale, and especially for the transition to the structure that we illustrate now and that leads us to our contemporary world, we think that Rombach can be understood at an intercultural scale. Here is what this transition brought for the emergence of the otherness:

“By this, the basic image of the structure was conceived. It says that the whole is not “above” the individuals, but lives “within” them. The whole makes each individual in the first place and in full reality to an individual, but at the same time does not cut off the individual from other individuals, but “unites” them. “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Paulus). To this notion, Nicholas of Cusa gave the ontological and philosophical form of expression. The inner essence of everything was the “non-aliud”, which at the same time was the particular itself and “nothing else”, and at the same time an exact expression of the whole, which is supposed to live as the same “not-other” within everything.”²⁶

The schema of structure implies an upheaval in the mental and categorical orders: we go from the vertical (*über*) hierarchy to the horizontal, relation and integration (*in*), which functions as an enabling-condition for the emergence of a possibility of thinking a plurality of cultures located next to each other. Furthermore, it developed the idea of communication between them (their different *modi*, under the names of conversation, dialogue or polylogue will be studied throughout this work). This new organisation of the world and this plurality that opens a relation to the other leads us to the concept of the “radical cultural other”, a polycultural Other. We can start with Waldenfels’ concept that we applied to cultures:

“When I speak about *radical* alienness, I want to speak about an alienness that cannot be carried over the same, neither be ordered in a whole that is, in this way, irreducible. Such a radical irreducibility presupposes that what we call subject is not the host [maître] in his own home and that each “given” order, or possible order in another way, holds in some limits. The alienness, in its radical form, expresses

²⁶Personal translation. Original text: “Damit war das Grundbild der Struktur erfaßt. Dieses besagt, daß das Ganze nicht “über” den Einzelnen steht, sondern “in” ihnen lebt, jedes Einzelne überhaupt erst in voller Wirklichkeit zu einem Einzelnen macht, und doch auch es dadurch nicht von den anderen abschneidet, sondern mit ihnen “eint.” “Nicht mehr ich lebe, sondern Christus lebt in mir” (Paulus). Dieser Auffassung gab Nicolaus Cusanus die ontologische und philosophische Ausdrucksform. Das innerste Wesen eines jeglichen war das “Non-aliud”, das zugleich das Jeweilige selbst war, und “nichts anderes”, wie zugleich auch ein genauer Ausdruck jenes Ganzen, das als dasselbe “Nicht-andere” in allen wohne.” [Ibid, p.11]

1 Introduction

the fact that the self is in a certain way *outside of himself*, and that each order is delimited by the shadow of the extraordinary. As long as we close our eyes in front of such a conception, we stay attached to a *relative* alienness, to a simple “alienness for us” that refers to a temporary stage of appropriation.²⁷”

The impossibility of ordering the alien in a well-known system or directly in our categories of thought is to guarantee the alien a respect in a sense of non-reduction to the own. If we interpret Waldenfels with extra care to the cultural context, the alien understood *as such*, in its alienness, cannot go through our internal structures, our mental categories, which are constructed in a certain culture, without being modified, without losing its alienness and in its way, without losing its own culture and particularities of its world. One world cannot be included *as such* in another world. This does not mean that we cannot interpret the Other, that we cannot speak about him, that we cannot understand anything of him, or that we cannot encounter and make the experience of its alienness. It means that in order not to reduce it to our world, to our categories, to our structures and our concepts, one should not forget his embodiment to his own culture (which does not mean a closure). The irreducibility of the alien is however not an obstacle for a discourse about it, but the proof of its recognition *as such*. The radical other under his form of cultural otherness is therefore the first presupposition against assimilation.

To conclude this part, let us add a word about the understanding of the tradition in intercultural philosophy. A twofold problem has been implicitly underlined: first, there is the problem of the tradition of intercultural philosophy itself, that is the difficulties of finding an inheritance of the question of cultural otherness, as it goes against the various types of historical ignorance or reductions of the others, or its relative understanding in a subsuming cosmos. It appears that our conception of a radical and polycultural Other has been rather sudden and recent, and therefore the question *of* the tradition of intercultural philosophy *in the broader history of philosophy* can be justifiably raised. Second, the question *of the concept of a tradition within intercultural philosophy* raises a problem (*cf. the first part, 1.1 The problem of the intercultural tradition*): as stated above, intercultural philosophy seeks to account for the multiplicity of traditions and thus employs the expression of an “inter-” to denote relations between a plurality of cultures; hence, it rejects the concept as understood and developed in the hermeneutics of Gadamer, as an excessive closure and a confinement within the Same. A redefinition of the concept is required in order to make the borders of cultures more flexible, and to update this concept in our intercultural and globalized world. We should therefore turn now to this task.

²⁷Personal translation. Original text: “Quand je parle d'étrangeté *radicale*, je veux parler d'une étrangeté qui ne peut ni être reconduite au propre ni être ordonnée dans un tout qui est, en ce sens, irréductible. Une telle étrangeté radicale présuppose que ce que l'on appelle sujet n'est pas maître dans sa propre maison et que chaque ordre “donné”, ou possible d'une autre manière, se maintienne dans certaines limites. L'étrangeté, dans sa forme radicale, exprime le fait que le soi est d'une certaine manière *hors de soi*, et que chaque ordre est circonscrit par l'ombre de l'extraordinaire. Aussi longtemps que l'on ferme les yeux devant une telle conception, on reste attaché à une étrangeté *relative*, à une simple “étrangeté pour nous” qui se réfère à un stade passager d'appropriation.” (Waldenfels, 2005a, p.349)

1.3 What is intercultural philosophy?

We have now established a general historical and conceptual framework about the problems of the emergence of the cultural otherness, and we have located the alienness of intercultural philosophy in the last phase of a cultural otherness; but we still have to face the question that is always raised by intercultural philosophers, and yet seems still unresolved: what is intercultural philosophy? The field of interculturality, based upon its complex history, should according to us reflect on two conceptual level of its definition. It is of course before all a philosophical concept that must be analyzed and understood as such; however, we think that for this concept to be operative, or correctly applied, it has to represent first an ethical attitude. The distinction between the second phase, the domination, and the last intercultural phase is a breakdown in the conception of the Other, based on an attitude of respect and recognition of the other as an Other. This ethical attitude is *pre-philosophical*, as it is an essential requirement, embodied in a *praxis*, and philosophically legitimated. Indeed, what has been lacking in some of the greatest philosophers of the West is not the arguments themselves but rather an ethical attitude to orientate their philosophical arguments. Their arguments without an appropriate attitude have appeared to be dated and invalid, precisely because they have not been processed through an analysis of their grounds and legitimacy, and they turned out to be ideologies. An awareness of the context of thoughts, of the direction of our ideas and their implications is crucial in order to avoid spreading harmful clichés and ideologies.

1.3.1 Attitude and praxis

Intercultural philosophy aims at a change of mentalities, a new attitude towards histories that are multiplied and opened, and a recognition of the plurality. In this regard, we agree with Mall's assertion that "Interculturality, expressed positively, is the name of a philosophical and cultural attitude, position and insight."²⁸ The awareness of the radical Other should be structured as a practical consequence in the form of an *ethics* of civilisations and worlds that would be based on recognition of the simple fact of plurality and horizontal order towards communications, exchange, immersion and any other contact, now multiplied, with the presupposition of equality. Intercultural philosophy has to take in consideration the systematical and theoretical side of philosophy, to set itself up as a reflected and legitimated model to approach alienness *in order to be applicable and applied to the social domains*²⁹. This should not be understood as a dogma, but as a logical consequence of the previous part concerning the emergence of the Other and the contemporary situation. To avoid falling back in the spheres of the ignored or relative other and in the dominated or excluded alien, and to acknowledge these new poly-dimensional relations and this multiplication of cultural spheres or worlds that eventually have to cross in a global world, one has to accept the very presupposition that to combine, to live with and to communicate with those different spheres, one needs to accept a basic ethic towards the Other, based on mutual respect and mutual recognition. Recognition is not here understood in the

²⁸Personal translation. Original text : "Interkulturalität, positiv ausgedrückt, ist der Name einer philosophischen und kulturellen Haltung, Einstellung und Einsicht." (Mall, 1995, p.2)

²⁹We understand social domains here in plural as each and every distinguished social sphere located in each and every cultures; in that sense, social reflects the different societies in their cultural aspects, including mutual differences.

1 Introduction

sense of Habermas or Honneth (nor the original thesis taken from Hegel), who are concerned exclusively with a European approach, limited to Western categories³⁰. We prefer in our interest an intercultural or multicultural approach such as the one that Betancourt (Fornet-Betancourt, 2011, p.131-157) pleads, who acknowledges the original culture in which we are located as a fulcrum to orientate ourselves, but who considers the other cultures to complete, enrich and develop our own culture. Recognition is therefore here the essential and primary condition to be situated in cultures according to a pluralistic approach. Understood at a very simple level, it is the acknowledgment of the other as Other, with its right to be Other, which means that I cannot reduce him to my own, and that he has to be treated and thought as an equal. He is an Other with which a relation can be constructed. It goes together with respect as the necessary moral attitude for such a *praxis*.

Praxis, as well as recognition and respect implies a constant actualization and re-actualization of the situation, or to say it differently: it implies a dynamic relation, always moving, never fixed. The sphere of the “inter” is delimited by several points of reference, which symbolize the cultures but do not define the sphere itself: that is precisely the task of the undefined space that is located between those references. We say “undefined” as it is actually a succession of different states, a dynamic relation that takes place with various forms: however, the central focus of interculturality is a relation defined by a dynamic movement, which never reaches a fixed situation but is always re-actualizing itself. If we take Wimmer’s previous schema of a polylogue (“A ↔ B and A ↔ C and A ↔ D and B ↔ C and B ↔ D and C ↔ D”. (Wimmer, 2004, p.69)), it is in general the arrow between the points that forms the core of intercultural philosophy. To say it differently: the “↔” symbolizes intercultural philosophy, whereas A and B for example are the limits, necessary to define the relation, as a relation can be understood only if there is at least two points to be related. They are therefore logical necessities, and concrete cultures established, but the focus and the interest of intercultural philosophy is precisely this “in-between” and the study of its expressions, concrete forms and developments. A question can be raised about the delimitations and the conceptions of the borders of A and B as concrete cultures, since it has been acknowledged that there is no pure culture and therefore no precise border between A and B. A and B are ex-changing or ex-changed so that the relation, the in-between is already a part of the cultures (of A and B), or more exactly, the main part of their cultures. Therefore the arrow is *de facto* a part of A and B, and the relations are part of the cultures. It does not mean that there is only one global culture of course, $A \neq B$ but A and B relate to each other, or communicate (in a broad sense, as the modi of relations and communication are the studies of intercultural philosophers). A is influenced by B (and vice versa), contains some common elements of B³¹ or creates some mixed (or hybrid) elements born from the relation of A and B, i.e. which belong neither to A nor B but to the encounter of A and B, born from the relation itself, etc. In any case, the relation is always already there with

³⁰We believe indeed that for example, the three modes of recognition used by Honneth would have significant different meanings and interpretations if we apply them to any other culture; love and justice especially cannot be universalized and used blindly to other societies. The attempt to substantialize these categories is already a problem in Honneth’s application to Western society and insufficient to include a complete approach of love, justice and culture, and therefore, could be with great difficulties applicable to non-Western societies according to us. (Honneth, 1996)

³¹This overlap is the basis of the analogical analyses of R.A Mall that will be studied in the next chapter.

1 Introduction

the cultures. We believe that this relational dimension is essential to any understanding and interpretation of intercultural philosophy.

With the relational comes also the aforementioned dynamic. M. Scheler gave a pertinent account of this point, though polemical with regard to his personal interpretation of Nietzsche. He calls *Allmensch* (Allman or Allhuman) the ideal of human being. It can be related to our mention of a horizontal relation aimed by intercultural philosophy, which is itself not uniformly accepted. Indeed, Scheler opposes his *Allmensch* to Nietzsche's *Übermensch*³², that is the *über* against the *all*, the hierarchy of a vertical appreciation or overtaking against the relation. From Scheler's point of view, Nietzsche presents a vertical hierarchy or transcendence of the common man by the *Übermensch*, whereas he is himself on the side of a syncretism by adjustment (*Ausgleich*). Against the fixed biological Nietzschean meaning that is blocked in a narrow understanding of human being determined by historical evolution, and a celebration of power, Scheler sets up a subsuming or including concept of man, characterized by its "plasticity" ("Plastizität" (Scheler, 1995, p.151)). For him, the "animal rationale", the *Übermensch*, Adam, the *homme machine*, etc. are only different aspects which shows a determined way of thinking at a certain time, but they certainly cannot *be* or cannot *define* the human being, who is much more broader and flexible than that. He writes then:

"The human is not a thing - it is a direction of the movement of the universe itself, of its ground. The human is "microcosm and spiritual living being" - I hope that those ideas are not already too narrow loops for the plenty of his possibilities and his figurations. *Thus: space for the human and for its essentially infinite movement and no fixation in an "example", in an either natural historical or world historical shape!*³³" [Ibid.]

It is certainly a singular interpretation of Nietzsche, who was himself critical towards the uniformity, who opened the way to perspectivism and brought the first grounds for a critical reflection on one's own culture. There could be possible intercultural interpretation of the *Übermensch*, considered as a openness of the movement beyond the closure of one's horizon. One can also see the "horizontal" as a reference to Gadamer, and a vertical approach as transcending one's own limits, in order to overtake our own tradition and our own culture. Nevertheless, even if Scheler's interpretation of Nietzsche can be debated, his conclusion contributes to our definition of intercultural philosophy, as a dynamic relation open to changes. The weight of tradition and history, which is a constant concern, should be lightened for a broader understanding of the alienness, since in this domain history and tradition can hardly be applied, and preconceptions are most of the time inadequate to the experience of the other as Other.

³²As there is no consensus regarding the English translation of *Übermensch* (superman or overman), we use here only the original term.

³³Personal translation. Original text: "Der Mensch ist kein Ding - er ist eine Richtung der Bewegung des Universums selbst, ja seines Grundes. Der Mensch ist "Mikrokosmos und geisterfülltes Lebewesen" - ich hoffe, diese Ideen sind nicht bereits zu enge Maschen für die Fülle seiner Möglichkeiten und Gestaltungen. *Also Raum für den Menschen und für seine wesensunendliche Bewegung und keine Fixierung an ein "Beispiel", an eine sei es naturhistorische oder welthistorische Gestalt!*" [Ibid.]

1.3.2 To “interculturalize” philosophy

To continue towards a definition of the concept of “Interculturality”, we have to start with some well known, and still problematic points: interculturality means firstly the space located between cultures, inter-cultures. This is already a formal abstraction that does not exist *in concreto*, since we are always located³⁴ in a culture by our tradition, our structures, our concepts, etc. The *inter* in the relation is therefore never *de facto* a neutral and empty in-between. It is always determined with and by cultures. At the same time, it cannot belong to any specific culture, and it is re-defining itself according to its concrete location. It is not because it is between A and B that it belongs to A nor B. It is a total malleable or plastic sphere that puts both A and B in contacts and separate them by a changing and undefined border, which is however actually and irremediably present there. In that sense it is an overlapping zone that does not belong to any culture and overtake both of them in the creation of common experience and encounters, and an overlap where borders stay undefined. It is a zone of contacts whose border are not drawn, and yet, have to be there to distinguish cultures.

Consequently, we should differentiate *inter-* and *trans-* culturality. In a sense, the inter-space could be understood as a trans-space, as it does not belong to any culture and could be seen as being located *beyond* them. One could consider the transculturality as being either what is essentially common in all cultures, or what can transcend cultures, such as religion as such, symbolism as such or Art in some ways, this very central core of every culture which is essentially Human; one could also consider transculturality as being this very basic phenomenon of the experience or the encounter of the alien that in an epochal movement is not located in a particular sphere but opens to the imperviousness of the Other, in an interpretation of the cultural other that would follow the transcendental of the Other by Lévinas. We acknowledge those positions and the question of the “core” of cultures under the forms of religion or Art for example, or the similarities found at a very metaphysical and primary level, as being indeed important reflections. Though we are aware of the transcendental cultural questions, we will not enter in details in this kind of argumentation. On another side, one can understand transculturality as the first step of pulling oneself out of one’s culture (H.R. Sepp). In order not to stay closed in one’s horizon with one’s traditions, one has to transcend one’s horizon, to disobey to it and to exceed one’s own culture towards the otherness. This first action can also be regarded as the necessary primary transcultural gesture. It leads thus to an important question: how can we distance ourselves enough from our own culture in order to be in a relation with others?

In this work however, we will focus on the intercultural side, following the lines of Waldenfels, who explains clearly the schema made above. It is therefore the description of the model, as it is neither A, nor B, nor any universal cosmos or transcendental entity, and however, at least for our interpretation of Waldenfels and application to our thought, it is made from A and B, from the encounter of A and B:

“If on the contrary we take seriously the term interculturality, we arrive then in

³⁴We can find an illustration of this dilemma and paradox between location and in-between space in the expression “Orthafte Ortlosigkeit interkultureller Hermeneutik” (Mall, 2005, p.105) of Mall, which will be studied later. We can summarize it as follow: “Orthaftigkeit der Hermeneutik ohne die offene Ortlosigkeit ist blind; und Ortlosigkeit ohne die feste Orthaftigkeit ist leer und lahm.” [Ibid, p.107] Personal Translation: “The location without the open a-location is blind; and the a-location without the solid location is empty and lame.”

1 Introduction

a in-between sphere whose intermediary character can neither be reduced to what is someone's own, nor be integrated in a whole, and even less be subordinated to universal laws. What happens between us does not belong to anyone nor to all together. In that sense a no man's land is constituted, region of limit that links and separates at the same time. What is there while it escapes one's own grasp, we call it alienness." (Waldenfels, 2005a, p.346)³⁵

Transculturality can therefore be considered for us only as a first step, and considered as a different accent of the study that will not be developed in this work. We will therefore use the term *interculturality*, as trans-culturality is here taking the risk to fall back in a vertical approach of cultures; it would imply a hierarchy between ordinary and extra-ordinary, or between common and empirical and transcendental, that we do not want to keep in this work. If we consider an inter-space, possibilities for contacts and relations can be multiplied from the cultures, to the cultures and become a mutual and reciprocal dialogue, polylogue, exchange, conversation, experience, encounter, etc. All these conceptions imply a direct relation *between* A and B, and this dynamic orientation is precisely our aim. Thus, transculturality can carry the dream of an "universalistic dream" (Wimmer, 1996, p.4) that can take the form of a refusal of the basic relativistic fact that the discourse of any philosopher is situated in a certain culture at a certain time and is therefore influenced and determined by its position, and should not be taken as the universal truth. Or to say it differently:

"I prefer the term interculturality over transculturality for the simple reason that all of our points of view are bound up in a culture and do not exist in vacuo. The prefix *inter-* in comparison to *trans-*, points to an experiential core of existence. If there is any universal worthy of the name, beyond either being postulated or just defined, it is the intercultural one. The prefix *trans-* seems to point to something beyond and makes us believe in a transition." (Mall, 2000b, p.36)

We do not think that it is unthinkable to make a transcultural approach of a particular point of understanding cultures; we do agree with the idea that one should go beyond his own culture, and that this direction can be transcultural. However in this work we chose to be cautious since such a use can bring unfortunate connotations or deviations towards universalism, homogenization, or any kind of hierarchical organisation.

We would like to make few additional remarks concerning the definition of intercultural philosophy in our work: intercultural philosophy is setting itself up as its own domain as it has to challenge the long Western tradition of denying a radical alienness, and of considering any difference as a sign of inferiority; however, the aim of intercultural philosophy is not to end up

³⁵We do not agree with his whole theory regarding the qualification of "alienness" and the suspension of the alien in a *responsive* approach that stops in this phenomenological moment and does not consider seriously the stage of any familiarity that can emerge with the act of living with the other for example, etc. We cut his whole argumentation into the above lines, and we strongly agree with the part we quoted, whose original text in French is: "Si au contraire nous prenons au sérieux le terme interculturalité, nous arrivons alors (...) dans une sphère de l'entre-deux dont le caractère intermédiaire ne peut être ni reconduit à ce qui est propre, ni être intégré dans un tout, et encore moins être subordonné à des lois universelles. Ce qui a lieu entre nous n'appartient ni à chacun, ni à tous ensemble. En ce sens se constitue une terre de personne, une région de limite qui relie et sépare en même temps. Ce qui est là en se soustrayant à une saisie propre, nous l'appelons étrangeté."

1 Introduction

as an isolated domain next to other philosophical fields such as phenomenology, hermeneutics, political philosophy, etc. It is to make every philosophy intercultural. We do not think that every theory needs to have a four-fold dimensional aspect³⁶, and that every philosopher should include a variety of cultural approaches in each work made in philosophy. However, we think that each philosopher should be aware of its own culture and of the variety of cultures available and located next to his own world. We think that the plurality of cultures and the multiplicity of relations should be made available in every field of philosophy, and that philosophies should be used in plural with a sense of equality and a horizontal order and communication. Following the idea of Stenger³⁷, we think that interculturality is now philosophizing, so that philosophy can interculturalize itself. We do not aim at adding another field of philosophy next to the other ones, at making intercultural philosophy an independent and self-substantial domain of reflection, but to change the course of philosophy by making philosophy intercultural in itself. This is according to us the final phase of intercultural philosophy, and we do hope that one day intercultural theories will be useless because philosophy will have absorbed it within itself.

It is however a long path in front of us. We would like to observe the following paradox: the basic mode of presenting intercultural theories is to use a European philosophical method to think the cultural otherness. J.L Mehta, R.A Mall, R. Ohashi are specialists of Western philosophy, and they orientated their philosophy towards a reflection between the encounter of the West and the East. As it is raised by Wimmer, the status of non-occidental philosophers is also not very clear, whether they are “not considered *authentic representatives* of their respective cultures” (if they study Western philosophy) or whether “they are not considered to be *true philosophers*” (if they study their own philosophy) (Wimmer, 1996, p.3), a feeling that is spread in all cultures. The new encounter between the East and the West is still ambiguous, and those who successfully became famous in the West (S. Radhakrishnan, J.N Mohanty, etc.) are concerned by this prejudice, as they adapted themselves to the West or they are expert on Western philosophy, leaving their “status” undecided for many. Concerning intercultural philosophy, the phenomenological approach of Waldenfels for example is almost strictly understood within European philosophy. His conception of the alien is European and is not determined by any cultural particularities or any embodiment in a singular culture. This can be discussed and does not need necessarily to be reproached, but it is nevertheless, a fact to be remarked. The contemporary cultural other, though born against any reduction to the same, is very often already understood in a Western framework. The communication that has been indeed effectively developed between the East and the West does not remove ambiguities and inequalities concerning the Other, often more insidious than it appears first. We understand thus very well for Western philosopher that they are also located in their culture, and that it is more familiar, in general, to use one’s own culture, and we will at the end do the same in this work in its main part. However, what is problematic is the systematicity of this use that ends up by neglecting the other cultural methods, or the

³⁶Following Mall, the interpretation of the non-West by the West, the interpretation of the non-West by the non-West, the interpretation of the West by the West and the interpretation of the West by the non-West.(Mall, 2000b, p.3)

³⁷G.Stenger writes in his preface: “Die Philosophie wird nicht nur aus externen Gründen interkulturell werden müssen, sie wird sich aus internen philosophischen Gründen *interkulturalisieren*.” (Stenger, 2006, p.14) Personal translation: “Philosophy will not have to become intercultural only for external reasons, it will interculturalise itself out of internal philosophical reasons.”

plurality of methods. Most of them are concerned with the actual plurality of cultures and the applications of Western concepts and methods towards other cultures, which is according to us the primary phase of intercultural philosophy. However, we think that it is not sufficient, especially when all or most of the approaches use the same Western methods; the diversity of doing philosophy should be kept as well as the various philosophies. Intercultural philosophy cannot only be concerned by other philosophies, it has to be inter-philosophies, it has to be inscribed in a plurality of methods and approaches. Consequently, we would like not to inscribe ourself in one particular method, as we think plurality of intercultural philosophical methods is the most cautious and the most complete way of doing interculturality. This is true concerning the variety of traditions as we just mentioned, and that we would try to apply, but also within Western tradition: we believe, and it will be the case in our work, that hermeneutics, hermetics and phenomenology in particular have all strong points to make for an intercultural reflection, but that it is in particular their *articulation* and their *relation* that matters. To say it differently: the deficiencies of each one in studying the cultural otherness can be filled by another method, so that one is dependent on another, without hierarchy but following a dynamic and relational dimension.

1.4 One way to intercultural philosophy

We consciously chose to restrict ourselves in this study to what we call “the German school³⁸” of Intercultural philosophy, that is, the contemporary circle of intercultural philosophers spread mainly in Germany and Austria, considered as “intercultural philosophers”. Because of the practical limitations of the scope of this study, we do not want to extend this debate here to other forms of the debate, whether in cultural anthropology or post-colonial study. It will be clearer and more reasonable to focus on one “school” that focuses on more or less the same problematics. A lot of their names have been used already. From their own perspectives and contributions, we would like in this work to confront them, with their advantages and deficiencies. We hope then to contribute to the conversation that is to us somehow incomplete, as we mentioned previously. We would therefore like to bring together the multiple approaches, definitions and dimensions of intercultural philosophy, to construct within this fertile field a possible synthesis. We would like to direct these philosophies towards the question: *how* to think cultural otherness? Or to say it differently: which methods can be applicable to intercultural philosophy? How is it possible to think, beyond our tradition and taking in consideration the plurality of cultures, a radical Other?

These seemingly simple questions open a vast field of interrogations, and the introduction should have helped us to raise them. The inclusion within one or several traditions, the difficult emergence of the cultural and radical Other, the still ambiguous and sometimes problematic status of intercultural philosophy, the deficiencies of philosophy itself and its need to be inter-

³⁸It is of course a term that does not exist and is just used here as a practical shortcut for a long list of intercultural philosophers. This includes in a non-exhaustive and not-ordered list H. Kimmerle, F.M Wimmer, R.F Betancourt, R.A Mall, H.R Yousefi, B. Waldenfels, G. Stenger, H.R Sepp, etc. We do not want to reduce their research to this domain or to bind them to some qualifications; we just acknowledge the fact that at least a large part of their researches explicitly concerns what they call themselves “Interkulturelle Philosophie.”

1 Introduction

culturalized, the accent on a concrete *praxis* and attitude, make the idea of a method extremely difficult. We said already that our answer will be a multiple method to respond to the multiplicity of cultures, which will take into consideration the dynamic and relational aspect that should be included in intercultural philosophy. A dynamic re-actualizing approach adds of course to the difficulty of speaking of a “method” which by nature tries to order by fixing things. Our understanding therefore includes our previous remarks, so that “methods” is understood in a broad and flexible sense to enable plasticity, as a way of thinking and as a way of doing intercultural philosophy.

In the broad and fertile domain of intercultural philosophy, and even if we restrict ourselves to this “German school”, we also had to make logical choices for the understanding, clarity and pertinence of our work. This study therefore does not aim at an exhaustive presentation and discussion of each of the aforementioned intercultural philosophers, or at providing complete details of each theory of the philosophers that will be mentioned. We wanted less to study one possible way of thinking intercultural philosophy by one particular author than to try to connect different works in order to combine their contributions and make emerge their possible problems regarding a methodological point of view, thus leading us to another possibility of thinking intercultural philosophy. We are therefore conscious that each section of this work could be extensively developed into a full thesis, and it is probable that we sometimes lack some details of a philosophical theory. We acknowledge the risk of giving an overview of very different philosophical and literary perspectives. We believe however that it is precisely the process of combination of mutual observations and evaluations that are connecting here under the form of a conversation (*Gespräch*) that is an intercultural way to reflect about the concept of method for relations concerned with cultural otherness. In this vast field, to give an exhaustive study of each intercultural philosopher is probably impossible, and it was not even our intention. A conversation (that we tried to locate between Indian and Western traditions) should stay at the core of our intercultural approach.

Presentation of the content- We will start from the hermeneutic approach of intercultural philosophy. This approach is extremely interesting as it directly deals with the problems of the traditions and the important closure brought about in particular by Gadamer, and at the same time it focuses on the question of “understanding”, a concept that is important in the consideration of a cultural other. It brings a challenge at the very beginning of its conception that we tried to underline in this introduction. It is therefore a broad and full transformation that is required, and the reflection is led by the criticism of the past, and the actual need of its openness. R.A Mall (*II,1.*) tries to overcome the hermeneutic problems within the field itself, through an “analogical hermeneutics”, and to renew the method with the conception of an “overlap” between identity and difference. He aims at creating a moderate and balanced conception of a hermeneutics that escapes both relativism and universalism, and to avoid any absolutization of the truth or the tradition, with a strong ethical orientation. He is criticized by what is called “Cultural Hermeneutics” (*Kulturhermeneutik*) (*II, 2.*), a collective work born at Graduate College of the University of Erlangen. We will use from the book some articles that evaluate the problems of intercultural hermeneutics, as well as those that present its own

1 Introduction

original contribution, which puts cultural hermeneutics on the crossroads between hermeneutics, phenomenology and deconstruction. It criticizes the binary condition of intercultural hermeneutics and tries to bring a necessary processual dimension. We will consider especially the role of the body that should be implied in an intercultural approach.

Though it is still called “hermeneutics”, the combination of methods and influences employed, as well the consideration of the limits of hermeneutics will lead us towards a debate on the plurality of methods (*III*). While reflecting on cultural hermeneutics, we will study the limits of the hermeneutic circle, and the possibilities of doing intercultural hermeneutic without the closure of this circle. One solution is offered by K. Klostermaier (*III, 1.*) who focuses on the notion of centre instead of the circle, inspired from its importance in Indian philosophy. This centre is linked by him with the Hermetics of H. Rombach, so that we can oppose the hermeneutic circle to the hermetic centre. His article contributes as a severe criticism of hermeneutics, and opens new possibilities, on the side of Indian philosophy and towards H. Rombach, the two directions that are then developed. On the first one, we will give an overview of ways of thinking about interculturality from Indian philosophy (*III, 2.*), that is to consider Indian philosophy not only as an object of study, but as a way to study Interculturality in its very structures. We will therefore have an overview on the classical compositions and their own conception of hermeneutics that have been in debate in its Western conception in this study and will try to explore the path for intercultural models within these philosophies, on the classical side with the Jain proposition and on the contemporary side in particular with D. Krishna. India has been constantly seeing re-interpretations of its structures of thought considering the fast changes due to colonization and post-colonization and the challenge that the so-called modernity has brought, so that authors like J.N Mohanty, D. Krishna, B.K Matilal, etc. have had, from a long time, to deal with a *de facto* presence of the own and the alien. Finally we will have a look on the opposition between Hermetics and Hermeneutics developed by H. Rombach (*III, 3.*). Hermetics will be for us the locus of a strong criticism of hermeneutics, as well as a new direction for interculturality. It brings a radical pluralistic conception of the cultural otherness through the concept of worlds, which suggests a fully dynamic (*concreative*) structure that takes differences so seriously that it reaches a lively experience of the Other that has to admit the limits of rationality.

The gap between Hermetics and Hermeneutics can according to us find a reconciliation in literature (*IV, 1.*). It deserves according to us at least an attention, as a possibility to overcome the problems of finding an intercultural philosophical method. Consequently, we will try to show that literature can bring important advantages to the debate, as an immediate and dynamic encounter to the cultural other in the writings, and an appropriate living experience. In so doing, we will take the example of H. Michaux, *A Barbarian in Asia* (*IV, 2.*). We believe that this singular work is a complex and sometimes painful achievement as far as its portrayal of the encounter with cultural otherness, the abruptness of its judgments as well as its recognition of the Other precisely as a radical Other, and the transformations of the author that one can read throughout his experience in Asia are concerned. We can therefore see, via a specific work of literature and its style, a singular and pertinent intercultural method.

The borders between methods that are drawn here can appear artificial, as it is obvious that

1 Introduction

influences and philosophical fields do not have absolute limits, and consider different ways of thinking. They represent for us distinguished paths towards intercultural philosophy as practical points of reference to put them into relations. Every dialogue or overlap thus presupposes different spaces from which a movement can arise, even if the movement is already present before our thoughts.

2 Interculturality as interpreted by hermeneutics

2.1 The concept of “analogous hermeneutics” as an intercultural method; analogy as a connective figure of difference

2.1.1 Ram Adhar Mall’s structure of overlap

2.1.1.1 *Between* “total identity” and “radical difference”

R.A. Mall’s model of understanding cultural otherness starts from a simple situation: he locates the possibility of communication of different cultures between two extreme poles, namely the fiction of a total *identity* (to prevent the excess of any absolutism) and one of a total *difference* (to prevent the excess of a full relativism). These are thought as the general concepts and categories that gave birth to various developments in the history of philosophy; we think in particular that Mall situated his theory between the excess of the closure of the tradition influenced on the one hand by Gadamer (on the side of identity, the extreme connection between truth and tradition that in the end identifies both) and the excess of the radical difference of Derrida on the other. Following this interpretation, one should then try to understand his theory as the position of someone who can mediate, who is in-between and fills the gap that separates Derrida and Gadamer. Consequently, the immense failure of their “conversation” should be regarded as the effect of their holding absolute the association or dissociation of truth and tradition¹. Identity and difference in their broad conceptions are understood as the main reason that has led philosophy, in particular Western philosophy, to have reduced theories either to uniformity, or to the endless plurality that destroys the idea of unity in such a way that we lose all consistency in an infinite multiplicity, and a consequent impossibility of thinking. These two concepts should before all be understood as *poles*, i.e. as two distant and abstract entities or categories that exert an attraction or an influence on the middle term (the overlap). In a way, we believe that Mall wants to practice in his own way the Schelerian idea of an *adjustment* by finding a medium way (under the name of “analogy”) between the two traditional extremes found in the tradition. He therefore writes: “Intercultural philosophy favors an analogous hermeneutics of overlapping structures beyond the two fictions of total identity (commensurability) and radical difference (incommensurability).” (Mall, 2000b, p.16)

It is explicit that with his theory, Mall is trying to avoid the contemporary debate about commensurability and incommensurability born with Kuhn and Feyerabend in the scientific

¹The texts of this missed encounter can be found in their English translations in the edition of Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer, as well as Gadamer’s and Derrida’s speeches made in Paris’ in 1981 as the afterwards philosophical reactions of Gadamer and various additional commentaries and analyzes (Michelfelder & Palmer, 1989).

domain², one which exploded and which is easily applicable in cultural problematics. He himself stands against D. Davidson³ in this respect, who is however not the most radical representative of the later postulate. With his overlapping model, he is trying to make both aspects insignificant and to escape this endless debate.

The impasse that we believe Mall tries to avoid is one characteristic of the tradition, and in this way, he tries to answer the challenge raised in the introduction. He is very much aware of the inadequacy of the otherness through history that we described in our introduction; the context of the emergence of the cultural other is thus the starting point of his philosophy and claims. Consequently his main aim is to defend the wrongness of the correlation between tradition and truth. We should therefore understand his theory as a response to overcome the burden of the tradition, as a way to escape the solutions of identity and difference that were given until our contemporary times, as aforementioned. Though they took place through different forms, different traditions and different ideologies, which are not differentiated here, Mall's point seems more to unite these solutions in a global movement of thought, to denounce all of them at the same time in order to show how general and broad, and therefore destructive, has been this association. We should therefore rather consider, under the names of these two general poles, the other way that can be traced in-between, which is the intercultural way.

“The concept of “analogous hermeneutics”, which does justice to the present *de facto* hermeneutic situation, is neither the hermeneutics of total identity, which reduces the other to an echo of itself and repeats its self-understanding in the name of understanding the other, nor that of radical difference, which makes the understanding of the other impossible. It does not put any one culture in an absolute position of generality and reduce all of the others to some form of it. (...) Such a hermeneutic attitude helps us to overcome the feeling of being hopelessly involved in the hermeneutic circle. It further frees us from our tendency to define truth in terms of a particular tradition and this tradition in terms of truth.” [Ibid.]

The following lines of this text refer explicitly to the distance and the criticism against Gadamer: though he is the main figure of hermeneutics, he is at the same time a controversial and an important challenge for intercultural philosophy⁴.

It is therefore in this context that Mall's structure of intercultural understanding should be understood. What matters for him is less the strict definition of identity and difference, which can recover a different meaning here, and more their understanding as two opposite directions *in the middle of* which stands Mall. This in-between is once again the location for intercultural philosophy, which finds itself to be then a “situated unsituatedness” or an “unsituated situatedness” (*orthaft Ortlosigkeit or ortlos Orthaftigkeit*), the paradox of the complex situation of

²For an excellent contextualization of the debate in relation to cultural philosophy, cf. R.J Bernstein's article (Bernstein, 1991).

³Mall comments in this respect: “In the field of intercultural understanding, it is wrong to reduce a theory of meaning to a theory of truth and the latter to translatability. Donald Davidson tends toward the thesis of a mutual untranslatability and speaks of radically different frameworks. However, cultures may be and are meaningful if we abstain from claiming the best intuition of truth only for ourselves.” (Mall, 2000b, p.16)

⁴Concerning Gadamer, one should see before all the chapter “the elevation of the history of understanding to the status of a hermeneutic principle.” in (Gadamer, 2004, 267-304); in German, “Erhebung der Geschichtlichkeit des Verstehens zum hermeneutischen Prinzip” (Gadamer, 2011, p.270-311); in French, (Gadamer, 1996, 286-328).

every philosopher who, for Mall, does not want to reduce philosophy either to one tradition or to a loss of all philosophy in an extreme relativism, and wants to pursue a possible dialogue. A philosopher is therefore situated in a culture, but at the same time philosophy itself is not the privilege of any tradition, and being located in one particular culture does not mean that our access to any different culture is condemned. One can grasp different traditions. This oxymoron (*ortlos Orthaftigkeit*) illustrates the middle way that is composed of both extremes of complete identity and difference, in the middle of which the balance of both enables an intercultural theory. Mall seems indeed to have a broad understanding of identity and difference and a variety of references, from Adorno to Merleau-Ponty through Tagore. It can be difficult to determine clearly his own definition, but we can put forward this quote of Dilthey that he refers to in a hermeneutic context: “Interpretation would be impossible, if the life-expressions were of completely foreign nature. It would not be necessary, if nothing were foreign to them”⁵

One needs therefore a *relative* difference between the two poles to even be able to *apply* hermeneutics, something that matters even more in an intercultural context, where we know the damages of any absolutizing of either of these poles. Thus, we would not need an intercultural hermeneutics if there would be a complete identity where interculturality could not even exist; likewise any intercultural hermeneutics would be impossible in the case of a complete difference. The idea of a relative or moderate difference is the starting point or the prejudice (understood in its first etymological meaning of *Vor-urteil*) of any hermeneutics and this applies to Mall.

Let us now try to define identity and difference following not only Mall’s thoughts, but also his silences:

[1] The strongest identity is obviously not possible, since it would imply that the plurality of cultures is at the end the same, one absolute global culture, i.e. there is only one culture and everything is identical: a very simple empiric glance can of course bring us to the most evident sense of difference toward cultures.

[2] Identity can at this stage be defined slightly differently, as the application of one’s own categories for the understanding of the other, that is, the reduction of the other to the own through a false understanding, which is actually not an understanding of the other, but a search of the own in the other. He adds then: “The hermeneutics of identity is way too narrow, almost fundamentalist. It comes down to the point that one raises one’s own self-understanding as the *tertium comparationis*, as the paradigm of understanding at all.”⁶

He illustrates this logic by saying that for instance only a Christian could understand a Christian, a Buddhist a Buddhist, etc. *ad infinitum*, since we possess only our own categories for the understanding of the Other, and we are limited to their applications. We actually have

⁵Personal translation. Original text: “Die Auslegung wäre unmöglich, wenn die Lebensäußerungen gänzlich fremd wären. Sie wäre unnötig, wenn in ihnen nichts fremd wäre.”, quoted in (Mall, 2000a, §16) Mall himself writes indeed in the same direction: “Wenn es nur Identität, Einheit gäbe, so existierte das hermeneutische Problem des Verstehens bzw. Mißverstehens überhaupt nicht.” Personal translation: “Would there be only identity, i.e. unity, then the hermeneutic problem of understanding respectively misunderstanding would not exist at all.” (Mall, 1995, p.30)

⁶Personal translation. Original text: “Die Identitätshermeneutik ist viel zu eng, fast fundamentalistisch. Sie läuft darauf hinaus, daß man das eigene Selbstverstehen zum tertium comparationis, zum Paradigma allen Verstehens erhebt.” (Yousefi & Mall, 2005, p.119).

to be similar to the Other to be able to understand him. There can be therefore no Other, and the cultural other is completely excluded, as religions, traditions and cultural habits have to be shared to be understandable. The hermeneutics of identity traditionally implies an absolute cultural horizon that pre-determines us in the scope of our categories, so that the understanding of the Other equals the recognition of the same in the Other. In this case, the cultural other has to be reduced to exoticism⁷, i.e. an imaginary conception of the cultural other understood from my own, that is an exceeding of my own in the domain of fantasy or imagination. The other then is different from me, but he definitely does not correspond to the Other as such: it is an intermediary creation based before all on my own representation of what exceeds my knowledge and categories.

Following these various definitions of identity and their implications in an intercultural context, we come to this schema:

1/ *Absolute Identity (one unique culture in the global sameness of the world -pure fiction) →*
2/ *Total Identity (reduction of the foreign to the own in a false understanding) →* 3/ *Overlap (relative identity and relative difference - Mall's position).*

Let us continue this schema on the side of difference:

[5] Mall thinks about difference in its exact opposition to his concept of identity, i.e. as an absolute impossibility. That would then mean the absence of any similarity, which makes any communication or possibility to understand the Other necessarily impossible. Therefore, either a mutual ignorance can result from cultures, or once again, a change imposed by the Other according to his strength and power. The latter is then called domination, which can be either ideological or physical. These two attitudes represent respectively the *de facto* history of the encounter between the West and the East in its two first phases that we defined in the introduction. Mall writes: "The history of the encounters of cultures shows that total difference, that is complete essential disparity, has been postulated hastily to either change the other in his essence or to appropriate the other, to neglect him or even to exterminate him. Such a way of (anti)communication results in a self-conversation."⁸

This concept of difference means an absolute impossibility of any thought, or an encounter based on strict violence. There is no contact, no exchange, no overlap.

[3] This difference has to be distinguished from the concept that emerged with phenomenology and postmodernity, which later helped to relativize Eurocentrism. In order to avoid any confusion in the understanding, we should here differentiate more distinctly between the two ideas of difference. Mall's use of "difference" seems to subsume both meanings, though he draws a distinction with a qualification as "radical". Radical difference means then the absolute impossibility of communicating (5), whereas difference is the positive condition to recognize the Other (3). He writes:

⁷Mall evokes also this case in his identity thesis and remarks especially the fact that it exists only as a Western concept: (Mall, 1995, p.31)

⁸Personal translation. Original text: "Die Geschichte der Kulturbegegnungen zeigt, daß totale Differenz, d.h. völlige Wesenungleichheit, voreilig postuliert wurde, um das Fremde entweder in seinem Wesen zu verändern oder es sich anzueignen, zu vernachlässigen oder es gar auszurotten. Eine solche Art der (Anti-)Kommunikation läuft auf ein Selbstgespräch hinaus."(Mall, 1995, p.36)

“Postmodern thinkers start from the facticity of the plurality of culture, denies the myth of total identity and the fiction of *radical difference*, takes *difference* (Derrida) seriously, sees the sedimented character of all cultures and traditions and thus overcomes the narrow limits of the hermeneutic circle without transforming themselves into others or being untrue to other cultures and traditions.” (*italics added by us*) (Mall, 2000b, p.42)

These two terms are therefore more or less opposite. Perspectivism⁹ and relativism are necessary deconstructions of the continuous connection between truth and tradition, and it “ties the concept of truth more to communication than to consensus.” [Ibid, p.43]. The second concept of difference is the condition not to fall in the ideology of identity. However, it is obviously not the same as the first reduction or the absolute/radical difference that forbids the very idea of a communication. In an intercultural context, we shall call the *positive* sense of difference, born from the postmodern thinkers, a *relative* one, though the authors may not have thought it as such, as for us it is the difference that leads to an intercultural communication, instead of the negation of any possibility of discourse with the previous one. It goes with the idea of a relative identity in the model of an overlap.

[4] Between these two meanings of difference we want to introduce another meaning or level of understanding that is not considered by Mall. It is significant for us as it shows another approach to think about intercultural philosophy. Indeed, we can also consider the “fundamental difference”, which considers the other as an irreducible Other that can never be reduced to the same. The definition of the Other as such, as well for Lévinas (in a conception that is not oriented by the question of cultures) as for Waldenfels in particular, is to be an Other, absolutely and radically distinguished from me. It implies a fundamental sense of difference. For Waldenfels, it enables a responsive approach of the Other. The phenomenon of the alienness is present before our very conception or understanding of him, and we therefore can only answer too late to his presence. The gap between the phenomenon and our answer is conditioned by the fundamental difference between me and the Other. It is because of this fundamental difference, which cannot be taken back to any known order or categories, that the response emerges, as well as the Other as such. In this understanding of difference, the impossible reduction to the same is also a way to avoid falling in any kind of reduction of the other. The Other is before all an Other and the difference is an ethical condition. For Lévinas, it is the face of the Other that leads to an ethical perspective based on the fact of being there. In that way, *the difference is the first presupposition of otherness* and is the condition of any understanding or even the condition of a plurality of cultures. In the case of Waldenfels, to disintegrate this difference, if possible, is to remove the Xenology itself. For Rombach (*cf. III.3.*), this conception of difference constitutes

⁹We simply mean here the awareness of the perspective or of the point of view from which an assertion is made. There is various possible perspectives that enable different possible judgments about truth. We do not imply the radical deconstruction of the notion of truth that would disappear because of a multiplicity of perspectives (as it can be found in postmodernist interpretations of Nietzsche), but the possibility of having different competing truth-values, i.e. concretely the possibility of asserting the truth to various modes of philosophising. The “weak” or etymological perspectivism does not erase the concept of truth and is still able to assert that something is not valid (because it is contradictory for example) but recognizes the perspective and the initial situation (including cultural) from which any assertion is made, which can therefore not be absolute.

the ground of his pluralistic conception of the “worlds” and the basic requirement for hermetics, which distinguishes it from hermeneutic, concerned on the contrary with the “fusion of horizons” (*Horizontverschmelzung*). This gives us another account of thinking the otherness, as a primary and essential condition of the difference. This is not the direction of Mall but it can be added in our model as a clarification of the concept, and another model of thinking interculturality that is significant in particular for the next chapter.

We can now complete our schema with the triad of differences: 3/ Overlap (relative identity and relative difference, Mall’s position) ← 4/ Fundamental Difference (difference as the first essential condition for the understanding of the Other and the otherness) ← 5/ Absolute/Radical Difference (impossibility of any communication, parallel or contact).

Following this explanation and to conclude, we think that we can complete the schema of our interpretation of R.A Mall of identity and difference thus:

Absolute Identity → Total Identity → OVERLAP ← Fundamental Difference ← Absolute Difference

2.1.1.2 The overlap under the form of an analogy

The overlap is therefore interesting as being the figure of tension or adjustment of the two poles; it is distinguished from both but at the same time, as an answer to both, is also influenced by them. The analogy is therefore a complex point of parallels between the differences, and it will also be significant in the last part of this work, when we come to literature and figures of speech (as well as metonymy). Mall uses often the concepts of “overlap”, “analogy” and “metonymy” in this model, without necessarily distinguishing them. We should offer here a clarification, according to our understanding, to contribute to the elaboration of an intercultural model.

Overlap- Indeed, it seems that for him, “overlap” is the general structure¹⁰ of relation and contact between differences.

“It is only the overlaps that permit a mutual interpretation. These overlaps are produced, they are not autonomous. They are embedded into life and depend on contexts of origin, methods, insights, values, interests, and interpretations. The overlaps constitute commonalities that can be established and argued on an empirical ground beyond all ontologizing.” (Mall, 2000a, §16)

The overlap is a condition for any understanding between cultures, based on a minimum similarity that does not remove the sense of difference, but gives a common ground to establish a contact or a communication. Its concrete form and realization depend on the actual culture and the various cultural practices. One should therefore not see any pre-determined border or any given form of contacts in an overlap. On the contrary, this schema can only be a flexible general model to let every concrete overlap takes form in a new way, which cannot be forced. It will change and reactualize itself for any encounter.

¹⁰We understand “structure” as an opened and flexible organization, which can be re-actualized, unlike the immobility of substance or the system, in the sense of H.Rombach. We therefore do not follow the discussion of Mall about the problems of thinking an intercultural structure, the criteria to avoid a reduction of the multiplicity, and the debate to avoid to fall in a oxymoron of intercultural structure. He considers that interculturality is opposed to the presupposed closure of a structure.(Yousefi & Mall, 2005, p.121-125)

It is also not equal to a simple intersection, a bare and weak meeting point between two cultures that could share only what they already have in common. It is a contact that leads to the development of a complete relation, as a first starting point that is less important for the first contact than for the whole following process emerging from the encounter. It announces a relation in process. No definite border of this overlap can or should be traced. It would otherwise only be an identity thesis, reduced to the same, like a fictional or ideal sameness in the core of every culture. On the contrary, an overlap, understood in an intercultural context, signifies the openness of the encounter of cultures. It is only a ground on which the relation can be made, which will consider the similarities as well as light the differences. The overlap is a methodological necessity for the development of hermeneutic understanding in the sphere of differences, an answer to the closure of the traditional horizon and the insertion of difference in the similarities¹¹.

Analogy- The form of the general overlap, or the overlapping structure can be characterized then as an analogy. Analogy features in a very long tradition of thought, especially in the field of logic, in the West as in India, which is certainly too long and too complex to be studied here¹². We therefore focus on the definition offered by Mall:

“My use of the term analogy in this volume relates to things and beings belonging to the same species, and we can use the means of analogy as a valid cause for the cognition of similarity. In the field of intercultural understanding, analogy stands for, first, a consciousness of nonidentity; second, a consciousness of difference; third, a consciousness of not total difference; and fourth, a consciousness of not total identity. Analogy is defined here as a likeness of relation among unlike things.” (Mall, 2000b, p.16)

We will study what we put forward against this definition later; let us understand it first. Analogy becomes here a more concrete qualification of the general structure of the overlap. It is then a way to think a model of intercultural hermeneutics, which can combine a relative difference and a relative identity, with a search for similarities among differences, and correlatively, the belief that there is always a common element that enables the analogy between cultures (on the contrary of the conception of a fundamental difference). It avoids any absolute conception of cultures and is the core of the thought of an in-between: the relation between cultures is characterized by relative similarity and continuity on the ground of a relative and respected differences. Precisely this relation is named *analogy*. Differences have therefore to be plural

¹¹Stenger gives a very interesting interpretation of the overlap in the concern of his own theory, and distinguishes the overlap from a simple intersection in this way: “Daher scheint auch der Begriff der “Überlappung” sehr gut getroffen, insofern dieser nicht einfach Überschneidungen oder gar Schnittmengen meint, sondern - so verstehe ich ihn jedenfalls - mehr eine Art “Horizontenfächer” intendiert, die, entfaltet und aufgefüchert, geradezu demonstrieren, daß genau in der Weise, in der jede Horizont als eigener und spezifischer auftritt, das Gemeinsame darin zum Vorschein kommt.” (Stenger, 2006, p.670) Personal translation: “Because of this, the concept of “overlap” seems to go very well, insofar as it does not only mean crossovers or even intersections, but - at least according to my understanding - it intends more a sort of “fan of horizons”, which, unfolded and fanned out, really demonstrates that in the way in which every horizon presents itself as the own and as a specific one, the commonality appears in it.”

¹²One can see on this subject to the precise analyses in Indian and Western philosophies of D.B Zilberman. (Zilberman, 2006)

to protect the multiplicity. This state is the fundament of any intercultural thinking as it defines any idea of purity in cultures, whether national, cultural, racial, etc. as a fantasy or an ideology. The idea of culture is following this analogic hermeneutic described as being a mixture of different living-entities, living-practices, living-habits, etc.

Analogy seems here to be a logical concept that aims at finding similarity among differences, which would not be superficial or reductive (it always implies an ethical attitude), but a “healthy comparative philosophy” (Mall, 2000b, p.17). It is therefore not strictly distinguished from the overlap, but is a kind of concrete overlap found in cultures, or an operational logic to find it. It is unfortunate that Mall does not give us the tools or the criteria to be able to formally apply the analogy, which stays either as an ethical ideal, or as an abstract concept. In general, we have to remark that Mall defines the way, the goal and the ethical attitude that define the analogical hermeneutic, especially of course in its opposition to the traditional hermeneutic, but does not always clarify how concretely it is possible to use it as a method. To say it differently: we have an idea of what should be an intercultural analogical method, but we know neither how to apply it nor how to make from the idea of an analogy a *de facto* operating process. We will therefore try to draw that from the application he makes of the parallel between Plato’s and Samkara’s philosophy just after this definition.

Metonymy- Let us end with metonymy. It is before all a figure of speech from the family of tropes that denotes something by the use of the name that is associated to a different concept. Both (the object, reality or “something” and the concept) are linked by a relation of contiguity and belong to the same semantic field. Following this background, it seems that the metonymy is the *modus or figure* of the general overlapping structure, the figure which can be used as a key of understanding of the general model. While analogy is an operative concept in the field of logic, metonymy is a more restrictive figure in the sphere of discourse. We should keep this background in mind while turning to Mall’s definition. “When we speak about metonymy here, this concept means then the intersection from cultural sedimentations.”¹³(Mall, 1995, p.46)

To use a metaphor, one could say that the different layers which compose the soil are not clearly distinguished from each other; of course, when the geologist looks at it from far, one can distinguish more or less the different steps, different eras and different sedimentations. But when one goes closer, it becomes harder to draw a definite border within the contacts of the different layers. There is therefore an intersection, which does not remove the identity of the layers nor their differences; their overlap shows both differences and identity.

The metonymy is this figure of intersection that is more than just a bare intersection, one that constitutes the whole soil by distinctions and similarities at the same time; in the sphere of language, metonymy is the figure that uses the similarity to denote with a different word a connection that is logically made. There is an immediate association played by the figure between two things, though they are not identical, as they are close enough to enable an association. This association is for Mall the way of being able to communicate with another culture: the other is therefore not identical, but using a similarity, I can associate logically my own sphere to his world. With the metonymy, I can therefore access the complex different world of the cultural

¹³Personal translation. Original text: “Wenn wir hier von einer Metonymie sprechen, so meint dieser Begriff den Übergang von kulturellen Sedimentationen.”

other. It does not mean a complete identity between cultures, as they stay distinguished, but a communication and an understanding can start to process associations under the form of metonymy (i.e. relating objects and concepts with an inadequate name, but one that is understood logically as it is close enough). It is a kind of creative distortion of languages or concepts¹⁴, in order to enter the obstacle of cultural otherness.

2.1.2 Application: “Metonymic reflections on Shamkara’s concept of Brahman and Plato’s seventh epistle”

For the reasons aforementioned, we want now to look into Mall’s application of the metonymy to study how concretely we can make use of the overlapping theory, as a method and as a realization. We are here focusing on one article where Mall explicitly refers to his model as a cross-cultural development of the intercultural way (Mall, 2000b, p.69-81). In so doing, we aim at clarifying Mall’s intercultural theory through an example of its application, but we do not want to enter into particular and singular details of Shamkara’s¹⁵ or Plato’s philosophies, or about the question of the adequacy of the parallel made by Mall, or the relevance of the very act of comparing two philosophies from different traditions¹⁶. All these points have already been studied in various literatures¹⁷. The question here is more specifically understood within the

¹⁴The sharpness and vivacity of language play an important role for the ability of communicating with different cultures. It is a quality expected especially from the anthropologists to show the differences of languages and cultures in a familiar language, once they report their experience and knowledge with the other in an essay for their own culture, that is, once they make from their notes a concrete book in their own language. We will come back on speech and literature and their solutions concerning cultural otherness, but we can refer already to L.Bonoli when he analyzes the art of *rule-bending* that the anthropologist uses to make his reader understand the sense of the alienness. He therefore plays with his own language, takes distance from his own cultural sphere to write in the familiar the difference, the distance and the variety of cultures and languages. (Bonoli, 2007a, p.116)

¹⁵For all the details about Śaṅkara’s philosophy, we refer to “The Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara” in (Radhakrishnan, 2009, vol 2, p.413-615) and “The Śaṅkara school of Vedānta” in (Dasgupta, 1975;2006, p.406-494). Advaita Vedānta in general received throughout history, including in the West, an extended treatment, and Śaṅkara is probably the most famous Indian philosopher. Studied are therefore numerous. We also point out here that the Latin style of spelling is most of the time Sankara or Shamkara, but we will in this section follow the transcription used by Mall. We however warn our reader that it may change in the next sections for other references by different authors. The negation is also a broad and fascinating concern of various schools of Indian philosophy: for an overview, (Kellner, 1996) and (Raju, 1954) and in particular in the Navya-Nyaya school, which developed a particular attention to this problem, cf. the great specialist B. K Matilal (Matilal, 1968) and (Matilal, 1990).

¹⁶Comparative philosophy is in itself a vast field of reflection. We can refer for instance to the collective work by E.Deutsch and G.J Larson (Larson & Deutsch, 1989) for various entries, as well as J.N Mohanty (J. N. Mohanty, 2001), as we will explore his philosophy later, or the criticism from the Intercultural side, for example with G.Stenger (Stenger, 2006, p.937-946)

¹⁷This kind of cross-cultural comparison appears frequently through the history of philosophy and they are often more interesting regarding their stakes and motivations than their actual development (in our study for example, we consider Mall’s article to be more pertinent for the application of the metonymic paradigm than for the connection between Śaṅkara and Plato itself). Husserl is *a fortiori* not an exception with his comparison of Socrates and Buddha, which says much more about Husserl’s principles and philosophical problems than about the two protagonists (in particular given Husserl’s lack of knowledge in Indian philosophy). In his excellent article called “Husserl and Indian Thought” (Schuhmann, 1992), K. Schuhmann meticulously analyzes every references to Indian philosophy made by Husserl throughout his life, and tries to find reasons for the indecision of the latter regarding the value of Indian philosophy and its final exclusion. He also offers an English translation of the Neumann review written by Husserl, and an account of the notes taken by J.Cairns during the seminar in which Husserl drew this comparison. We can only appreciate the precision of the details and quote a short passage of the interpretations that Schuhmann gives about the Husserl’s difficulties to deal with the status of Indian philosophy: “Husserl’s attitude is a typical example of what Halbfass called “the exclusion of India from the historiography of philosophy.” To Husserl this was not so much a question of factual

intercultural context : how can we apply or understand a “metonymic reflection” ?

2.1.2.1 From the model of the “Identity-Overlap-Difference” to its application under the form “Positivity-Metonymy-Negativity”: Explanations

Mall starts this article, which we consider to be an application of the overlapping theory, by a complement of the previous definition:

“Metonymy is the indubitable consciousness of the difference between the name and the named, concept and reality, which induces us to take recourse to negative expressions to describe something that claims to be positive. The metonymic figure of speech in its ultimately metaphysical import stresses the fact that the ultimate one, although in need of expression, resists the very possibility of its expressibility through language.” (Mall, 2000b, p.69)

The articulation of identity, in the relative sense of similarity and difference that constitutes the ground of his theory is here taken up in a particular form, namely the distortion between the language and the object [name and named]. The correspondence principle¹⁸ so described raised many problems in the tradition of thought (Indian as well as Greek) but it found a new illustration or turn in its conception with the use of the figure of “metonymy”: the answer appears here to be found in the language itself, in a hermeneutic approach. It is more exactly the consequence of the fact of the non-exact correspondence in an intercultural context (for example, *darśana** to philosophy, *dharma* to religion and the discussions concerning their difficult translations) that leads to the consciousness of inadequacy of this non-correspondence, and therefore, has to find a “trick” in the language itself with the use of a figure of speech to compensate this difficulty. We should add here that Shamkara believed in the correspondence principle, which becomes however complicated in a metaphysical perspective of the absolute (*Brahman**), in the impossibility of reducing it to the language, beyond any possibility of speech. Metonymy appears here as a solution, which is defined therefore by an articulation between the positive and the negative.

But can positive and negative stand for identity and difference? It is certain that metonymy takes here another direction in this specific example, and that it is problematic to link directly the first thesis and this continuation, as it would mean a direct analogy between positive and negative on one side, and identity and difference on the other side. They are obviously distinguished concepts. Such an understanding implies first to find an analogy for the overlap as a middle term between positive and negative, which would logically be the metonymy. Metonymy is here

or practical considerations, but a matter of principles. Husserl’s argument can be summarized as follows. His major premiss consisted of an a priori analysis of the concept of philosophy as founded on the concept of reason in general. His minor premiss was of an empirical nature. He tested pertinent thought-formations in order to see which ones would meet his requirements, and in which way. The conclusion has been reported above: there was no philosophy outside Europe, and in Europe only Plato had conceived its idea, and only Husserl had begun to work it out. Husserl’s argument is of course vulnerable especially in its minor premiss.” [Ibid, p.36]

¹⁸For a presentation of the correspondence principle in the Indian philosophy, with reference to Śaṅkara, we refer to J.Bronkhorst (Bronkhorst, 1996). He gives a precise account through a large range of justifications of this principle accepted by all classical schools of Indian philosophy. He defines the principle of correspondence thus “the words of a statement correspond, one by one, to the things that constitute the situation described by that statement.” In an epistemological field of knowledge and validity of the object and the concept, Śaṅkara accepted this principle, which finds its limitations however within the metaphysical domain.

to be understood as a positive figure that uses negative expressions to say something believed to be positive. It does not stand literally between the positive and the negative, which would be impossible: indeed, nothing can be found which is neither positive nor negative. However, something can be thought that uses the negative to express the positive, because the positive cannot be expressed in positive terms. What we mean here is that metonymy stands for the problem that, at an ontological level, something that would be located “between positive and negative” cannot exist. However, at a rhetorical, or linguistic level, figures that express the positive via the negative exist, and can thus be used to link both dimensions in an overlapping figure, which is as we think, the aim of Mall. Therefore, if we follow the correspondence principle, we can play on both levels, which is what the metonymy does, between the ontological and the linguistic levels: the metonymy, to come back to the previous and traditional rhetorical definition, is then what confuses the concept and the reality, therefore the ontology and language, by forcing with a distortion of the language an ontological problem. It goes without being noticed in the common understanding, because the association is normally commonly accepted. For example at a very simple level: Hollywood means a real quarter of the city of Los Angeles, but it refers most of the time to the industry of the cinema that is located at this very place. Therefore the use of the term “Hollywood” when we mean the cinema is ontologically and logically wrong (the cinema is not an area, this is a logical misuse and misconception) but it came into use by a logical continuity between the place and the activity. In the end, it became a linguistic expression that is commonly understood. It does not mean that Hollywood is identical to the cinema, in the same way that it does not mean that the Absolute is identical to the language that we use to speak about it, which is the fundament of Plato and Shamkara’s problem in the article of Mall. But it does not mean either that in the language, but also then in the understanding, Hollywood is radically different from the cinema, as the connection has been brought up with the analogy created by the metonymy. And the same goes for the absolute. The metonymy operates so, that it enables an overlap to speak in Mall’s category, or an analogical continuity between the concept and the reality (the metonymy between the negative expression of the positive inexpressible reality of the absolute), so that we can speak about the Absolute in a negative way only. Therefore, identity and difference do not equal the positive and the negative at an ontological level, but there is an analogy in the way it works: identity and difference are the two poles of the overlap, the way the positive and the negative (at different levels, ontological and linguistic) are the two poles that make the metonymy work.

2.1.2.2 A metonymic comparison

The details of the operating aspect of this metonymy in each theory (Shamkara and Plato) are then described.

Let us be quickly reminded of the main lines of each argumentation by Mall, concerning Shamkara:

“What is the nature of the ultimate reality? As an infinite consciousness implied by all empirical knowledge, it is not available to empirical knowledge. When it is termed as indeterminate (*nirguna*), it does not amount to nothing; it only means that all the mind can think of does not really positively belong to it. Because it can never be

presented as an object of knowledge, it is beyond the reach of the familiar categories of thought. Hence, no direct, positive description is available. The Absolute of Shamkara is not only indefinable; it is also unknowable because to be known is to be made determinate. (...) The fact of its unknowability does not, however, exclude the possibility of its being realized in the sense of having “felt knowledge of it.” Every negation has some positive implication, and the negative definition of Brahman does not make it a blank.” [Ibid, p.72]

And concerning Plato: “Even dialectic prepares our mind for illumination; it lets us be better suited for an intuitive, noetic experience of the one ultimate reality. It is less a mystic experience than an insight that goes by the name of illumination. The vision of the One, the Absolute, that flashes into the mind of the seeker, cannot itself be communicated.” [Ibid, p.76]

For both authors, but for different reasons, the necessity, the justification and the way to the positive Absolute, as well as the difference between negative assertion and nothingness, should be expressed negatively. Negative assertions and nothingness have to be distinguished of course, because saying something negative, or not being able to affirm something about something does not mean that this thing does not exist. This has to be remembered as an essential distinction, since it is precisely from this distinction that the Absolute is understood. We cannot give the complete argumentation or a full epistemological commentary on the subject here. We go directly to the conclusions that are brought through this parallel with the name “Shamkara and Plato compared and contrasted”: the comparison seems in Mall’s category to fall under the side of a relative identity, while the contrast is the method to notice the relative differences.

Mall starts with an observation about the characterization “negative”:

“There seems to be a technique as old as human thinking itself that tries to say what cannot be said. In other words, it is negative in so far as it emphasizes the incapacities of language. Simultaneously, however, there is left a persistent and legitimate feeling of the difference between what is really said and what should have been said so that this feeling of difference is not there.” [Ibid, p.77]

The negation is understood as a failure or an inadequacy of the language to express something that considers what is beyond the content of the speech. It does not remove however the attempt of expressing it, which is the reason why this attempt is negative. It is negative as a feeling of the condition that leaves us unable to express the positivity of the Absolute, which is then negative in its formulation. As we cannot express it, we can express the fact that we cannot express it, and express thus our limits. It is in general understood as what cannot be obtained: a negation, not of the reality itself, but of the way to perceive it, as the fundamental inadequacy of our knowledge, language and concepts regarding reality. In that sense, the negation is positive, as it is an existing statement about a positive reality that takes a negative form.¹⁹

¹⁹Indian philosophy, especially the Nyāya school has developed a precise and achieved theory about negativity, including the positivity of negation. See for example: “Superficially speaking, a negative judgment merely separates this attribute from the reality or object to which it refers, and it may therefore appear that the negative judgment is devoid of any such meaning. But when we reflect, we come to see that, over and above the separation or denial, it implies some positive attribute as characterizing the object in question, and that the denial is made on the ground that this characteristic, however vague our notion of it may be, is incompatible

Mall does not argue or justify explicitly his comparison between Shamkara and Plato. It is however obvious that he distinguishes both in their own context, an attitude that is necessary in an intercultural context. Mall's project is of course not to equate both, but to respect their respective differences and appreciate their similarities. There seems to be a basic similarity about the conception of the expression of the Absolute, grounded in different and differentiated contexts, histories, traditions, and languages. This common conception however enables an overlap, that is an encounter on the soil of differences. It is because the difference is not radical that one can compare, i.e. find a point close enough to be discussed in both theories, related enough to be shared. It is also because the identity is not radical that one can compare; it would be the same theory otherwise. Mall's comparison is not directly concerned with the discussion of what is, should or should not be comparative philosophy, and it is not our point either. We just want to signal here that the comparison, as well as the contrast - the latter certainly matters more - are both possible thanks to the overlapping model that Mall tries to convey. His structure tries precisely to give the condition for his comparison. But what is it then to compare?

It is interesting to make a small detour here to P. Masson-Oursel who was the first to have explicitly used the term "comparative philosophy" (Halbfass, 1988, p.420), in 1923. As a follower of A. Comte, he believed that the main condition to reach this state of positivity was to be obtained through comparison. But what matters more for us here is the way he conducted it, using the *analogy* as a main method to practice it. He does not define it exactly like Mall, especially given the differences of context and the strong influence of the positivism on Masson-Oursel. However, let us allow a complementary or an outside input to the intercultural theory of Mall with another conception of a *analogic* approach, this time on comparative philosophy.

For Masson-Oursel, the comparison cannot operate directly between two authors or systems since of course, as they are culturally different, their context, history and content have to be distinguished and cannot be immediately brought together. One needs a comparative tool to conduct a parallel between cultures. More precisely, a parallel cannot be drawn directly between cultures, one has rather to grasp the *proportion* in each cultural system. Only the proportion can be compared interculturally. To say it differently: analogy is defined as a mathematical proportion that enables the comparison, as the equality of two relations, and Masson-Oursel writes to illustrate: "A is to B as Y is to Z"²⁰. Between A and Y, or between B and Z can be as many and as broad differences as one can see, since what we compare is only the relation between A and B and between Y and Z, which has to be comparable. In this way, we do not come up against the problem of the encounter, or the reduction to the same, or the inadequacy, the gap between cultures. Each culture keeps its own intelligibility in its singular structure, which distinguishes it from the Other (on the side of difference). However, the analogy (the similarity of the respective internal relations) enables to relate the different particular structures (on the side of identity). To use Mall's categories: the in-between A and Y, and the in-between B and Z is the locus of relative differences, while the proportional relation between A to B and between Y to Z is the locus of relative identity. The overlap takes in that case the form of a mathematical

with the denied feature. This is what is meant by the positive implication of negative judgments. The judgment "A is not B" is accordingly to be analysed into "A is not B but C", or "A is X which excludes B." (Hiriyanna, 1957, p.139)(M.Hiriyanna does not refer explicitly to a school in this passage).

²⁰Original text: "A est à B comme Y à Z." (Masson-Oursel, 1931, p.22)

analogy and enables a comparison, which could then take the form of a discussion or a concrete relation between the two respective cultures.

Masson-Oursel affirms then that everything can be compared, and that this process is even necessary in philosophy, as long as things are not *directly* compared and are always mediated by the analogical model. Here is his justification:

“If however, we force ourselves to look only for proportions of the type

$$\frac{A}{B} = \frac{Y}{Z}$$

the complexity of the conditions of similarity requires from the observer an analysis of real precision. The superior guarantee of objectivity is the result of:

1° The fact that four factors and not only two facts have to be considered.

2° The fact that in each of this relation, the numerator is to the denominator in a singular relation, for example the one of the part to the whole. This is the case of the analogy

$$\frac{\textit{Socrates}}{\textit{Greek sophistry}} = \frac{\textit{Confucius}}{\textit{Chinese sophistry}}$$

which could be symbolized as follow:

$$\frac{s}{S} = \frac{c}{C}$$

(...) We admit therefore that the comparability of two facts depends on the comparability of their domains.”²¹

He gives a commentary to explain this proportion with the fact that the role that Socrates played towards Greek sophistry can be compared with the role that Confucius played towards Chinese sophistry. Confucius and Socrates are different and should be distinguished at all levels. They certainly cannot be immediately compared. However, what can be compared between both is the *relation* that they had towards their reciprocal sophistry. Each brought in their differentiated

²¹Personal translation. Original text: “Si, par contre, on s’astreint à ne chercher que des proportions du type

$$\frac{A}{B} = \frac{Y}{Z}$$

la complexité des conditions de similitude requiert de l’observateur une analyse de véritable précision. La garantie supérieure d’objectivité résulte : 1° De ce que quatre facteurs et non simplement deux faits, doivent être envisagés ; 2° de ce que dans chacun de ces rapports, le numérateur est au dénominateur dans une relation particulière, par exemple celle de partie à tout. Tel est le cas de l’analogie

$$\frac{\textit{Socrates}}{\textit{Greek sophistry}} = \frac{\textit{Confucius}}{\textit{Chinese sophistry}}$$

qui pourrait se symboliser ainsi :

$$\frac{s}{S} = \frac{c}{C}$$

(...) Nous admettons donc que la comparabilité de deux faits est fonction de la comparabilité de leurs milieux.”

contexts the speculation that then characterized their era, both brought new dogmas with the help of a new method, both attempted to break the common sophistry to bring a new philosophy. The content, the way and the particular changes are diverse and different, but their role, their particular relation to their own century and culture can be compared.

It is interesting to remark that the relation of the numerator to the denominator and their specification as “the one of the part to the whole” corresponds to the rhetoric definition of the synecdoche, which is a figure of speech classified as a particular form of metonymy. Mall and Masson-Oursel have certainly not the same idea of comparative philosophy and intercultural philosophy; they do not aim at the same study, they are not influenced by the same authors, and it is probable that Mall did not read or did not get influenced at least by the positivist view of the first one. However, their tools, their working and their logical categories can be related in some way. Maybe we can now allow ourselves to draw the following model to illustrate Mall’s comparison:

$$\frac{\textit{Brahman (Indian absolute)}}{\textit{Śaṅkara}} = \frac{\textit{Hen and Agathon (Greek absolute)}}{\textit{Plato}}$$

With this model, we mean that “the concept of *Brahman* is to Śaṅkara as the concept *Hen* and *Agathon* (One and the Good) is to Plato”, to speak with Masson-Oursel categories. Or to put it differently: the relation of Śaṅkara to the Absolute is as the relation of Plato to the Absolute. The Absolute has different names according to their linguistic spheres; it has different implications according to their respective traditions, and it has different backgrounds, especially metaphysical, according to their philosophical cultures. However, both conceptions are led by the same concern about the inadequacy of the concept to the reality, the impossibility of truly referring to the Absolute, the necessity to emphasize on the experience and the intuition rather than on rational knowledge, and the negativity of the expression to refer to its positivity. In that way, we believe that Masson-Oursel can be an interesting detour into Mall’s model of comparison.

Mall ends his article by differentiating Plato’s and Śaṅkara’s concepts of experience and mysticism, for the first sees a reconciliation of unity and diversity that is impossible for the second²². He then contrasts the exoteric and the esoteric in Plato and Śaṅkara, and notices that two directions are followed by them. On the exoteric side, Śaṅkara invokes the authority of the texts, and Plato continues the dialogue of the Academy. On the esoteric side, Śaṅkara refers to intuition, “noetic experience (*sākshātkāra*) of the non-duality between *Atman** and *Brahman*”, while Plato experiences the One “as a sudden insight of light flashing into the soul.”[Ibid, p.80]. This balance between exoteric and esoteric, or rationality and mystic experience seems to be found, to leave its tracks in differentiated cultures, and shows the limit of hermeneutics, or more exactly the mention of an experience of something beyond any analytical approach. Hermeneutics seems

²²More precisely, Mall writes: “Despite striking similarities and illuminating differences between the monistic concept of the One (Hen) of Plato and the nondualistic Pure Consciousness of Shamkara, they meet to differ in their concept of the mystic vision, experience. This experience teaches Plato that unity and diversity, one and all, join hands and are ultimately reconciled; it teaches Shamkara, in contrast, that there is nothing with which to be reconciled and the parasitically illusory character of all appearances is eliminated with for all time.” [Ibid, p.79-80]

aware of this quest and does not consider itself to be the only way of questioning the world, but goes toward a conjunction of “methods” or approaches.

Mall concludes with these words:

“There seems to be inherent irony of the human quest for the Absolute. Those who have realized it cannot tell what it is really like, and those who have not cannot really know what it is like. The future of Indian as well as of European philosophy seems to lie in a balanced and critical synthesis of the roles played by authority, reason, experience, and self-knowledge.”[Ibid, p.80]

We will come back to this point at the end of this work, which echoes with the Hermetics of H. Rombach. It is interesting to note that Mall looks before all for harmony against any form of absolutizing of culture. His ethical perspective is evident, and his aim is to justify it at a formal philosophical level. We should therefore not consider his model as a fixed or dogmatic hermeneutic model but as a call for openness, and as a strong claim for contacts and understanding between cultures. He presents the inherent complexities of globalization and cultural relations better than any particular application, which is a strength as well as a problem. We explained his system in a particularly oriented way, in order to make sense of it and to bring out its most pertinent points. We will turn now on some of its weaknesses.

2.2 “Cultural hermeneutics” (Kulturhermeneutik) as a criticism of intercultural hermeneutics

Intercultural philosophy is composed of different traditions of thinking, which enables a dialogue comprising competing alternatives of philosophizing. This fact has led to well-founded criticisms about Mall’s hermeneutics that can be found especially in a collection of articles under the name “Cultural hermeneutics. Interdisciplinary inputs to the contact with cultural difference.”²³ (Original: “Kulturhermeneutik. Interdisziplinäre Beiträge zum Umgang mit kultureller Differenz” (Ernst, Sparn, & Wagner, 2008)), on which we will focus now.

2.2.1 From the intercultural hermeneutics of R.A. Mall to the cultural hermeneutics

2.2.1.1 What is “Cultural Hermeneutics”?

Processes and combination of phenomena- We start with a preliminary definition of cultural hermeneutics, as it is originally provided in this collective work. It is presented as a study of the “phenomenon of alterity” (Ernst et al., 2008, p.11), still considered as “hermeneutics.” It is at the same time a reaction against classical hermeneutics, and a reaction against intercultural hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is understood here in a broad sense and can integrate various

²³We will more precisely focus on the first four articles of this work, which concern directly and explicitly our researches and which are grouped together under the title “(Not) to understand difference - intercultural hermeneutics on the way towards cultural hermeneutics” (Original: “Unterschiede (nicht) verstehen - Interkulturelle Hermeneutik auf dem Weg zur Kulturhermeneutik.”) These articles are written by C. Ernst and H. Wagner (Ernst, 2008; Ernst & Wagner, 2008), H. Grünwedel (Grünwedel, 2008) and T.Kempa (Kempa, 2008).

philosophical methods, such as phenomenology and deconstruction. It can be difficult sometimes to define what characterizes it as hermeneutics, and we believe it is defined by its concern towards the question of *understanding*, however in a critical and different way from its the traditional hermeneutic meaning. The criticisms are therefore grounded on this difference and plurality of thinking intercultural philosophy:

“A primary result was the assumption, which up to now has not been falsified, that intercultural communication does not only proceed in the binary schema of “we” and “the others”, i.e. in the difference or opposition of “identity” and “alterity”, but rather that in complex situations and non-linear processes certain phenomena occur, in which the binary logics of order, which rules the respective system, indeed not just disappears, but practically and momentarily is not effective exclusively anymore.”²⁴

This remark can easily be connected to Mall’s intercultural hermeneutics, though C. Ernst and H. Wagner do not refer explicitly to the latter. Indeed, the model of identity and difference that we drew earlier is already severely attacked by this remark. The first two models of complete identity and complete difference, which are obviously rejected by Mall²⁵, perfectly tally with this criticism. In spite of Mall’s own criticism, his very classification reveals a schema of thought slightly simplifying the quite complex situation of cultural otherness. To characterize in broad strokes the two models that are rejected (identity/difference) in order to opt for the third one (overlap) has necessarily something to do with an argumentative strategy. All the same, this third model, which is in a way *the middle way* or the balance between two extremes, does not completely escape this criticism either. Though the overlap or the analogy is an interesting figure, it is always half-way for Mall between identity and difference, so that it can never transcend it, but is always comprised between both. Mall considers the overlap as a structure, in the sense of a living process in its application, as every overlap takes *de facto* a different form according to its concrete content. However, the movement at a structural level is itself pre-determined, as an overlap defined by identity and difference on both sides. In any case, the hermeneutics is constituted of three parts, the binary poles of difference versus identity and the overlap. But the overlap is itself always defined in terms of the binary extremes, and one pole excludes necessarily the other, so that it reduces the movement to fit in the middle space, and does not reach the flexibility that it was aiming at. The figure of analogy stays always caught between these two poles, as Mall himself demonstrates it in this aforementioned problematic quote: “In the field of intercultural understanding, analogy stands for, first, a consciousness of nonidentity; second, a consciousness of difference; third, a consciousness of not total difference; and fourth, a consciousness of not total identity. Analogy is defined here as a likeness of relation among unlike things.” (Mall, 2000b, p.15-16)

²⁴Personal Translation. Original Text: “Ein erstes Ergebnis war die bis heute nicht ins Unrecht gesetzte Annahme, dass interkulturelle Kommunikation nicht nur im binären Schema von “wir” und “die Anderen”, also in der Differenz oder Opposition von “Identität” und “Alterität” verläuft, dass vielmehr in komplexen Situationen und nichtlinearen Prozessen gewisse Phänomene auftreten, in denen die das jeweilige System regierende binäre Ordnungslogik zwar nicht einfach verschwindet, jedoch praktisch und vorübergehend nicht mehr alleingeltend wirksam ist.” (Ernst et al., 2008, p.12)

²⁵We should remember here that the distinction that we made between different types of identity and difference is not found as such in Mall’s theory. He distinguishes only “total identity”, “complete difference” and the “overlap”.

On the contrary then, cultural hermeneutics focuses on the various processes of movements and changes such as superposition, evolution, antagonism, incarnation, etc. It does not capture or illustrate a changing content of the overlap as Mall conceives it, but it is a structure that is in itself changing and thus cannot be captured. These are multiple figures whose processual complexity goes further than the schema drawn earlier and rightly denounced as binary. More than the phenomenon, it is the *combination* of phenomena that is interesting for us now, in their relationships and processes. The intricacy becomes so dense that it erases the very criteria of identity and difference; the question is not anymore their adjustment, rather it has already deleted the possibility of making them the only criterion of understanding.

Horizon- Another distinction between classical and intercultural hermeneutics is the concept of horizon, which is quite a difficulty for the necessary openness of the understanding of the Other. It has been kept by Cultural hermeneutics but with a significant change in the definition.

“The ideal aim of each hermeneutics is the enabling of a critical-affirmative conversation, which is productive for all participants and their self-understanding. If the cultural *praxis* should not be founded on domination or violence, it needs a horizon, in which the different participants can communicate with each other as different with each other.²⁶”

The horizon is not here a closure in one’s own tradition, it wants to take the form of the acceptance of mutual differences, as a characterization of the tradition in order to recognize the other as Other. The concept of the horizon is founded in classical hermeneutics, but it takes another dimension based on an intercultural communication. It is a sign of the difference, not in order to prevent any understanding, but on the contrary, to establish it on the ground of differences, for a possibility of communication. The horizon is the mark of various individual cultures from which one cannot escape, and it would be a delusion to deny one’s cultural roots: on the contrary, the consciousness of belonging to a particular horizon must force one to take the risk to engage a conversation in spite of the differences (instead of looking at outward and possibly superficial similarities), and through the possible misunderstandings and difficulties. Fusion must not arise: one must rather go through the challenge of differences. They denounce then classical hermeneutics as an attempt of standardization, which forces integration in favor of compatibility of different interpretations, or in general, of a process of homogenization.

Transdifference- The last distinction that we want to stress here between intercultural and cultural hermeneutics concerns the accent put on the difference of cultures. Intercultural philosophy, or at least that of Mall previously studied, is *worried* about the fact that cultures might not be able to understand each other, which is the main ground to avoid the concept of a fundamental difference. It considers therefore radical perspectivism (understood this time as the disappearance of *any* similarity that enable *any* kind of communication) as a major danger to be avoided, and locates then itself exactly between difference and identity. We look in

²⁶Personal translation. Original text: “Das ideale Ziel jener Hermeneutik [ist] die Ermöglichung eines kritisch-affirmativen, d.h. für alle Beteiligten und deren Selbstverstehen produktiven Gespräches - denn wenn kulturelle Praxis nicht auf Herrschaft oder gar Gewalt gegründet sein soll, braucht sie einen Horizont, in dem die Verschiedenen als verschiedene miteinander kommunizieren können.” (Ernst et al., 2008, p.15)

that case at *similarities* in a context of cultural differences. In this respect, cultural hermeneutics goes further: it insists on the concept of “*transdifference*” while identity is considered on the side of classical hermeneutics and risks to deprive the Other from its quality of otherness. Transdifference is a consequence of the first definition aforementioned, i.e. the inevitable fact that cultures are moving systems of production of interpretations and modes of living and that only complex structures should be used to analyze changes and movements without reductions. Against synthesis or analysis in their original meanings, transdifference considers cultures as already changing categories that should be thought in terms of difference, even if it brings us to some limits of understanding. W. Sparrn writes: “As the borderlines are defined binarily, “trans-” is understood as occurring across those given, respectively functionally distinct borderlines, for example between ethnic groups, religions, languages and in general all cultural practices.²⁷” “Transdifference” in our opinion is the main opposition to the conception of Mall and is at the same time differentiated from the classical hermeneutics of the concept of understanding as well.

2.2.1.2 The divergence of the concept of “understanding”

The concept of “understanding” for cultural hermeneutics is a hermeneutic concept, which has been influenced by other philosophical conceptions, from pragmatism to phenomenology. It addresses different criticisms. First, as for Mall, understanding was thought as an external category applied on cultures (in classical hermeneutics there was not even the awareness of cultural differences). The understanding between cultures is therefore the action of finding common points to enable dialogues on the ground of differences, with an ethical perspective to respect cultures, but with a belief of cross-characteristics that enable the overlap. Understanding seems to be an *over-concept* that comprises its different actualizations: understanding the meaning of *Darsána* (philosophy in Sanskrit), understanding a foreigner, etc. to enable variegated cross-points and dynamic overlaps between cultures. But *understanding* itself seems to be a category beyond cultures, present in all cultures with the same characteristics to be filled with particular intentional objects. Cultural hermeneutics moves one step forwards, in the sense that understanding is already a cultural category and therefore represents various systems distinguished from one another. Understanding may not mean the same thing in different cultures. To compare, or to relate “understanding” in the plurality of cultures is therefore already complicated, and to look for a common understanding is probably unachievable. “For all objects of understanding in the sense of this [cultural] hermeneutics are products of cultural praxis, and this understanding aims for its part at cultural practice, namely at the generation of relations between spatially and temporally separated bearers of signification and their producers.”²⁸

It is in the *praxis* that a culture gives herself meanings and the objects of understanding are also shaped within a particular culture. Meaning, understanding, categories and structure are therefore already differentiated and constructed by cultural elements. One must situate oneself

²⁷Personal translation. Original text: “”Trans-” wird verstanden als: quer zu den gegebenen, funktional jeweils eindeutigen, da binär definierten Grenzlinien, z.B. zwischen Ethnien, Religionen, Sprachen und überhaupt kulturellen Praktiken, auftretend.” [Ibid, p.12]

²⁸Personal translation. Original text: “Denn alle Gegenstände des Verstehens im Sinne dieser Hermeneutik sind Erzeugnisse kultureller Praxis, und dieses Verstehen zielt seinerseits auf kulturelle Praxis, nämlich auf die Bildung von Zusammenhängen zwischen räumlich und zeitlich getrennten Bedeutungsträgern und deren Produzenten.” [Ibid, p.15]

in an environment of differences in order to approach the Other. This does not exclude the very concept of understanding but places it in a relativistic context: any universal claim of understanding as a transcendental category able to include all cultural systems to binarily judge whether they are true or false, whether someone is understood or misunderstood, is already a try of homogenization of cultures. Understanding has to be included primarily in the scope of differences.

Consequently, the biggest disagreement that constitutes the opposition of Cultural hermeneutics towards classical hermeneutics concerns the question of *misunderstanding*. For classical hermeneutics, misunderstanding or not-understanding are the oppositions of understanding, whereas for cultural hermeneutics, “they are the forms of divergent understanding on the ground of an antecedent understanding.”²⁹ For the latter, not- or misunderstanding are the proof of human creativity, and therefore necessary for hermeneutics. Indeed, when one does not understand because of a cultural difference, one becomes aware at that moment of some elements of the constitution of one’s own culture, or feels that one belongs to a particular culture, which is relative, as well as the existence of different and distinct, but at the same time complete, complex, structured and meaningful cultures, and therefore one realizes the intercultural dimension, which is not necessarily obvious and immediate inside of one’s own world. The gap, the difference born from the misunderstanding brings the mistaken speaker to catch a glimpse of the plurality of cultures and its own otherness to the Other’s culture. It then brings an effort of creativity, imagination and open construction to build a bridge between those two cultures to find a way to understand each other, by explanations, images, figures of speech, etc. In that way, understanding is not a transcultural concept but integrated to every culture, and it is because of its relativity to a cultural structure that it enables a constant creation and actualization of its process, becoming intercultural when a concrete encounter between two different understandings happens. From this encounter and its misunderstandings or its impossible completeness emerges the necessary awareness of one’s own relativity and the search for new means of communication in order to find a common understanding (though there can be no certainty that it will happen).

This disagreement regarding the very conception of understanding is then the ground for T.Kempa’s criticism of Mall (Kempa, 2008). He is pointing out the difficulties of the “situated unsituatedness” (*ortlos Orthaftigkeit*) thought as the paradoxical paradigm of intercultural philosophy, that represents according to Kempa’s interpretation the fusion of the conception of Plessner’s “*ortlos*” and Gadamer’s “*orthafte*”. The condition of being situated in the particular tradition of Gadamer is relativized by the possibility of an anthropological hermeneutics. [Ibid, p.76]

Kempa on the contrary considers intercultural philosophy from the pragmatist tradition. Though his solutions are not completely convincing for us, he brings to light some of the difficulties of the philosophy of Mall, especially concerning the very concept of understanding in the hermeneutic tradition. Influenced by pragmatism (Charles Sanders Peirce), Kempa (Kempa, 2008, p.77) considers the understanding as a process in which the first phase destroys the certainty of the action. Understanding is therefore not at all an adequacy or a concordance between

²⁹Personal translation. Original text: “Sie sind Formen des abweichenden Verstehens auf dem Boden eines vorgängigen Verstehens. [Ibid, p.34]

a previous given meaning and its realization (hermeneutics), but it is the gain of the ability of acting by destroying the antecedent beliefs. The criticism of hermeneutics is therefore to consider the understanding as something already fixed and positive, and the misunderstanding as a defect that should be corrected towards a consensus. In classical hermeneutics, one has to look for the true understanding, which already exists, in order to apply it. One has to correct one's *errors* of understanding; but in Kempa's perspective, there are no such errors, there is only an active process of destroying beliefs for new beliefs. The hermeneutic approach reduces the question of the cultural other to a binary perspective: either one can understand the other (and therefore assimilate him to an already given meaning) or one cannot understand him. For Mall, it is more complicated as it is a common effort from two different spheres looking for a possibility of overlapping, which refrains from an assimilation. Understanding is therefore not a *given* from one hegemonic definition by one tradition, but is a common conception found by the overlap. However, understanding is still considered as finding the common, the relative identity, the similarity between the differences, which means that understanding is still a correspondence. It is a positive understanding and its negation would be misunderstanding, which equates the failure of the overlap (Mall however does not envisage this possibility). One looks towards the same to communicate, as understanding is the appropriateness of two concepts on the ground of the cultural differences. On the contrary, cultural hermeneutics looks at transcending this binary conception for the idea that the very concept of understanding is itself made of misunderstandings, made of otherness, of conflict, etc. Conflict is in this respect not only pejorative but can also lead to understanding from differences. Kempa writes:

“Hence the answer to this apparent aporia of hermeneutics lies in the clarification that understanding is not only a pure process based on consensus, and that misunderstanding and accordingly not-understanding should in no case be considered as pure deficit phenomena. Understanding is by itself neither a construction of a signification nor a consensus about a thing, nor a concordance with others, nor an equalization, though all of these elements play an important role. A real understanding nourishes itself much more from the alien, from the dissent, from the conflict, from the not-understanding, and therefore from what is regarded as falsehood or as a lie - after all, understanding nourishes itself, only if it is about understanding of something new, unknown, from the clash, the conflict. This applies in particular to interculturality.”³⁰ [Ibid, p.80]

Though Kempa does not solve for us the problem of how to understand cultural otherness, he points out well Mall's difficulties of trying to keep the horizon of Gadamer in conjunction with an anthropological detachment from Plessner. He also brings the dimension of misunderstanding

³⁰Personal translation. Original text: “Die Antwort auf diese scheinbare Aporie der Hermeneutik liegt demnach in der Klarstellung, dass Verstehen eben nicht ein rein konsensbasierter Vorgang ist und Missverstehen bzw. Nicht-Verstehen keineswegs als rein defizitäre Phänomene anzusehen sind. Verstehen ist weder allein Konstruktion einer Bedeutung noch Konsens über eine Sache, auch keine Übereinstimmung mit Anderen und auch kein Gleichsetzen, obwohl all diese Elemente eine wichtige Rolle spielen. Echtes Verstehen nährt sich vielmehr (auch) aus dem Fremden, dem Dissens, dem Konflikt, dem Nicht-Verstehen, also mithin aus dem, was als Unwahrheit oder Lüge gesehen wird - letzten Endes nährt sich des Verstehen, sofern es um das Verstehen von etwas Neuem, Unbekanntem geht, aus dem Aufeinanderprallen, dem Konflikt. Dies gilt insbesondere für die Interkulturalität.”

that is for us an integrated and major phase or process for an intercultural understanding. The concept of understanding cannot keep, even implicitly, an aspect of truth-value, it has itself to be relativized to cultures and to a dynamic and mutual construction. In that sense, understanding in intercultural context is a “*bricolage*”, an approximation born from mutual creativity and flexibility in finding new ways to understand and be understood. It cannot be pre-determined or prepared but it has to be experienced, and it has to go through numerous misunderstandings in order to establish a shared understanding.

He brings quickly the notion of embodiment (*Leiblichkeit*), the question that is for us the logical consequence. Indeed, the question of understanding in a constant and radical process starts from a particular culture, considered as a standpoint. Both intercultural and cultural hermeneutics consider the concrete culture and the constant actualization of the process, or the overlap. But it implies then to consider the perspective of an encounter, which takes place in a bodily dimension. Thus, as the researches on embodiment already showed, this aspect of the question is not neutral and should not be underestimated. Especially in intercultural contexts, and ethnologists would certainly agree, the encounter is first of all an encounter of different peoples with their physical differences (thus, the concept of racism is a proof of the importance of physical elements in the encounter of the cultural other, as well as the myth of the “supremacy of the white man”, still topical).

2.2.2 The bodily dimension of the understanding of cultural otherness

B. Waldenfels states the emergence of interculturality in the history of ideas as a continuation of the phenomenological awareness of the embodiment (*Leiblichkeit*) as follows:

“The presently common term of *interculturality* reminds us as much of the Husserlian concept of intersubjectivity as its realization, intercorporeity by Merleau-Ponty: the interpersonal exchange extends its scope to become intercultural. The centring on an element around which others would join together is then broken in favor of a sphere or an intermediary realm, an *interworld* in which one relates to the other and is what one is in this relation only.”³¹

But to extend the problematics of intersubjectivity or intercorporeity to cultural otherness (*Fremdheit*) is not obvious and it gives rise to different questions. We have now to consider another bodily practice from a body that is foreign to me by its very movements.

Let us make a necessary conceptual remark in order to avoid any significant misunderstandings due to the English language. We do absolutely not imply a difference in the body that would be racial in its connotation, so that some cultures would be inherently, due to physical composition, able or not able of some facts or actions, leading then to any hierarchy. This is a perverse and counter-use of cultural considerations of embodiment. Body will be here always understood in terms of *Leib*, by which we mean the physical dimension of the body linked to its consciousness,

³¹Personal translation. Original text: “Le terme aujourd’hui usuel d’*interculturalité* rappelle autant le concept husserlien d’intersubjectivité que sa concrétisation, l’intercorporéité, par Merleau-Ponty : l’échange interpersonnel s’élargit pour devenir interculturel. La centration sur un élément autour duquel d’autres viendraient se regrouper est ainsi rompue en faveur d’une sphère ou d’un royaume intermédiaires, d’un *intermonde* dans lequel l’un se rapporte à l’autre et n’est ce qu’il est que dans ce rapport.”(Waldenfels, 2009, p.105)

and the living and experiencing dimension that can be cultural. The distinction between *Körper* and *Leib* is essential here as it efficiently shows the influence of cultures. A *Körper* according to our understanding, is what all human-beings share without any distinction of cultures. It is the very transcultural and physical level, i.e. the fact that human-beings are all constituted by a certain composition of our body, which ensures that discoveries or science of anatomy can be shared through cultures without problems of translation of intercultural reflections. On the contrary, the *Leib* is the living body related to our consciousness, i.e. our incarnation in a certain body. This body is shaped by cultural habits, is always in a moving process and is the prime mover of our actions. The relations of the *Leib* to the *Körper* can also be cultural (funeral and burial for example) but we consider it to be before all the fact of the *Leib*.

So the difference of cultural practices in their bodily dimension excludes me as I am neither immediately able to understand them, nor able to participate. I may not understand the other body in some actions because its habits, its customs, its movements, all come from a different tradition and culture to the point that the actions of the body differ from other bodies. This is easily conceivable in terms of religious rituals, that is the practice of religion, which I may not be able to understand, and even less to participate in, as gestures are in that case usually specific to the different religions. G.Stenger exemplifies for instance the sitting position. "Sitting" means thus something different in the West and something else in Eastern Asia. The very concept "to sit" implies in practice in the West "to sit on a chair" whereas it equates "to sit *in itself*" in Eastern Asia (Stenger, 2006, p.461). It is the same concept but it implies a different physical reality that is incarnated in the very being of the different cultural members: for a Western mind, to sit is immediately associated, which means incarnated in the bodily structure, with a chair, while for a Eastern Asian mind, it indicates immediately to sit on the ground³². The body has therefore an active and culturally particularized understanding of a situation, and this situation will be experienced differently by culturally differentiated bodies (*Leib*). It concerns actually the whole field of experience, with the greetings, highly particularized within Europe itself, of course extended to a worldwide range of civilizations; it is also the case for the action of eating, from a fork to the chopsticks through the hands, etc. Bodily moves are always localized and specific, and the whole gesture needs a phase of learning. Intersubjectivity is here extended towards interculturality, while interculturality is provided with the perspectives and researches of corporeity.

2.2.2.1 A bodily hermeneutics

We would like therefore to draft here the possibility, maybe surprising from a phenomenological outlook, of a *bodily hermeneutics*. This is of course not understood in the strict sense of hermeneutics, but wants to extend the reflection on cultural hermeneutics, in a re-centralization on the role of the body. This has been neglected by classical hermeneutics - mainly focused on linguistic conceptions - that has difficulties to *incorporate* the body in a theory, even regarding understanding. However, we think that a body-based lecture for an interpretation of

³²G.Stenger remarks there the strange phenomenon that cultures that sit on a chair consider themselves as "high-cultures", by a sense of hierarchy probably composed by our consideration of a king who is heightened. It is nevertheless interesting to observe how a culture is giving herself meaning with respect to size and verticality in comparison to others. (Stenger, 2006, p.461-462, see footnote No. 296)

the cultural otherness is possible, and it can also be considered as a learning process towards the understanding of the other. To say it differently: an integration of the bodily domain in hermeneutics, understood broadly, is not only a possible way of understanding but has to be integrated in order to transcend the sphere of understanding as language only, and to extend it to the physical, living and experienced reality.

The body of the other is first of all an object of questioning in my space of living. When we use the term *object*, we obviously do not mean a use or a simple grasp for personal ends as it is for objects. We mean on the contrary an active position of the subject that reflects in front of the body of the other, which calls into question and brings me uncertainty in an intercultural case. In the situation of religious rituals, it is easy to see the interrogation of someone external who would assist for the first time to a ritual of a religion other than his own. The positions of the body, the actions, the gestures are then highly symbolic. One can actually *see* in the physical sense, one can observe physically these differences of moving and being in a certain place, because bodies represent there a certain spirit of religion: bodies take the religious feeling and the belief towards the physical sphere, in order to signify religious purposes. The body of the other is as such an object of reflection, or more exactly, the gap between mine and the Other's bodily practices urges us to reflect, to interpret, and opens the field of understanding, misunderstanding and not-understanding. Body-based lecture is therefore definitely different in its effectuation, but it leads to the same questions about *errors*, the same problematics of belonging to a tradition, the same polemics about prejudices, etc. But this time, these questions are all *incarnated* in a living and moving body.

This concept of *incarnation* is precisely the problem, as one requires a reflecting consciousness to be able to read the body, but incarnation means already to escape it due to its immediacy, which makes the reading difficult, on the side of the phenomenon. We can illustrate it with the example of G.Stenger: "A Korean at home in Korea does not say while eating, "I'm eating with chopsticks", but he says "I'm eating", which means, that he has so much incarnated the chopsticks, that they do not specifically arise as a theme."³³

The incarnation is what makes the practice familiar and lively, that is, what makes it escape reflection, thoughts and distance. It is the mark of my own sphere of being and acting. At the same time, it is precisely what shows cultural otherness to one who did not incarnate the same culture; it is what will be first noticed by him or her. What seems to the one the most "natural", which is obviously something cultural that became so familiar that it is lived and felt as natural as if it was always there, is relative and brings immediately the feeling of cultural difference to the one who does not belong to the same culture. It will then be the locus of questions and tries to read the body from the cultural other, i.e. to understand the bodily practice, by observing, analyzing, understanding, and maybe living with him³⁴. If a Korean is not even aware that he is

³³Personal translation. Original text: "Ein Koreaner bei sich zu Hause in Korea essend sagt nicht, "ich esse mit Stäbchen", sondern er sagt "ich esse", was besagen will, daß er die Stäbchen so inkarniert hat, daß sie nicht eigens als Thema auftauchen." (Stenger, 2006, p.483)

³⁴The particular concept of "*Konkreativität*", or even the hermetic experience, are specific concepts by H.Rombach, developed afterwards by G.Stenger, that will be studied later on. We do not want to enter into the details here, and we consider the usual categories of understanding and interpreting. They are not absolutely removed by the hermetics and stay necessary, but they are enriched by a more immediate, experiential and dynamic dimension of a mutual approach, experience and living together. One can however already glance the link

eating with chopsticks, a Westerner will immediately notice it in Korea, will maybe define it as a sign of this culture, and will then through the eyes of the Koreans as well as through his own eyes see himself as a foreigner, as a cultural other, as he may not be comfortable with eating with chopsticks. He will train himself with difficulties, or ask for a fork, but in any case, the very fact of not being used to eat with chopsticks, that is the lack of confidence or the inability to eat with chopsticks, is the immediate fact that will distinguish his culture from the other culture. This example may seem a bit too ordinary, but it shows precisely how deep in the cultural practices one can find these differences, and into the most common and widespread practices. It can also of course be extended to enormous varieties of cultural actions and differences.

Incarnation is therefore what shows differences more strongly. Stenger adds that “the body has always to *become a body*. (...) The body takes place as ‘incorporation’ and that is precisely its becoming of a body.”³⁵ The body is never a natural given but is the process of an education in the broad sense - i.e. every cultural habit and practice shaped by a culture, a society and a personal environment - and therefore, is subject to intercultural problematics. Transformations and changes are then symbols of the body that is firstly characterized by an absence of permanence.

The problem is then of course to be able to understand a body in this conception of the living and changing aspect of the incarnation. As the Introduction to cultural hermeneutics says, a hermeneutics on the side of the conception and integration of the bodily dimension has to be processual and has to consider the permanent changes in which it wants to be inscribed: the object here is not a fixed study but has to be understood in a more complex approach. As Stenger says, “One should not forget that incorporation (*Einverleibung*) not only aims for invigoration and consolidation, but always absorbs only that, which in a certain sense already brings with it an own force. What is incarnating is itself already incarnate.”³⁶

The object of study is then undifferentiated from the content of the study, it is already what we say about it, and every discourse is inadequate as it is already fixed in the moving, and therefore already irrelevant at the time of the utterance. However, this inadequacy of the discourse does not remove the fact that the body is submitted to interpretations, that a look can be perceived and analyzed in different ways, differently felt and interpreted with different consequences: the bodily interpretation is however made with various tools, which are all embodied in the physical character. Perceptions (including feelings) in a broad sense bring a living and lived dimension to the object of study and the subject of study, which excludes *de facto* any objectivity in the proper sense and which can be interpreted, once again, only in a given relation to the cultural other.

The body is then the first place for an encounter of cultures, and does not escape a “*learning-process*”. This is best illustrated with the example of an ethnologist, who experiences directly the encounter with a cultural other and is therefore at first concerned by the idea of an inter-

between hermetics and embodiment, as hermetic works further into the sphere of language and understanding, to bring the whole being into an immediate consideration. It will therefore be a jump from one world to another, and an experience that goes beyond a simple try to understand, as well as a real sharing of cultures.

³⁵Personal translation. Original text: “Der Leib muß immer Leib werden. (...) Der Leib geschieht als “Einverleibung” und genau das ist seine Leibwerdung.” [Ibid, p.481]

³⁶Personal translation. Original text: “Man darf dabei nicht vergessen, daß die Einverleibung nicht nur auf Eigenkräftigung und Selbststärkung aus ist, sondern stets nur das aufnimmt, was selber gewissermaßen schon eine Eigenkraft mitbringt. Das Inkarnierte ist selber schon Inkarnat.” [Ibid, p.482.]

cultural embodiment. This encounter possesses the two dimensions discussed before: on the one side, this encounter is and cannot escape embodiment, and at the same time, it aims at a hermeneutic understanding what can be for him radically alien. To say it differently with Grünwedel: “The presence of the ethnologist in the field goes along with assignations of roles, processes of incarnation and mechanisms of defense. The latter, as well as the construction of meaning qua *mimesis* and dialogue (*Dialogizität*) in the personal, that is, bodily encounter, are questioned regarding the possibility of understanding.”³⁷ Grünwedel criticizes strongly the position of C. Geertz, famous anthropologist, who speaks about the key concept of a “thick description” and reduces then his experience to a text. For him, human beings are semiotics before all, behaviors are symbolic actions, and ethnography is a science of interpretation, just like hermeneutics, but it is interpretation of a living culture instead of texts (as it is traditionally). However, to qualify slightly differently Grünwedel’s opinion, one should also notice that Geertz does not neglect the dynamic and bodily aspect of his studies when he writes: “Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of “construct a reading of”) a manuscript - foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherencies, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behavior.” (Geertz, 1977, p.10) Geertz is aware of this bodily dimension, but he considers his role as one of a translator via the description of cultural behaviors, in order to make them understandable to another culture. He corresponds to bodily hermeneutics, insofar as he tries to understand by describing and interpreting a dynamic and living culture by fixing it into texts.

However, the criticism is pertinent when we consider Geertz’ position in the whole field of anthropology. Or more exactly, one can guess in Geertz some traces of a much broader defect in anthropology. There is a classical tendency within this field to aim at “incarnating objectivity” on the field, as a scientist, in the assimilation, in the sharing of lives and also of course in the scientific methods and writings afterwards. Anthropologists were or are aiming at neglecting their own embodiment to situate themselves as a neutral and immobile translator, which is of course highly open to criticism. The ethnologist’s body is obviously the first mean and the most obvious encounter, and it is at first with gestures, practices, and experiences that an anthropological theory can be constructed³⁸. Therefore, the anthropologist’s interpretation is marked by his own body and his interpretation is already determined and marked by its relation to the cultural other.

The bodily and the hermeneutic dimensions do not always have to exclude each other, regarding the writing as well as the reading phases, if we stay cautious. For that matter, the philosopher L. Bonoli offers us a relation between anthropology and hermeneutics, and applies a Gadamerian concept to anthropology. He focuses on the concept of *Anstoß*, translated in

³⁷Personal translation. Original text: “Die Präsenz des Ethnologen im Feld geht einher mit Rollenzuweisungen, Einverleibungsprozessen und Abwehrmechanismen. Letztere sowie die Bedeutungsherstellung qua Mimesis und Dialogizität in der personalen, d.h leiblichen Begegnung werden auf die Möglichkeit des Verstehens hin befragt.”(Grünwedel, 2008, p.56)

³⁸We do not want to enter into the multiple specifications and distinctions, internal to the field of anthropology. Following Bonoli, we distinguish anthropology as production of theories that aim at understanding and studying humans in their various cultural organizations, and ethnography as production of a scientific writing that tries to describe and to report other cultures. Anthropology is then based on this scientific writing. (Bonoli, 2007b, p.108)

English as “shock³⁹”. This shock is for Bonoli the apparition of the cultural otherness, as a manifestation of the real cultural difference. It is only when something breaks in our common and familiar world, by measuring our prejudices to reality, and we are shaken up by an event in almost a physical shock, that we can reach more adequately cultural otherness. He explains the problem as follow:

“It however appears obvious that this work of linguistic elaboration [to give an account of the shock] is not an epistemological neutral gesture: it implies a transformation, a construction of the lived experience according to lexical and conceptual tools that our linguistic system provides us with. It is precisely in this work of elaboration that the conditioning linked to our cultural-belonging takes place, and that otherness is transformed, from “something that produces a shock” towards something that we can say and understand, and therefore towards something that can be integrated in our symbolic system. It follows that an otherness expressed in our language is already not a “true” otherness anymore, insofar as it is already mediated and belongs straightaway to our conceptual horizon.⁴⁰”

The signifying expression is already transforming the content of the experience in an intercultural field, because it does not have access to an adequate means of description, to what is immediately felt or lived. There is a resistance to the scientific or personal description of the encounter with the cultural other. Hermeneutics is inadequate for a perfect transcription of the world. However, the body possesses in itself a broad field of expressions that enables encounters and questioning. If the lexical field is even more alien to us, given the problems of translations and conceptual problems due to linguistics, the bodily field of communication, that is the whole of signs, behaviors and practices, is very often easier *translatable*. It is so precisely because it is not a translation in the strict sense, but an experience, which is related to the actual living dimension of human-beings. It is therefore with the help of an approximation of my encounter with the cultural other that I can try, by living with and next to him, to interact, share and learn an actual existence.

³⁹Original mention: “Wir sahen schon, daß die Negativität der Erfahrung logisch gesehen die Frage impliziert. In der Tat ist es der Anstoß, den dasjenige darstellt, das sich der Vormeinung nicht einfügt, durch den wir Erfahrungen machen. Auch das Fragen ist daher mehr ein Erleiden als ein Tun. Die Frage drängt sich auf. Es läßt sich ihr nicht länger ausweichen und bei der gewohnten Meinung verharren.”(Gadamer, 2011, p.372) English translation: “We have already seen that, logically considered, the negativity of experience implies a question. In fact we have experiences when we are shocked by things that do not accord with our expectations. Thus questioning too is more a passion than an action. A question presses itself on us; we can no longer avoid it and persist in our accustomed opinion.”(Gadamer, 2004, p.360). L. Bonoli writes originally in French and gave his own translation of *Anstoß*, translated in the text as “impulsion” and retranslated by him as “heurt”, which tallies better the English translation and the idea of something *breaking* our familiarity, a sudden burst.(Bonoli, 2007b, p.6) and (Gadamer, 1996, p.389)

⁴⁰Personal translation. Original text : ”Il apparaît toutefois évident que ce travail d’élaboration linguistique [de rendre compte du heurt] n’est pas un geste épistémologiquement neutre : il implique une transformation, une construction de l’expérience vécue en fonction des instruments lexicaux et conceptuels que notre système linguistique met à notre disposition. Et c’est justement dans ce travail d’élaboration qu’intervient le conditionnement lié à notre appartenance culturelle et que l’altérité est transformée, de “quelque chose qui produit un heurt”, en quelque chose de dicible et de compréhensible, et donc en quelque chose d’intégrable dans notre système symbolique. Il s’ensuit qu’une altérité formulée dans notre langage n’est déjà plus une “vraie” altérité, dans la mesure où elle est déjà médiatisée et appartient d’emblée à notre horizon conceptuel.”(Bonoli, 2007b, p.7)

Learning is not an abstract term here and there are actual means to do so. Just as the copy of a text permits a child to learn writing, just as the exercise of critically reading and interpretation a text sharpens the ability to judge, bodily *mimesis* is also a practical education to come closer to a cultural other. The body in the *mimesis* becomes an interface in the understanding of the other: by repeating the practice of a rite of another culture, by learning to eat with chopsticks, by imitating the appropriate greetings, one learns and appropriates little by little the cultural practice of the other, in a signifying and understandable form. Or to say it differently with Grünwedel: “Subsequent linguistic considerations about embodiment (*Leibverwurzelung*) of cultural processes of understanding thus lead to the model of an interface (*Schnittstelle*), which according to the author not only delivers a possible, but also an evident pattern of interpretation of the body’s function of understanding.”⁴¹ The body is therefore in a situation of direct and immediate understanding of the other, it incarnates itself as hermeneutics that does not go through text but through bodily practice. It becomes an intercultural interface, beyond understanding, by making the other familiar to me as a moving incarnation.

2.2.2.2 The bodily phenomenon

If we continue our specification of the role of the body in an intercultural perspective, we reach a certain rupture with hermeneutics, in its linguistic understanding. The body is then considered as a phenomenon, to be distinguished by its characteristics of apparition, of an event far before any conception, linguistics or intellect. The fact of the embodiment is to escape and to surprise ourselves, which goes beyond hermeneutics. This part already tends towards the next chapter. The body is to us a bridge for a combination of different ways of understanding the cultural other, a polydimensional interface. As B. Waldenfels says:

“The experience of the alien does not constitute an act that we can allocate to ourselves, but resides in singular events that anticipate our intentions, that impede them, that depart from them, that overtake them, and make the circle of particularization and generalization, of division and totalization burst. In that respect, the alien shows a “non-assimilableness” (*non-assimilabilité*).”⁴²

Waldenfels shows that the intentional structure, which goes from myself towards the world, or the Other, is inadequate in the case of the alien. My intentions are always already an answer to the events that happen around me, a necessary and always singular *adaptation* to the world. Waldenfels calls this experience *Fremdaffektion*, that is hetero-affection⁴³. He summarizes in

⁴¹Personal translation. Original text: “Anschließende linguistische Überlegungen zur Leibverwurzelung kultureller Verstehensprozesse führen so zum Modell der Schnittstelle, welche nach Meinung des Autors ein nicht nur mögliches, sondern auch durch Evidenzcharakter ausgezeichnetes Interpretationsmuster der Verstehensfunktion des Leibes liefert.”(Grünwedel, 2008, p.63)

⁴²Personal translation. Original text: “L’expérience de l’étranger ne constitue pas un acte que nous pouvons nous attribuer, mais réside en des événements singuliers qui devancent nos intentions, les contrarient, s’écartert d’elles, les dépassent, et font ainsi éclater le cercle de la particularisation et de la généralisation, du partage et de la totalisation. En cela, l’étranger manifeste une non-assimilabilité.” (Waldenfels, 2009, p.65)

⁴³We translate by “hetero-affection” by following the French translation “hétéro-affection”, as we think it gives a better account of the German intention, in French as well as in English. It goes with the idea of a “pathos” given from the alien, therefore from an outside dimension. We do not apply our own categories on the Other in order to understand him, or we do not transform the Other, but we are touched by the very apparition of the Other and we have to react to this phenomenon by an affection always singular, actualized and different. (Waldenfels, 2005b, p.340)

English his thought as follow:

“In sum, everything that appears as something has to be described not simply as something which receives a sense, but as something which provokes sense without being meaningful itself, yet still as something *by which* we are touched, affected, stimulated, surprised and to some extent violated. I call this happening *pathos*, *Widerfahrnis* or *af-fect*, marked by a hyphen in order that something is done *to us*.” (Waldenfels, 2007, p.74)

The lexical field that Waldenfels employs is far from any conception of hermeneutics and is understood in the experiential, that is in the sphere of feelings. It is hardly described, and it is a process in which I am before all the *receptacle*. That means that I am before all *passive* in being touched, in receiving the event that is beyond my control, my order, my will and even my being. My body is therefore the first presence to have access to what happens to me, and it is the first medium that can deal with the presence of the Other; Waldenfels here does not mean necessarily a cultural other.⁴⁴

This antecedence of the alien makes it difficult then to be able to qualify him. It is the fact that he precisely escapes any certainty that expresses him better. His extra-ordinary character, and his dimension of being *beyond* (me, my understanding, my structures) define him, or to say it differently:

“The paradox of the Husserlian determination of the alien resides in the fact that the accessibility reveals itself to be the accessibility of an inaccessible. The place of the alien in the experience is strictly speaking a non-place. The alien is not only elsewhere, he is the elsewhere itself, and more precisely, an “original of the elsewhere” (Merleau-Ponty). (...) As the natural perceptive belief of Husserl, the experience of the alien, as experience of the distant is at work before the opposition of the yes and the no (Husserl, 2005, §106). In this way, the determination of the alien is not a negative definition, as we often suppose. The alien does not present any lack, in the sense where everything that we do not know yet, knowable in itself, is waiting to be known. We rather have to deal with an absence in the flesh. ⁴⁵”

⁴⁴We can relate Waldenfels's thought to the Other of Lévinas. Though the specificity of the cultural question is not a topic of reflection, the Other as such is beyond any appropriation, as a first and antecedent bodily presence. One can easily apply this following quote to the cultural context though, as the difference would reinforce the feeling of the apparition of the Other: “The metaphysical other is other with an alterity that is not formal, is not the simple reverse of identity, and is not formed out of resistance to the same, but is prior to every initiative, to all imperialism of the same.” (Lévinas, 1979, p.39); Original French edition, (Lévinas, 1971;2010, p.28). For the possible relation, or at least the interpretation of Waldenfels on Lévinas, one can consult B. Waldenfels, in (Waldenfels, 2002)

⁴⁵Personal translation. Original text : “Le paradoxe de la détermination husserlienne de l'étranger réside en ceci que l'accessibilité se révèle être l'accessibilité d'un inaccessible Le lieu de l'étranger dans l'expérience est à proprement parler un non-lieu. L'étranger n'est pas simplement ailleurs, il est l'ailleurs, et, plus précisément, un “originaire de l'ailleurs” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, 308). (...) Comme la croyance perceptive naturelle de Husserl, l'expérience de l'étranger, en tant qu'expérience du lointain, est à l'œuvre avant l'opposition du oui et du non (Husserl, 2005,§106). En ce sens, la détermination de l'étranger n'est pas une définition négative, comme on le suppose souvent. L'étranger ne présente aucun manque, au sens où tout ce que nous ne connaissons pas encore, étant en soi connaissable, attend d'être connu. Nous avons plutôt affaire à une sorte d'absence en chair et en os.”(Waldenfels, 2009, p.36-37); we used the English edition (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p.254) to translate the quote of Merleau-Ponty, in reference to the French edition (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p.302).

There is something paradoxical in the thought that the alien, who is in the very first impression supposed to draw the limits of my own body with his own limits and be located in a space that I have therefore to share with him, precisely escapes any accessibility, any rooting in a space. Although he is physically there in front of me, he embodies the complete absence of a space in my understanding. His physical body only represents, because of his character of alienness, the impossibility to situate him in a determined place, to integrate him in the order of my *Lebenswelt*. Because he is Other, he is precisely apart (*extra-ordinary*) from my common world. Waldenfels shows with great pertinence that this body of the alien is significant by the very fact that it escapes all my categories and qualifications: he is not what can be understood via a description, as Geertz wants to believe; he is not what can be understood by criteria coming one after the other through knowledge or abilities; he is not a “not yet” but a radical alienness.

Is there then a possibility to become accustomed to the alienness, to *tame* the difference? Or to say it differently: without reducing or appropriating the alienness, is it possible to think of a *living-together* in a way that the alien can become familiar, without his presence being troubling or disturbing, without being *shocked, shaken*? In passing, it can be remarked that this question is reversible and reciprocal, as one can consider that I am much an alien to the other, as he is an alien to me. We like to believe that the moment or phase of an effective “learning”, i.e. a mutual process based on sharing, is this dynamic idea of a living together⁴⁶. Learning by *mimesis* or learning the culture by textual teachings or readings goes certainly in the direction of a closer proximity and a better understanding. However, both stay insufficient. When the practice of the Other seems “natural”, that is cultural but familiar, when we do not have to think and analyze to go with the other, and when we are not anymore an alien for the other, in the sense that he does not have to make any effort to adapt himself to our alienness (and *vice versa*) then only we can think of a real *learning*, in terms of a dynamic living experience. In the end, the mutual integration, incarnation and incorporation can provide differences that however do not imply an impossibility of living-together. It would be defined by the permeable and indecisive character of a border where the relation is a dynamic and mutual process of sharing. To come back to the first example that we took in Stenger’s philosophy, this situation could be illustrated by the day where I do not, as a foreigner, notice anymore that I eat with chopsticks, where I do not need to apply myself to eat with it, where I do not realize that it is not “normal” in my cultural sense of the norms; correlatively, it means that my host, or the one I share my meal with, will also not notice anymore that I am not used to eat with chopsticks, and will not have to explain it to me, etc. It is the same way for the Korean with a fork (though due to the Western influence, it is rarely a problematic case). This is of course a very simple example, and one may reach much more complex situations where the differences are harder to resolve, but it shows at least how the *learning* process defined by a living together in the difference can be shared, so that the alienness becomes actually a familiarity, and the alien becomes an ally. It can of course be applied to the religious example of a ritual aforementioned.

⁴⁶One can easily link this idea once again with the *Konkreativität* (Concreativity) of H. Rombach *Konkreativität* implies however more than a “living-together” as it means also to create something together, that is, a common way, common creation or a new hybrid process. We stay for now at this point of a sharing of cultures in a mutual process of learning from the other, which at the end, can reach a stage where both alien become familiar, when alienness is tamed into the familiar. In so doing, cultures can live *with* each other, which is certainly radically different than *next* to each other.

We should come back to a more formal level in order to give a conclusion to this part. We can say now that bodily phenomenon is first what shows the radical difference between the alien and the own. It is necessary in order for the alienness to emerge and consequently, necessary also to create links and relations between the same and the other. An instantaneous confusion would prevent any distinction and would make any approach of the cultural other a reduction.

From that fact follows a bodily interpretation of the Other, i.e. a try to understand the alienness in the context of an ethical intercultural framework that would prevent any assimilation. We called it “bodily hermeneutics”, in reference to the various ways of understanding and reading the body of the other, from whom I am distinguished, but who has to be understood in order to live with him. We have included this movement in the general framework of a cultural hermeneutics, though it is not necessarily originally made by the authors, and not in the way we conducted this argumentation. We did so, as cultural hermeneutics was already the bridge between different methods and understood hermeneutics far beyond a strict analyzes of the text and the language, towards an integration of the dynamics processes of the embodiment and variegated moving and changing figures.

At the end of this process, it seems that we come back to the bodily phenomenon, but in a slightly different way: my bodily practice is then modified, it becomes itself different, transformed with the contact of the other culture. The bodily phenomenon that was the place of an absolute separation becomes then the interface of a relation and of a permeable and open border. This connection is not anymore intellectual as it was in the antecedent level of bodily hermeneutics: rather it becomes immediately embodied. The irreducibility of difference which stays present of course, but does not happen anymore as a violent distinction excluding me or the other from the other’s world. I and the other share without having the need to reflect on our bodily practice. Hermeneutics and phenomena are therefore linked in the sequences of a living together and the adaptation to the alienness.

3 Beyond hermeneutics: limits, combinations and external considerations. On the extension of the debate to a plurality of intercultural methods

3.1 The problem of the hermeneutic circle. Can hermeneutics go beyond its own limits?

In different ways, we already have dealt with some of the limits, or at least some of the problems encountered by hermeneutics with regard to its possible “interculturalization” (Stenger, 2006, p.14). The constant position of severely criticizing and standing against the classical authors (for instance, Heidegger or Gadamer) is the first sign of a possible and plausible incapability of hermeneutics to interculturalize itself. The failure in integrating cultural otherness within the traditional hermeneutics, whether it happened due to an attitude of denial (Heidegger and his mention European philosophy as a tautology (Heidegger, 2003b)), relative disinterestedness (Ricoeur), or formal exclusion (the prejudice of Gadamer) should question the very idea of making hermeneutics intercultural, as far as the hypothetical conditions for hermeneutics to open itself to a plurality of cultures are concerned. We should at least admit that the very conception and development of hermeneutics offers a strong resistance to the idea of interculturality.

The question of the hermeneutic circle represents the height of the hermeneutic limits. Consequently, intercultural hermeneutics itself is struggling between its criticism, its opposition and its positive re-definition in order to tackle the problems that it raises in terms of openness to the cultural otherness. In so doing, it confronts itself with the limits of classical hermeneutics that become in a way its own limits. Indeed, the criticisms addressed to Mall concern the restriction of its binary understanding in terms of identity and difference (resulting in overlap), whose aim is to deconstruct the relation between truth and tradition, a direct opposition to Gadamer. Mall, as well as other intercultural hermeneutists, rejects of course the closure of the hermeneutic circle, but in so doing, restrains himself at the same time to a certain understanding in opposition to this circle. By having to prove that intercultural hermeneutics overtakes the figure of the circle, he is somehow determined by it. It results from this fact that intercultural hermeneutists are involuntarily still conditioned by this figure, which can explain some of the aforementioned difficulties of Mall. For instance, the concept of “*Orthaftigkeit*” (situatedness) that Mall tries to overcome with the addition of the adjective “*ortlos*” (unsituated - inspired probably from the “excentric existence” of H.Plessner) is a consequence of the closure of the tradition from Gadamer. Kempa (Kempa, 2008) underlines the paradox of the standpoint of intercultural philosophy that starts

as reaction against Gadamer and tries to overcome it within the field of hermeneutics itself, that is, the one that neglects cultural otherness.

We should however not be mistaken here. We do not want as such to blame the contributions of intercultural hermeneutics, nor to erase the study that we have led until now and to consider it invalid. It would obviously be wrong and meaningless. We indeed believe that hermeneutics brings substantial and decisive criticisms and propositions in the field of intercultural philosophy. Besides, as we quickly mentioned in the introduction, the very fact that intercultural philosophy has been developed extensively in German philosophy where hermeneutics is strongly influential, and not in French philosophy for example where *Déconstruction* was however more inclined to do so, is a historical sign of its worth in this field.

However, after having studied its emergence and some of its major contributions, we should also face its limits as we just introduced it, and raise the following questions: given the prevailing place of the hermeneutic circle in the tradition of this field, does the destruction of this closed circle operated by intercultural philosophers not mean the self-destruction or the impossibility of intercultural hermeneutics? We have remarked the changes and the combinations of philosophical traditions operated by what is called “cultural hermeneutics”, which has constructed bridges towards different influences and methods in order to fulfill the intercultural dynamic and processual structure. Can we still consider this cultural hermeneutics as hermeneutics? And if not, or only in a restricted way, can hermeneutics alone still think interculturally? To summarize it differently: if the hermeneutic circle is what has led hermeneutics to Eurocentrism, in a reduction and a historical closure, and is at the same time the centre of its method, does the act of breaking this circle for the sake of interculturality prevent hermeneutics itself?

3.1.1 Gadamer’s hermeneutic circle. How can we interpret the hermeneutic inheritance?

It is maybe time to open the methods towards other “horizons”; it is maybe the place to look at a variety of methods to tally them with a variety of cultures, and philosophies. Let us firstly have a glance at the definition and the problems of the hermeneutic circle. Like always, the tradition has simplified a matter that was less Manichean than it seems, and Heidegger’s and Gadamer’s hermeneutic circles are therefore:

- 1/ different one from another;
- 2/ not as simply and uniformly closed as has been said against them.

The first point goes beyond the scope of this work. We can only refer to the brilliant analyzes of J.Grondin¹. As Gadamer is more often the direct interlocutor or opponent to intercultural hermeneutics, we will focus on his sole conception. Regarding the second remark, we have to acknowledge that Gadamer considers his hermeneutic circle as a necessary openness, as well as

¹J.Grondin speaks about differences of accent between Heidegger and Gadamer especially concerning the epistemological status of the hermeneutic circle. The ontology however is the common ground for both. A complete, detailed and systematic analysis of the two philosophers in order to look for the different intercultural consequences of their hermeneutic circle that takes in consideration their respective differences would be an interesting way to look at concrete and precise explanations for their denial of interest in cultural otherness, which can however not be developed in this place. We refer only to the chart here, in the German edition in (Grondin, 2000, p.133) and in the French edition in (Grondin, 1999, p.127), which summarizes well the second chapter that deals with this problem.

a rectification of one's prejudices. The hermeneutic circle is not (only) led by the tradition, but it actualizes our prejudices by confronting them to the understanding, to the interpretation. In so doing, it rectifies them.

But here stands the problem of Gadamer:

“Rather, a person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something. That is why a hermeneutically trained consciousness must be, from the start, sensitive to the text's alterity. But this kind of sensitivity involves neither "neutrality" with respect to content nor the extinction of one's self, but the foregrounding and appropriation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings. (Gadamer, 2004, p. 271-272)²”

This quote about the hermeneutic circle shows Gadamer's ambiguity, rather than what is often said, i.e. a complete and radical closure. He indeed considers the “alterity”, and the relativization of the prejudices or fore-meanings once they are confronted with the text, what they have to do. Gadamer does not stay on the conception of prejudices and the exclusion of difference. If one can not escape these prejudices, they also have to be validated and re-actualized by the text itself. Gadamer mentioned just after the “shock” (“*die Erfahrung des Anstoßes*” [*Ibid*, p.272], “*in the experience of being pulled up short by the text*” [*Ibid*, p.270], “*l'expérience du choc*”, [*Ibid*, p.289]) that “re-activates”, or “wakes up” our consciousness from its humdrum routine as we saw earlier with L. Bonoli, which is a necessary openness to the text and brings the novelty of the experience.

However, we are still far from any intercultural perspective, and Gadamer's limits are important and significant. The term of “alterity” (*Andersheit*) has to be here related to Waldenfels' criticism of an alterity understood in the limited framework of the same and the *domesticated*. It appears clearly in the original German text, as *Andersheit* is not *Fremdheit*. We are still in the sphere of a relative other, which is situated in the framework of a strict European concept and understanding, and this is reinforced by the following commentary:

“Thus the meaning of "belonging"—i.e., the element of tradition in our historical-hermeneutical activity—is fulfilled in the commonality of fundamental, enabling prejudices. Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject matter that comes into language through the traditional text and has, or acquires, a connection with the tradition from which the text speaks. On the other hand, hermeneutic consciousness is aware that its bond to this subject matter does not consist in some self-evident, unquestioned unanimity, as is the case with the unbroken stream of tradition. (...) It is in the play between the traditional text's strangeness and familiarity to us, between being a

²Original text: “Wer einen Text ' verstehen will, ist vielmehr bereit, sich von ihm etwas sagen zu lassen. Daher muß ein hermeneutisch geschultes Bewußtsein für die Andersheit des Textes von vornherein empfänglich sein. Solche Empfänglichkeit setzt aber weder sachliche “Neutralität” noch gar Selbstauslöschung voraus, sondern schließt die abhebende Aneignung der eigenen Vormeinungen und Vorurteile ein.” (Gadamer, 2011, 273-274); in the French edition, (Gadamer, 1996, p.290)

historically intended, distanced object and belonging to a tradition. The true locus of hermeneutics is this in-between.³

The priority of a common prejudice, that is the necessity of a single tradition in Gadamer's understanding is the most problematic for an intercultural application of his thought. The alterity in the sense of *Andersheit* as opposed to *Fremdheit* (alienness) means here that one has to belong to the same culture to be able to understand a text and that the hermeneutic circle implies a historical and cultural determination. Gadamer considers the otherness and the danger of one's own prejudices, but in a complete ignorance of any cultural problematics. It raises the following question: what happens when someone is reading texts from another culture? Can he understand them? From Gadamer's point of view, it is dubious, or more exactly, the question is itself far from appearing.

It is interesting to notice that Gadamer takes into consideration the concept of a *Zwischen*, an "in-between" that is so important for intercultural philosophy. The hermeneutic locus corresponds also to an in-between. It is however also obvious that it is an in-between of two very restricted poles *a priori* defined by a certain tradition, and can bring forth only a restrained hermeneutics and not an intercultural one. We are located in our own tradition before all, as an unspoken presupposition. The strangeness of Gadamer is thus the one of a singular person vis-à-vis his consciousness of the tradition, between the objective history and the subjective tradition. It is thus very far from a cultural inter- and an awareness of a plurality of traditions. The universality of the circle (Mall, 2005, p.79) therefore prevents any multiplicity and pluralities, and if we can think of one, it can be only under the forms of different isolated monads, as presented by Mall: "The concept of the well-known and much-talked about "hermeneutic circle" overcultivated in certain versions of modern hermeneutics, makes us believe that cultures and traditions are just like monads, and they are condemned to move within themselves."(Mall, 2000b, p.42).

However, one has to acknowledge that the hermeneutic circle is a persistent figure of hermeneutics, for Gadamer in particular, correlatively to the conception of the prejudices and the role of the tradition. This complex circle has ignored the plurality of cultures and closed itself to any relativity of understandings, a cultural conception of the prejudices as well as the specificity of the question of the application of prejudices in intercultural context. Those questions have been only recently studied, and they start most often from the very opposition to Gadamer. They try therefore to open the hermeneutic circle to cultural questions, questions that were originally absolutely absent. By criticizing, they however stay in the opposition, and either try to tally Gadamer with cultural problematics, which turns out to be complicated, or they try to criticize Gadamer's ignorance, which turns out to be limited in bringing new creative propositions. But

³Original text: "So erfüllt sich der Sinn der Zugehörigkeit, d. h. das Moment der Tradition im historisch-hermeneutischen Verhalten, durch die Gemeinsamkeit grundlegender und tragender Vorurteile. Die Hermeneutik muß davon ausgehen, daß wer verstehen will, mit der Sache, die mit der Überlieferung zur Sprache kommt, verbunden ist und an die Tradition Anschluß hat oder Anschluß gewinnt, aus der die Überlieferung spricht. Auf der anderen Seite weiß das hermeneutische Bewußtsein, daß es mit dieser Sache nicht in der Weise einer fraglos selbstverständlichen Einigkeit verbunden sein kann, wie es für das ungebrochene Fortleben einer Tradition gilt. (...) Sie [die Spanning] spielt zwischen Fremdheit und Vertrautheit, die die Überlieferung nur uns hat, zwischen der historisch gemeinten, abständigen Gegenständlichkeit und der Zugehörigkeit zu einer Tradition. *In diesem Zwischen ist der wahre Ort der Hermeneutik.*" [Ibid, p.300]; in French, [Ibid,p.317]

what if Gadamer's view or the hermeneutic circle itself has to be given up, what if we look at it from another tradition?

3.1.2 To recentre the circle through interculturality

K. Klostermaier, a distinguished scholar in Hinduism and Indian history, suggests in an article called "The Hermeneutic Circle and the Hermeneutic Centre" (Klostermaier, 2008) a shifting in the accent from the hermeneutic circle to the centre, as influenced by Indian philosophy. This excellent paper gives us a new account of the hermeneutic circle that actually opens itself to cultural otherness, or more exactly, of the possibilities of making a hermeneutic *centre* intercultural. This is made possible with the two new directions that Klostermaier opens: first, a focus that, more than just for use or interest, pays real attention to the process and the practice of the concept of the centre in Indian philosophy, as a viable alternative to the circle. That is, Klostermaier takes Indian philosophy seriously enough not to be limited to an object of study, but to raise itself as a model of understanding in order to correct the inadequacy of the hermeneutic structure. He then shifts the criticism from an internal standpoint (against Gadamer *via* Gadamer) to an external deviation (against Gadamer via another model and another tradition, namely Indian philosophy).

Secondly, he makes a transition via Indian philosophy towards Hermetics with the study of H.Rombach, which is considered as another method, as an alternative to hermeneutics for intercultural philosophy. These two directions will be extended beyond the scope of this single article, and will respectively form the two next sections of this chapter. But presently we want to reflect on this particular article regarding the limits of the hermeneutic circle. We consider thus in this section a precise application of what the two next sections will enlarge from a general point of view of Indian philosophy and Hermetics. Here we focus on one concrete possibility of *practicing* intercultural philosophy via the problem of the hermeneutic circle, before enlarging the questions to the general paradigms of thinking interculturality itself.

3.1.2.1 *Samsara* and the figure of the circle

Klostermaier starts with the conception of the circle in Indian philosophy as a symbol for *samsāra*^{*}, which needs to be explained first. *Samsāra* designates the flow of the world, the wheel of life and death, the process of coming, disappearing and reappearing according to the laws of *karma*^{*}, that is the total sum of human actions, good or bad. The belief in *samsāra* goes as a "necessary corollary" (Hiriyana, 1949;1985, p.47) to the doctrine of *karma*, as the effects and the causes cannot be all found within the restricted sphere of a single life. It presupposes the continuation of the existence of the self in several lives.

Barring the materialist school (Cārvāka) who believed in the physical dissolving of the body and with it the end of everything, the belief in *samsāra* and the continuing self is spread throughout all the schools of Indian philosophy. It is omnipresent, diverse and broadly represented, through scriptures, cultural traditions, arts, theologies and philosophy. It does not mean however that it is uniform; we should remark that though the concepts are fundamental common points in general in Indian philosophy, the discussion concerning their understanding and their realization leads to different argumentations, disagreements and discussions, in particular in the

heterodox systems of Jainism and Buddhism for whom it gained new significations⁴. This is however beyond the scope of this work as we only want to remark few general facts *in abstracto*, especially concerning the considerable influence that this model of thought exerts in Indian culture, at all levels and far beyond the strict philosophical sphere.

It is worth noticing that it is one of the only elements in Indian philosophy that received such a general agreement, others being Liberation or Salvation (*mukti**, *mokṣa** or *nirvāṇa** for Buddhists) and the doctrine of the soul (called *ātman*, *puruṣa** or *jīva**), apart from the Buddhist (Dasgupta, 1975;2006, p.71-75). These three are related to each other if we consider *karma* as the condition or cause of *samsāra* and the *mokṣa* as the final aim of the soul regarding *samsāra*, that is precisely the end of the cycle of existence. They form the basic necessary structure of thought for the Indian schools, and therefore, the conception of a circle oriented towards its liberation, namely towards a centre, is indeed a deep orientation of the whole Indian philosophy. It indicates also “that Action, in the form of an inner-ever-creative will of the universe, rules it.” (Raju, 1971, p.53)

Let us quote three differentiated systems in order to illustrate this broad concern, respectively the *Maitri Upanishad*, as a first sign of interest in the early literature, a comment from Nāgārjuna concerning the Buddhist interest, and one from Śāṅkara, the famous Advaita philosopher. These are just examples to show the enormous references throughout the whole Indian philosophy, and could be extensively multiplied.

1. “In this sort of existence (*samsāra*) what is the good of enjoyment of desires, when after a man has fed on them there is seen repeatedly his return here to earth?” (*Maitri Upanishad*)
2. “There is no difference at all/ Between *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*./ What makes the limit of *nirvāṇa*/Is also the limit of *samsāra*./Between the two we cannot find/The slightest shade of difference.(...)The bliss consists in the cessation of all thought./In the quiescence of plurality./No [separate] reality was preached at all,/Nowhere and none by Buddha.” (*Mādhyamika-śāstra of Nāgārjuna*)
3. “The complete comprehension of Brahman is the highest end of man, since it destroys the root of all evil such as ignorance, the seed of the entire *samsāra*. Hence the desire of knowing Brahman is to be entertained.” (Śāṅkara) ; respectively,(Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1957, p.93;p.344-345;p.511)

The fact that it has been almost universally accepted makes the discussion rare, and it appears generally more as a presupposition, or a recurrence as an orientation of thoughts. It makes its philosophical treatment more difficult, but to summarize, we can follow W. Halbfass:

“In its concrete totality, the doctrine of *karma* and *samsāra* is a very complex phenomenon, both historically and systematically. It functions at various levels of understanding and interpretation, as an unquestioned presupposition as well as an

⁴We refer to S.Dasgupta for example (Dasgupta, 1975;2006), where after the brief description of the general characteristics that forms the common agreement, one can find the details in each schools of the specific explanation of various understandings, functions and argumentations. For specific concern about the question of *karma* and rebirth, one can refer to the collective work of Indologists and philosophers (Doniger, 1980); particular developments and problematics that are organized according to the schools are there developed.

explicit theory, in popular mythology as well as in philosophical thought. In its various contexts and applications, it has at least three basically different functions and dimensions. *Karma* is (1) a principle of causal explanation (of factual occurrences), (2) a guideline of ethical orientation, (3) the counterpart and stepping-stone of final liberation. These three functions are balanced, reconciled, and integrated in various manners, they do not form a simple and unquestioned unity.”(Halbfass, 1991, p.295)

This definition brings into play the most important ideas. The physical world is the consequence of the effects of actions, and thus, every event is determined by a cause. Causality is a fertile concept in the realm of Indian philosophy, broadly discussed, understood better along with the concept of *karma*, and consequently *samsāra*. But the causality is not “a blind mechanical law” (Hiriyana, 1949;1985, p.48); there is justice in the attribution of merits and demerits, and therefore causality is ethical. This explains why it has been almost always been a part of the tradition, since it forms a kind of moral education for humans, as M. Hiriyanna explains:

“The implication of this idea of retribution is that the karma doctrine is grounded in a moral view of the universe, and that it therefore commits man to the obligations of a truly moral life. (...) They [The punishments] are thus really more than retributive; they also constitute a discipline of natural consequences to educate man morally.”[Ibid]

Finally, the conception of *samsāra*, the wheel of life and death, is correlative to the concept of liberation and the possibility of ending this circle, as a final goal of existence. In that sense, the determination of Indian philosophy is not pessimistic, rather it aims at shaping the moral consciousness optimistically. The circle and the centre cannot go without each other, the circle is meaningless without the centre of liberation, and the liberation would be an abstract and pessimistic idea without the circle of life to motivate its search, to build a dialogue and a path towards the liberation. In that sense - and this is the starting point of Klostermaier - a circle cannot be understood without a centre, and *vice versa*.

3.1.2.2 Centre as an alternative model

Out of this conception of the circle, Klostermaier gets the idea of focusing on the centre in philosophy, and so doing, he writes:

“Not only all Indian *darśanas*, “philosophical systems” and specific theologies, but also the fine arts and the diverse branches of scholarship aspired to reach that centre, which was identical with emancipation, enlightenment, the grace of a savior. Their importance and value was judged not by external criteria (*vyavahāra*) alone, but by their capability of expressing, and leading to, the centre. From such a perspective the hermeneutic circle is not so much the (a)symmetric completion of an initial (pre-)understanding but the concentric expansion of a central point or principle.”(Klostermaier, 2008, p.82)

This search for the centre finds its counterpart in the Greeks and their conception of the *archai*, the principles. Klostermaier does not try to continue hermeneutics by criticizing its Gadamerian

structure, but he criticizes the path of the Western hermeneutic circle taking as his vantage point the conception of the centre and the concept of *samsāra*, and pleads for a new orientation, which will lead in a new method (Hermetics, with H.Rombach). He does not put forwards the concept of the centre against Gadamer, but he applies Indian philosophy to overcome the limits of Gadamer, or to say it differently: his criticism is not located within hermeneutics, trying to deal with internal difficulties, but is a structural criticism that can evaluate the whole system from outside, from another method and another tradition. Plurality of thinking and methods thus shows itself to be able to bring creative, radical and efficient criticisms.

Klostermaier suggests therefore that a relation between the circle and its centre should be established, no matter what the particular name of the latter is, whether it is Good, Deliverance/Liberation, Enlightenment, and so on. Indeed, for Klostermaier the centre of the circle has been forgotten by hermeneutics, which is precisely the reason for its limitations. The hermeneutic circle is composed of prejudices that one perfect, which means that one is always closed in one's own conceptions, culture and tradition. The circle is closed because it lacks a centre able to enlarge it, divert it, or correct it from a transcending point of view. It is always confirming its own tradition and coming back to the beginning, even if the prejudices have been individually corrected within the same circle. Hermeneutics neglects the correction of the trajectory of the circle, or the correction of the circle itself, of the whole model. One has to be able to call into question the circle, and it can be done only with and from the presence of a centre. If one adds simply a plurality of circles, one adds a plurality of closure without any encounter: plurality alone (as a multiplication of the same closed model) cannot be a solution. A centre on the contrary, or in its actualization a "re-centralization" and "de-centralization" can change the trajectory (against centrism that, on the contrary, is the continuous movement that upholds and forces every trajectory towards the centre). It enables to challenge or to be challenged by other cultures, by way of encounter or dialogue with cultural otherness.

All this is indeed found within the text of Klostermaier itself. He illustrates in his method a "*mise en abyme*" of his theory, since he applies in the process of its methods the content of his theory, that is: he looks at a centre in and via Indian philosophy to illustrate the intercultural limits of the circle, and suggests a new path as an alternative to the Western aporia of the hermeneutic circle, which is in its very elaboration cross-cultural. This very process reflects for us one of the major aims of intercultural philosophy - to be able to think via various cultural paradigms at a methodological level. Interculturality is then found in the method itself.

Let us for now come back to the content of the argumentation of Klostermaier. To follow his argumentation, we can look at his criticism on the limits of the circle:

"From such a perspective [Indian accent on the notion of centre] the Heideggerian/Gadamerian hermeneutics which is content with completing the hermeneutic circle would appear to suffer from a "forgetfulness of the centre". Post-modernists, by their own definition, would not only lack such a centre, they even repudiate the notion. Would one not have to ask: whence can a circle originate, if not from a centre? (...) One may be ignorant of the *arché* that governs the growth of a plant, an animal, or a human being but without it there would be no organism, no world. A person, a whole age, may be mistaken about the identity of the centre, but the

search for the centre, the gravitation of thought towards some deeper meaning, remains valid and is indispensable to any true understanding of reality. There must be an inkling of *parokṣa jñāna*⁵ [mediate knowledge] in all forms of *aparokṣa jñāna* [immediate knowledge], to merit the designation *jñāna** [knowledge]. The pull of the central point must be perceived in the segments of the circle in order to give meaning to hermeneutics as a path to truth/reality.” [Ibid, p.83]

If it is affirmed that the hermeneutic circle brings back our prejudices, though enlarged and corrected, then the discussion is lead only by the confirmation of one’s own statement, and a discussion or an exchange can only start within a single tradition. Our understanding is thus limited to be only an extension of our prejudices, and our prejudices are the ground of our understanding without end. Hermeneutics “confirms itself” [Ibid.]. J.L Mehta comments: “Strange hermeneutics, in which a valid dialogue can begin only after understanding has been achieved, rather than being itself the locus of the playground in which understanding has its very being.” [quoted in Klostermaier, Ibid.]

Therefore, the whole undertaking of constructing a dialogue, or opening ourselves to a possible polylogue would depend on the destruction of the hermeneutic circle, and an external re-positioning of our thought. If the hermeneutic circle condemns ourselves *a priori*, Klostermaier suggests us to re-centre our thoughts, so that an intercultural dialogue can start. What Klostermaier suggests is beyond the polemics between relativism and universalism, and takes into consideration the plurality in the search of a centre. What one looks for is not a *unique higher expression* of a primary principle, which would lead to an ideology to dominate all cultures. It obviously does not mean that the Good that the Greeks look for (*Hen* and *Agathon* to refer to the previous section) is better or higher than the Absolute (*Brahman*) of Śāṅkara. That would result in domination by the culture that is able to impose its own centre onto the others in the same way in which the religious wars have conducted their own ideologies or beliefs to impose them on the Other, from the Roman era to the present days. What we look for is the presence of a primary principle as such independently of its expressions.

We should however address here a warning as far as the reading of the article, as well as our analysis here is concerned. We unfortunately have to remark that Klostermaier is not always clear about his conception of the plurality with regard to the centre. If he argues obviously for an intercultural perspective, and therefore against any standardization or closure, one has to notice an important confusion in his article that results in the following problem: Klostermaier clearly speaks of *archai* in the plural Greek form, he explicitly takes into consideration the plurality with reference to the sciences. However, it seems that he then suddenly changes his line of argumentation when he mentions the “centre” only in the singular form in his conception of the dialogue, speaking about “universal dimensions of the topic” possible in the conception of a centre, reinforced by a problematic conception in the conclusion: “one can only hope that it will

⁵K. Klostermaier explained previously the meaning of *parokṣa* and *aparokṣa jñāna*: “The kind of knowledge arrived at through words and their interpretation is *parokṣa jñāna*, mediated knowledge, which by definition is neither ultimate nor free from possible distortion (the medium being susceptible to many kinds of imperfections). The knowledge arrived at through a wordless and non-sensory approach was known as *aparokṣa jñāna*, immediate knowledge, which, by virtue of its freedom from possibly flawed media and stages of transmission, had the certainty of absolute truth, *satyasya satyam*, real truth, true reality.” [Ibid, p.82.] For *jñāna*, cf the *glossary*.

move the dialogue partners closer towards the centre, instilling them a sense of an exploration of the depth which is common to all rather than being content with comparing surface.” [Ibid, p.89]. Somehow, we cannot decide whether Klostermaier considers a plurality of centres as it seems in the following section, or an absolute centre that contains everything, all cultures, all qualifications, all traditions, etc. As Klostermaier takes his concept from the Indian tradition, for which the conception of the Absolute (*Brahman*) is crucial, we will conclude in favor of the latter alternative, though it is for us open to criticism, as we will come back in the conclusion of this section. We want here to warn our reader of the ambiguity that may appear until then, as it seems that Klostermaier himself does not solve this primary problem.

3.1.2.3 On the side of sciences

Let us for now come back to his contribution towards an intercultural theory. We ought to appreciate here the originality of K.Klostermaier, who finds the multiplicity of centres in epistemology, out of which he gets his argumentation and inspiration.

“Instead of finding *one* ultimate, stable particle, that could provide the foundation for the physical world, nuclear scientists found an ever-increasing number of particles of infinitesimal duration. Instead of being able to reduce life to a limited set of biochemical laws, life scientists are increasingly intrigued by the amazing plasticity and apparently limitless creativity of nature. Prigogine and Stenger speak of the need to re-open a dialogue with nature, to replace the one-sided attack on nature with which modern science started. In this new dialogue everything is open on both sides - the pull of the centre is evident in this new search for *archai*. No longer are “bits of matter” considered the ontological foundations of the physical universe and no longer are immutable laws of nature expressed in linear algebraic equations considered the ultimate truth about reality. Concept like chaos and interdependence have become central, and information is seen as the key to both the development and the understanding of nature. Mutuality and dialogue have replaced strict separation of subject and object and dogmatic scientific doctrine.” [Ibid, p.84]

In the same way that a dialogue has been re-opened, and that it has been re-centered on the search for new principles following new dialogues, an analogy should be made in philosophy for new dialogues influenced by a search for new centres; it implies also to leave room for dynamic pluralities. The possibility of a dialogue is besides considered in opposition to hermeneutics, and is therefore possible because of the conception of a centre.

But a centre brings more than a possible multiplicity. It gives meaning to the circle itself, without which it is vicious and useless. On a philosophical level, Klostermaier encourages us not only to make use of other traditions, but to reconnect with their centre, with their philosophies as complete wholes, oriented towards a principle. To say it differently:

“If one simply were to “utilize” elements of Eastern traditions to “prove” or support an already established Western point of view one would miss the central point and the real truth of these traditions. While quotes from *Mimamsa* texts, for instance, can be used to corroborate a particular Western theory of language, the central

“truth” of Mimamsa is ritual: one would completely miss the meaning of texts if one divorced them from the ritual tradition they reflect.” [Ibid, p.85]

We should remark here that this point of view would certainly be contrasted or criticized by some Indian philosophers (who on the contrary have been influenced by the West), who would argue that Mīmāṃsā (or other schools, in particular Nyāya) should not be reduced to its metaphysical and ritual perspectives only, and that one can study their highly philosophical theories about meaning without reducing it to religion. This has been a broad protest of Indian philosophers who, armed with this argument have been protesting against the widespread Western prejudice that Indian philosophy cannot really be philosophy, as it is in its very essence religious. B.K Matilal in that regard has been an excellent and prominent philosopher, who tried, and did develop Indian philosophy in a rational, deductive and analytic way, with an accent on Indian logic (for instance, (Matilal, 1990) and (Matilal, 1968)).

To follow the present argumentation however, let us leave aside this discussion for the moment. From an intercultural perspective, Klostermaier’s point is meaningful, as it encourages to take in consideration the whole of another culture; as aforementioned, one cannot “use” the cultural otherness as an object, but has to consider it in its whole. Cultural otherness is not a tool, whether in a physical sense or as an argument, but has to be considered in its method of thinking and in its centre, in order to be able to produce a real effective dialogue. If one limits the cultural other to some points detached from their context, the cultural other will be once again reduced to the own, which will end in the pursuit of a monologue, as Indology did. To say it differently: to utilize elements of the cultural other is to continue the hermeneutic circle in order to prove or correct one’s prejudice within a unique tradition, and to prove its truth through the other. On the contrary, to transcend this use of the other is to let it be a centre, to look at the whole of cultural otherness in order to grasp the centre that deviates and draws the circle.

In so doing, one reaches the intercultural dialogue:

“ Real dialogue is the movement from the circle to the centre: it is not meant to indefinitely continue traditional ways of seeing things but to open the eyes to new perspectives on the centre. Dialogue is important not for the sake of the hermeneutic circle but for the sake of the hermeneutic centre: it de-centres routine understandings, and re-centres understanding it. If the momentum of the dialogue is kept going, the “new centre of understanding” will be somewhat closer to truth/reality than the individual centres before, around which (unbeknownst to the hermeneut) the traditional monologue was conducted.” (Klostermaier, 2008, p.85)

The dialogue can connect different traditions and therefore enrich the centre itself, which brings a complete breakdown of the limitation of the horizon. The restriction was there because of the lack of a centre that could change and open the path, the content and the orientation of the circle. Therefore the circle was always coming back to its own prejudices. It is now relational, as it is connected to a centre that can discuss with a plurality of traditions. Klostermaier adds that the dialogue can also teach us that different traditions do not only answer differently to questions, but that they also ask different questions. The circle is also a limited figure, as it has

to go in one direction, and can never deviate without centre. On the contrary, if one looks at a centre, one can have different perspective on the circle and articulate it according to different questions, way of thinking and different concepts.

3.1.2.4 From the hermeneutic circle to the hermetic centre

Klostermaier then moves on to the relation from the centre to the circle, that he finds in the attitude of intuition, revelation and meditation [Ibid, p.86]. He points out the fact that Indian philosophy in general cannot be understood without its practice, or more exactly, that it is meaningless without a practical dimension, without being lived through modes other than the pure rational perspective of philosophy. He also reminds us of the fact that “meditative reason” has been practiced until our modern scientific times in the West too. It has been the most persistent prejudice against Indian philosophy to be considered as such, but it is now being raised in the same West as an important and valid point. In general however one has to remark that though Indian philosophy is rational and offers conceptual analyzes, which are highly achieved, it does not develop theory for theory’s sake. It would then lack its very essential meaning. Therefore, even the most logical and epistemological schools of Indian philosophy, such as Nyāya, aim at gearing philosophy towards liberation. Let us quickly affirm this point with the opening paragraph of Vātsyāyana’s commentary on the Nyāya-sūtras (trans. J.N Mohanty):

“Without the means of valid cognition, there is no knowledge of object; without knowledge of the object, there is no success in practical response. The knower, experiencing the object with the help of the means of valid cognition, desires to acquire the object or to shun it. The effort to acquire or shun the object gives rise to action. Success of action consists in relation to the “fruit” (*phala*). Experiencing the object, the knower, desiring to acquire or shun the object, acquires or shuns it. The object is pleasure (or the cause of pleasure) and pain (or the cause of pain).” (J. N. Mohanty, 2001, p.21). Translation from *Bhāṣya on Nyāya-Sūtra* 1.1.1.

We should now come back on the conclusion of Klostermaier. He talks about Rombach’s hermetics, which will be developed extensively in the last section of this chapter (*III, 3*). We want here to focus on the relation that he finds between the two dimensions, that is, Indian Philosophy and Hermetics, and the argumentation that follows.

Rombach’s hermetics is a severe criticism of the hermeneutics of Gadamer; it wants to eradicate the opposition between subject and object and in this respect it tallies with the search for the centre of Klostermaier. The latter takes interest into the Zen saying reproduced by Rombach in *The Coming God (Der kommende Gott)* (Rombach, 1991, p.137), which says: “Upon the saddle there is no rider, under the saddle there is no horse. (Klostermaier, 2008, p.88)⁶”. The commentary of Hisamatsu explains that only with the non-duality of the horse and the rider, one can ride; if both are apart, then one cannot ride, but one can observe a separate horse and a separate rider, therefore useless. The “undivided Oneness” [Ibid.] is what forms hermetics, and Klostermaier adds:

⁶Original text (translation by K.Klostermaier): “Auf dem Sattel ist kein Mensch, unter dem Sattel kein Pferd.” (Rombach, 1991, p.137)

3 *Beyond hermeneutics: limits, combinations and external considerations*

“Hermeneutics always maintains the difference between the subject and the object, the distance between knower and known. A hermeneutics of riding will always consider the saddle an object on which sits a rider, and which is on the top of the horse. Riding will always be explained in terms of rider, saddle and horse. Hermeneutics by definition reduces its object to the categories in which its own particular “prejudice” is articulated.” [Ibid.]

For Klostermaier then, hermetics is the adequate method for the search of a centre. Though he stays on the concept called “hermeneutic centre”, it recalls some central concepts in the hermetic domain, when he speaks of a “creative hermeneutics”, i.e. the renewed perspective that takes its source in the undifferentiated and the unknowable (in opposition of the tradition), as the following remark shows:

“The “hermeneutical centre” is a challenge to the seeker for truth/reality; moving towards it implies a personal transformation. The tautology of the hermeneutic circle, by contrast, confirms the hermeneutics in the traditional ways of thinking and acting (...). An awareness of the “hermeneutic centre” will bring movement into the hermeneutics scene and act as stimulus to join in the search of a universal truth that translates into liberating action.” [Ibid.]

The *transformation* of oneself, the movement ordered and led by the search of a universal principle is what joins theory and practice in Indian philosophy, and this is what Klostermaier aims at introducing in an intercultural theory. His method can only be approved, as he brings an interesting cross-cultural approach, which goes further than any comparative thought. Interculturality is here incarnated into its very movement and method. He opens the path for a possibility of intercultural thinking with Eastern philosophies, not used merely as an object of study, not even as a punctual example in order to prove a Western point of thinking, and not considered as a single isolated thought that one can independently study in the framework of Indology, but as a whole in its own right.

He argues against a total identity and a total difference in the sense of Mall, but he also goes further in a way: through Indian philosophical orientation, he shows the impossibility of the hermeneutic circle *in toto*, which means a distance taken from the whole hermeneutics. Klostermaier gives a new possible orientation for an intercultural method, articulated by the position of a centre. This centre is more than an overlap as it is not the combination or the relation of two or more philosophies, but it is the very principle of all possibilities of thinking, and of all philosophies. It is not a concrete and pragmatic overlap but the common search for a primary principle. It is not considered however as an ontological closure or a metaphysical primacy of any tradition, but as the centre whose attraction is to give new perspectives and to enrich the circle, that is, to provide a coherent and dynamic practice of the theoretical search. The movement has to be shifted from the path of the circle to a dialogue between the circle and the centre, so that the circle is enriched by the multiple possibilities, origins, and varieties of thoughts and traditions.

However, we can underline here that Klostermaier takes the risk that the dialogue between centre and circle would end up in the continuation of a unique tradition; what would be the

motivation of the circle to be re-actualized or transformed? To enlarge the possibilities and to be able to consider pluralities of “worlds” (Rombach), one should introduce a multiplicity of centres, multiplicity that was almost accepted by Klostermaier with the sciences, but however not explicitly funded. This will be the aim of the last section of this part, which continues with Rombach and his interpretation by Stenger.

In conclusion, we would like to add one thing. We wanted to follow closely Klostermaier’s article in this section, as an intercultural application, paradigmatic of this chapter. It is for us a proposition, though sometimes open to criticism, that constructs a bridge between the two next sections, Indian philosophy and Hermetics. It is a pertinent try to overcome the problems of hermeneutics by introducing Indian philosophy, towards a new “method”, if it can be qualified as such, of hermetics. It raises broader questions about these two directions, and multiple consequences that we will now approach, from a more general and systematic point of view. Klostermaier was for us more an application of what will be developed now, a precise introduction to the broad fields that are open, and cannot be studied so closely as we just did, as it is obvious that “Indian philosophy” and Rombach in their own right would be the object of independent studies, broader and longer. We consider therefore the following sections as an enlargement of the problems raised now though not an exhaustive one of course.

3.2 On the needs and possible intercultural methods from Indian philosophy

This section could appear inappropriate for two reasons:

1/ Which methods could we even classify under the general name of “Indian Philosophy”? Or, can we speak of *one* method when we speak of “Indian Philosophies”? It seems already clumsy, or at least very difficult to consider Indian philosophy as such, as a undifferentiated whole where we can look for intercultural methods.

2/ Why would we isolate Indian Philosophy as an object of study (to look inside Indian philosophy for a method, instead of looking within Indian philosophy for a *praxis* of interculturality), while trying to establish the point that intercultural philosophy has to overtake the simple *use* or the simple situation of being an *object* (as it was the case for Indology) in which one applies one’s own categories, in order to become a possible intercultural centre?

These criticisms are well founded, but they would point to a misunderstanding that we want to prevent. In spite of them, we think nevertheless that this section is in itself more important than the criticisms that one could attempt. For we do not want to construct *one* particular intercultural method with Indian philosophy here (1). It would deserve a whole thesis. With Klostermaier, we saw in the short space of an article how one can conduct one’s own path through the paradigm of Indian philosophy, far beyond studying a particular theme within this field as is usually the case, but by constructing a counter-theory to the hermeneutic circle from the ground of Indian Philosophy. In that regard, it was not the work of an indologist, but a work in Indian Philosophy as well as in Western Philosophy, being located between these two traditions. We consider such a work to be the consequence of the present section, which takes a step backwards in attempting to analyze the foundation of this argumentation. We want here to

approach different possibilities of realization, of which Klostermaier was a particular example. It would be a following work then to develop the different directions *in concreto*.

To the second criticism, that we would “objectify Indian philosophy”, we can answer that even if this section does not represent a final stage of the intercultural method, one has to stop for a moment in order to reflect on the problems and possibilities of applying a method, before being able to apply it. We want here to reflect on Indian philosophy in order to evaluate its problems and possibilities and make them a part of the *structures* of Intercultural philosophy, for, as shown by a fact we previously raised, it still lacks Interculturality. It is therefore for us a necessary moment, not in itself, but as an intermediary stage. This criticism is also the reason for having started with an application (of interculturalization as the structure of thought) with Klostermaier, in order to *practice* already this theoretical pause⁷.

3.2.1 Traditional structures of Indian philosophy and their modern/post-modern reinterpretations

3.2.1.1 Composition and tradition in classical Indian Philosophy

As the study of Xenology in the introduction made clear, it is not obvious to find any mark of reflection on cultural otherness in classical Indian Philosophy, which has been internally composed without being driven by any particular look at the alien. W. Halbfass added, for example, that the expansion of Buddhism does not even seem to have been a fact for or a concern of Hindus throughout history, as if it happened without the native land of Buddhism noticing its success. To find intercultural structures therefore is not immediate in classical Indian philosophy, and is not easier than in the Western tradition. However, the meaning of the tradition and how the tradition itself composes philosophy, which play such important roles in our understanding of the state of cultural otherness, and in the hermeneutic conception, are of course already distinguished, and can bring us some elements for a new understanding of the needs and of the concerns regarding intercultural philosophy.

We should then start with some observations at the structural level of the composition of Indian philosophy. It has been remarked by all specialists that Indian philosophy historically developed itself within a system of commentaries, so that hermeneutics as the relation between language and interpretation (Gächter, 1990, p.3) may describe the Indian tradition in general (Roy, 1993, p.64). Each philosopher therefore was writing a commentary about a particular *sūtra** composing the Vedas or Upaniṣads concerning the founder’s texts and authority (Deutsch, 1989, p.167). The different commentaries and their different interpretations, accents and points

⁷We started from R.A Mall’s position, as an orientation and guide in Intercultural Philosophy for this work, from its contributions, as well as what we consider to be its limits. From his theory we continued in different directions, sometimes in the form of a criticism in the framework of cultural hermeneutics, and also beyond hermeneutics, to consider the limits of this very field. However, we want to make clear here that this section should not be understood in opposition to his position, but on the contrary, in the continuation of his thought. We should underline the fact that Mall’s theory is precisely one of the few in the intercultural field who explicitly aims at introducing a plurality of philosophies in the very path, methods and conceptions of intercultural philosophy. If his pure theory of intercultural philosophy is to us sometimes too unilateral in the “analogous hermeneutics”, then he also tried to turn on the side of Indian philosophy to integrate or to make it a part of the method. We think in particular to his intercultural reflections from Gadamer, where he crossed Indian and Western philosophies on the side of hermeneutics (Mall, 2005), along with his study on Nagarjuna (Mall, 2006).

of view led to the various orthodox schools⁸. The very action of composing (classical) Indian philosophy can therefore be described in the following way:

“My argument will be that this idea of philosophy as “recovery” rather than “discovery” is central to the traditional Indian understanding of a philosophical text. (...) What constitutes the text in Indian thought is precisely the *sūtra* (or *kārikā*) and/or other authoritative sources, together with the ongoing exegetical work.” (Deutsch, 1989, p.169)

Some consequences follow from this initial situation. In particular, we should consider the fact that the exegetical action forms the main core of the tradition, which implies at the same time corrections, new arguments and ideas, attempting to make accurate the knowledge and to make the concepts more precise through their respective distinctions and definitions. Indian philosophy is therefore composed in general of “a period of philosophical fermentations which is expressed in *sūtra* or aphorisms. Subsequently we find the *bhāṣyas** or commentaries on those aphorisms, which then are supplemented by glosses or *ṭīkā**, expositions and explanatory compendia.” (Roy, 1993, p.69) The *sūtra* does not go without the *bhāṣyas*, so that the latter became at the end more important than the original expressions.

What is interesting for us is that in his article, E. Deutsch makes reference to Gadamer, together with the Vedānta, since “this “act of reason” [the preservation of the tradition] for Gadamer and for Vedānta is a creative undertaking” [Ibid, p.170]. Somehow, the conservation of the tradition, which is precisely what is criticized by intercultural philosophers, finds an echo in classical Indian philosophy. Presented as such, it puts forth a difficulty for any “interculturalization” of classical Indian philosophy. It has actually been a part of the challenge of contemporary Indian philosophers, such as B.K Matilal and Mohanty who, themselves being located between the East and the West in their education and profession, had to deal with the prejudices of the West, and the inadequacy of the modern interpretation of Indian philosophy in India itself. But if this presents to some extent a major obstacle to interculturality, it has not necessarily been understood as such⁹, so that the “creativity” aforementioned can also in some theories play a

⁸K. Roy gives a synthetic account of the different ways of interpretation in the classical Indian philosophy that “refers both to the act of interpretation and to the art and principles of interpretation” (Roy, 1993, p.81) in her second chapter ““Hermeneutics” in the Indian Tradition” (p.63-81). We will roughly sketch it out here so that one can realize the importance of the interpretative process in Indian Philosophy. The Vedas form at first the “source” of interpretation for the entire Indian exegesis of the orthodox systems. As they emerge at the same time, it is more exactly the dynamic process of interpretation of the Vedas that led to their difference. Though the object of interpretation is the same, they differ according to their singular emphasis and understanding of the former. Philosophy of language and grammar is also another orientation led by Pāṇini, Patañjali and later on Bhartṛhari, who focused on linguistic analyses and meaning, born from the stability of the Sanskrit language used in philosophy, its sacred status and its understanding. The Mīmāṃsā school, through its research on the rules for sacrifice, has developed rules for the interpretation of the Vedas and is considered nowadays as the “hermeneutic” school in its content and concepts for it has established the rules for interpretation (while the others are hermeneutic through their formation and development). The Epics of India do not escape this venture of interpretation through its re-interpretations. In the heterodox schools, Buddhism has a very particular proposition for interpretation that has been broadly developed throughout history, whose core can be summarized as follows: “Words, having no direct reference to the realities refer to conceptual images; such images are the subjective constructions of the mind (*vikalpas*) (...) So the meaning of a word has to be considered as the negation of the concepts’ counter-correlate, as the exclusion of everything other than the concept (*anyāpoha*).” (p.77). cf also (Lopez, 1993). Jainism will be studied later on in this study. One can also refer to Mall (Mall, 2005) for an account of different hermeneutic systems.

⁹We do not mean here to imply that there is no conservative approach to the Indian tradition, which would be

prominent role along with the conservation of the tradition. In an Indian context, especially where we notice that the structure of the philosophical development is exclusively exegete, denying any creativity to this hermeneutic model implies to deny creativity to almost the whole of Indian philosophy. One has to consequently cautiously recognize that under the appearance of preservation of the tradition (represented by the authority of the Vedas - for the orthodox schools - and the *sūtra*) creativity does not lack the process of commenting, i.e. the *bhāṣya*. Though the commentators do not distinguish their own contributions from the tradition itself, both are merging together so that the preservation of the tradition also implies creativity, and so that there is consequent ruptures, contributions and renewal within the tradition (K. Roy notes the example of Patañjali commenting on Pāṇini and Śabara on Jaimini (Mīmāṃsā), Vātsyāyana on Gautama, etc. (Roy, 1993, p.70)). The preservation of the tradition in this context does not imply an absolute closure to any new element. The Indian hermeneutic process relativizes Gadamer's consequences of the hermeneutic circle and the feeling of total conservation that the Western hermeneutic tradition attributed to him.

Deutsch continues with a second element, relevant for our understanding. He writes: "In Indian philosophy generally one finds a tendency to incorporate and repeat arguments from highly diverse sources (often using those of one's opponent against another of one's opponent), as though a philosophical argument were a kind of public property." [Ibid, 171] This process works as an "appropriation", term that Deutsch uses afterwards in considering the role of the philosopher-commentator. *Appropriation* is once again, for an intercultural survey, a difficulty that does not tally a sufficient ethical framework.

Deutsch remarks however three consequences of this appropriation. First, it is a "dynamic engagement", which means that one does not passively receive a foreign, or other, content, but has to creatively and actively change what one receives into one's own content, in order to be incorporated to the original theory. From that, it follows that it is a transformation. Appropriation is a process that changes an external element to incorporate it to the original theory. Finally, it means that "knowledge, then, is something made" [Ibid, p.172]. Knowledge is a form of realization (for Vedānta especially) through an action. This brings us to the link between reason and practice, which has been at the core of numerous prejudices towards Indian philosophy (as not being philosophical). In general, it is more accepted in Indian philosophy that theory is valuable if it aims at a practice, or, to say it differently, that theory is achieved when it can bring pleasure and remove pain (J. N. Mohanty, 2001, p.22). It simply means that rationality and knowledge in Indian philosophy aim at a practical realization.

One can see here the ambivalence of the term appropriation, which is obviously a dangerous term in Intercultural philosophy. In this context however, it is also a transformation towards otherness as an incarnation of external elements within the theory itself. Transformation is

an obvious exaggeration. We also do not mean that there are only creative approaches; Mohanty underlines in this respect that the *pandit** tradition, which is traditionally in charge of continuing the work of the tradition, has come to a point where, according to him, there is a lack of creativity. We only mean here to say that beyond these various approaches, there have also been creative approaches to the tradition that have enabled new orientations, along with consequent changes and the implantations of foreign elements within it - Śaṅkara would be an example for the renewal of Vedānta within the Indian tradition, and the modern interpretation of Matilal, and its use of analytical concepts from the West in order to re-new the classical understanding of the Nyāya tradition an example of creativity in the tradition through that which is foreign to it.

equally an important term for intercultural philosophy, as it is the presupposition to being able to change with the other towards something mutual. Klostermaier also underlined this fact, in the form of a criticism of the hermeneutic circle that prevents transformation, on the contrary of the centre. The Indian philosophical tradition on the side of the centre continues within an already determined path, but however not in a Western sense. In this sense, Indian philosophy has been determined by tradition, but the meaning of the tradition could be enlarged and interwoven with creativity in a common motion, more flexible than it was in the West, which, if it stays outside the intercultural domain, can however bring another conception of the tradition. It means that a combination of theories can be mixed together.

3.2.1.2 Re-appropriations, re-interpretations, or how to think Indian Philosophy today?

At the time of modernity, and at the time of post-colonization, the need for looking back at the Indian tradition in order to compare it to the West, or in general to show the superiority of the former (i.e. to show that Indian philosophy has always included all Western philosophical conceptions (Halbfass, 1988, p.403-418)), came along with a second order reflection on the need to adapt Indian philosophy, or to rethink it in a new world. Looking at history and traditions has never been a neutral act, but it was in this case a radical change, and it led to broad reflections following the postcolonial state, the emergence of comparative philosophy and the openness towards the West. One can find consequently two extreme reactions: the affirmation of Indian philosophy as superior or as the perfection beyond all others (i.e. Western), and the attempt to modify Indian philosophy in its very structure in order to make it resemble the Western categories. One can analyze these directions with Mall as the excess on the side of a radical difference that would lead to a hierarchy and absolutization of Indian philosophy, and the excess of identity in order to make Indian philosophy conform to Western structures. Between the two are different middle (or relative) paths, leading to possible intercultural theories. It has to be remarked that interculturality must obviously not be developed as the only possible trend, and one has unfortunately to admit that there is a general consent to teach Western philosophy prior to Indian philosophy in the academical world (a situation described by the opposition of the weakening of Sanskrit departments teaching Indian philosophy and the growth of philosophy departments oriented mainly towards Western philosophies (J. N. Mohanty, 2001, p.56-74)).

J.N Mohanty (1928-), in his introduction in honor of B.K Matilal (1935–1991) (Bilimoria & Mohanty, 1997), attempts to recall the latter's path in philosophy, between the criticism of the parochialist West that Indian philosophy cannot be philosophy, and the traditional Indian criticism that modern Indian philosophers are not properly following the Sanskritist tradition. According to former there was at the beginning of the respective careers of these two aforementioned philosophers an initial situation that divided philosophy into three major ways in India. The first one was, or still is, the *pandit** tradition, that is the classical teaching and learning of the Sanskrit texts and knowledge, that keeps and transmits the traditional Hindu culture, and Indian philosophy. Though Mohanty, who has himself received this tradition, says to be grateful to them and deplores their vanishing, he also recognizes the lack of creativity that has nowadays come to this field. On the other extreme was the Indology, in which we find the aforementioned criticism made in this work, and the particular strange state of this field that has no equivalent

regarding the West, and above all no qualification to judge philosophical text (what it however did). But the criticism of Mohanty is even stronger against the third path. He writes:

“Indian philosophers educated in Western thought developed a myopic vision of Indian thought. They characterized it in such global terms as “spiritual” and “transcendental”. (...) They wanted to instil in us the perception that Indian philosophy was superior to Western. One respect in which this superiority was explicated was by claiming that Indian philosophy was practical (i.e. aiming at the removal of pain and suffering, leading eventually to *mokṣa*) and spiritual (in a rather undefined sense of the term, and we all felt we knew what it was about), culminating in a mystic union with the truth.”(J. Mohanty, 1997, p.5)

He remarks the presence of the same clichés in the West. In another article, Mohanty describes this situation as the “pizza effect”, the fact that “the modern Indian’s perception is determined by the West’s perception of Indian” (J. N. Mohanty, 2001, p.57). The fact that both parts of the world share the same clichés, stereotypes and wrong ideas about what is Indian philosophy, which ends up by refusing the qualification of philosophy, brings an important point that severely harms this philosophy. Mohanty continues in this second article:

“It may be noted that-and this is part of the “pizza effect” referred to earlier-precisely those features which made, in the eyes of European Indologists, Indian thinking primitive, for Hegel the beginning of thinking, are those which the modern Indian intellectual prizes as the glory of Indian cultures. They seem to agree regarding the facts, and to differ only regarding how to estimate them. These alleged facts precisely are wrong.”(J. N. Mohanty, 2001, p.58)

The modern or post-modern philosophers, who still want to do Indian philosophy but intelligently in a modern context, have therefore to reflect on this encounter between the West and the East, an encounter that should avoid the extreme of a confrontation, largely found in Indian thought as well as in the West, and the extreme of a regionalization of philosophy. This reflection is an important concern nowadays in India, and brings central arguments and elements from different sides - it is a reflection on Indian tradition itself, reflection on the understanding between the East and the West, reflection on the criticism on the West-, an intercultural reflection. Its foundations and developments in India show clearly the complexity of establishing ethical intercultural relations when the presence of the Other is an unavoidable necessity, which means that it is not an easy agreement. In this perspective, J.L Mehta writes about the Heideggerian “Europeanization of the earth”: “There is no other way open, to us in the East, but to go along with this Europeanization and to go through it. Only through this voyage into the foreign and the strange can we win back our own self-hood; here as elsewhere, the way to do what is closest to us is the longest way back.” (quoted in (Halbfass, 1988, p.442)) The relation of India with the West shows the complexity of answering to an event that has already penetrated the alien philosophical category of thinking and formulations of philosophy. In some ways, the cultural otherness (the West) has become so familiar and omnipresent that it has been either rejected by attempts of deconstruction or totally included within contemporary philosophies. The West (in its global and somehow undefined geographical meaning, often understood as an abstract

entity of what is different from Asia) is therefore a *strange Other* in India, between familiarity and otherness. The position of India towards it is ambiguous, and regarding philosophy, rich of different trends and approaches that show other sides of intercultural philosophy.

3.2.1.3 Remarks on the difference between “Indian Philosophy” and “Philosophy in India” today

We want to quickly distinguish between two ideas: the one of the situation of *Indian philosophy* and the other of *philosophy in India* in a contemporary context. The schema drawn earlier is that of Indian philosophy, which is the one that directly concerns our study. We however want to make its definition clear by taking a quick detour into the situation of philosophy in India today. This model is studied by B. Oinam, current Professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru University (New Delhi) in an article called “Philosophy in India: An Agenda for an Alternative Mode of Philosophising”(Oinam, 2011). He also distinguishes between three trends of doing philosophy in India, but different from those of Mohanty. First is the consequence of the use of English language and the European and Analytic categories and philosophies, which has transformed most of the philosophers of the country into specialists of Western philosophy, in the Continental as well as the Analytical tradition, the latter one with even greater importance, considering the influence from the United States and the linguistic affinity. Oinam remarks however that “While complete appropriation of European and American philosophies have been witnessed, a very few Indians have been able to make a mark in the mainstream Anglo-American and European traditions of philosophy.” [p.77] Mohanty represents one of these names. The second trend characterizes the philosophers “driven by a nationalist ethos” [p.77], that is those who use Western methods to criticize Western categories, and to show that India includes already this foreign categories. “The underlying idea behind this trend of engaging in philosophy through comparative perspective is not merely about highlighting similarities and differences between two philosophical traditions, but more so about making an ideological point.” [Ibid, p.78] We do not necessary agree with Oinam however in the names mentioned in this category, as we believe, and we hope to show here, that Mohanty tries himself to prevent this use. It is nevertheless a dominant attitude in Indian philosophy, as well as in philosophers in India nowadays. The last one is the Sanskrit tradition previously evoked. Considering these three trends, we have to recognize that the first one, however dominant, is not Indian philosophy, and it brings problems to the interculturalization of philosophy between India and the West. For how can we even think interculturality if philosophers in India themselves are not concerned with Indian Philosophy and do not consider their philosophy as philosophy?

3.2.2 Intercultural leads and models within Indian philosophy

3.2.2.1 Philosophy as *samvada*

Consequently following the last two points, the debate over interculturality is slightly different in Europe and in India. If the tendency in Intercultural Philosophy is precisely to “interculturalize” philosophies and to recognize a plurality, this situation has already been achieved in its excess in India, in the sense that a reversal has in some ways already operated. Hybridity of philosophy

has become so strong that philosophy in India is mainly foreign, and that Indian philosophy has mastered too well the use of Western categories (we believe however that the work of Matilal for example is also enriching the tradition through the variety of its conceptual tools, and the mix between Western and Eastern categories). As we noticed since the beginning, even in the field of European interculturality, the methods are often Western, while the object of study can be Eastern. This phenomenon has characterized an important part of Indian philosophy. There is a need therefore to look for other structures of thought, in the intercultural field as well as in Indian philosophy. It has been already an operative search in Indian philosophy, unfortunately sometimes driven by nationalist motives or conservative goals. It is often a sensitive subject as it deals with the shaping of the nation's image and the feeling of identity (close to ideologies) (Krishna, 1991, p.11). The reciprocal outlook between India and the West brings sometimes an ironic "argument", i.e. "nationalist philosophers" would object that since the Western domination and the exclusion of Indian philosophy has been first the fact of the West, it is then the latter's responsibility to recognize at first Indian philosophy as equal before philosophers in India would change thinking on the mode of equality or mutual adjustment. This opinion means simply that in a relational or bilateral consideration, the easiest way is naturally to blame the Other, which seems trivial but represents a larger opinion than one could imagine at first.

To interculturalize the structures of philosophy would therefore mean to search for recognitions and equalities of different ways of thinking philosophy from a variety of traditions. Regarding this matter, Oinam presents us with a fourth trend in a postcolonial time:

"A prominent philosophical theme in this trend is Daya Krishna's idea of "philosophy as *samvad**". Or his taking the idea of "alienation" beyond the matrix of Marxism, based on the ontological foundation of internal estrangement. The term "*samvad*" itself is rooted in Sanskrit signifying the idea of "dialogue". Defining philosophy as *samvad* highlights several aspects of the Indian philosophical traditions. Philosophising in the Indian tradition is always in the mould of an inherent debate. That one has to constantly be aware of a prior existent counter point outside of one's own position or school. That other's point of view is already there, refuting which one consolidates one's own philosophical position. In other words, the presence of a counter point (*purvapaksha*) is to be historically acknowledged, in the sense that the Sanskritic tradition of philosophising in India begins with a debating spirit. There is always an alternate point of view before one, as one begins the debate. And that is where philosophical argumentation takes off. A *khandan* of a counter philosophical position that is opposed to one's own position is to be the beginning point." (Oinam, 2011, p.83)

Samvad (or *samvada*) thus conducts the debate towards the border of the Western and the Indian philosophies as an actual conversation between different traditions¹⁰. It brought "the

¹⁰This experiment that has led to the book *Discussion and debate in Indian philosophy: issues in Vedanta, Mimamsa and Nyaya* has been preceded by another experiment of the same kind, the one that explicitly mentions B.Oinam, *Samvada: A Dialogue between Two Philosophical Traditions*. Because of its difficult availability in Europe, we until now have not been able to get this reference. We apologize for the lack in the discussion, though we believe that the second experiment is also a good example and may be sufficient for the present mention as intercultural model.

active practitioners of the two philosophical traditions, the Indian and the Western, in a dialogical situation where each was “forced” to “existentially” face the “living” tradition of a different way of philosophizing” (Krishna, 2004, p. XIII) . The idea of *philosophy as samvad* brings an intercultural alternative, as a method, to the different variables of dialogue, polylogue, conversation or other ways of communicating in the field of Intercultural Philosophy, as it has been expressed through Western categories. It presents an interesting path towards the deepening of the question of how we can interculturalize the intercultural structures, as well as to combine, contribute or continue the “dialogue” between different traditions, precisely not as a dialogue only, but also as *samvad*.

In the aforementioned context of the feeling of alienation (in the etymological sense of the term) of Indian philosophy, Krishna conducts a second original *experiment* in order to come back to a “*doing* of Indian philosophy” that would not have to be structured and thought exclusively through the alien, but which would also not be exclusively the monopoly of the traditional *pandits*, so that it would avoid the transformations of Indian philosophy as being on the horns of a dilemma between static conservation and foreign expression. He rejects the fixation of India in a fascinating past¹¹, and wants to challenge the unilateral way of philosophically thinking, i.e. to create a “living continuity with Indian philosophical past” (Krishna, 1991, p.VII). This coincides with a conception of Indian philosophy not as a historical object to simply learn but as a living field of open interrogations and concepts to actively think and question.

Krishna’s main idea is therefore to make Indian philosophy come alive through a process of conversation. He has made both traditions enunciated by Mohanty, which have ignored each other until now, converse together on various topics of Indian Philosophy, and he states: “Who could have imagined even a few decades ago, that Pandits of the status of Pattabhirāma Sastri, Ramanuja Tatacharya, Remella Suryaprakasa Sastri, D. Prahalada Char, V. Venkatachalam would engage in an active controversy on issues in Vedānta, Mimāmsā and Nyāya with scholars such as Fritz Staal, Karl H. Potter, V.N. Jha, N.S. Dravid, G.G. Pande, R. Balasubramanian, J.N. Mohanty, Sibajiban Bhattacharyya and others whose names are well-known to the English-knowing ‘world’ of Indian philosophy.” [Ibid.] The two worlds within India were able to contribute together to the renewal of Indian tradition, not by alienating itself through the West, not by fixing itself in the immobile tradition but by recovering its original primary goal, i.e. the conversation and in so doing, the relational aspect. We will come back to Rombach on the implication of the term conversation but in general it should be understood that such a process brings a common (or more exactly *concreative* to say it with Rombach) construction that is not equal to an addition of different points of view but to a multiplication of efficiencies and creativity. A conversation brings by the dynamic activity of merging together more than just the sum of its particular components (Stenger, 2006, p.878). *Samvad* as a dialogue brings another mode of conversation across cultural boundaries that opens itself to interculturality in its very expression and structures.

¹¹D. Krishna writes: “The interests of western Indological studies combined with the search for a spiritual self-identity in the face of overwhelming western superiority in all fields of knowledge seemed to have led to the creation of a certain picture of India’s philosophical past which has become fixed in the minds of successive generations of students and teachers, both in India and abroad, through innumerable text-books which render it almost impossible to question the picture or build a different one. To break the picture, its outlines and patterns and foci, have been the first concern of these articles.” (Krishna, 1991, p.VII)

3 Beyond hermeneutics: limits, combinations and external considerations

It is important to notice that if we focus for example on the first section of the conversation, starting with an article called “The Development of Advaita Vedānta as a School of Philosophy” by K.H. Potter (Krishna, 2004, p.3-39), respected specialist of Indian philosophy, interculturality is operated in a subtle way. The debate is about the elaboration by Potter of a five-steps model to think the elaboration of any “school” of philosophy. Those are summarized by V. Venkatachalam [Ibid, p.39-40] as the “discovery” stage, the “development” stage, the “polemical” stage, the “systematical” stage and the “decline”. We will not enter here in the detail of the contents of the discussion about these stages and their application to the Advaita Vedānta, which form the core of the debate. It has to be noticed in general for the whole collective work (the aforementioned article and review are only one section of it) that the debate is a scientific debate over philosophical questions and is not interested in theories about comparative or intercultural theories as such. It is an intercultural practice and this aspect precisely gives it its importance for a general theoretical elaboration. We, on the contrary, focus here on the conception of the model for this elaboration.

A few remarks can be added in order to show the intercultural orientation of this debate: the discussion starts by Potter, who establishes a general paradigm of development for any philosophical school through the quite extensive example of the analytic and pragmatic schools [Ibid, p.15-18]. This undertaking is not driven by nationalist ethos, but by mutual relations between East and West as well as different sides of Indian philosophy. The composition of this *samvad* proceeds by the following succession: after Potter’s paper come those by Venkatachalam, G.C Pande, S.L. Pandey, Ram Murti Sharma, Sibajiban Bhattacharyya, to finally give to Potter an opportunity to answer to the criticism raised by the previous authors. As one can see (the names were divided by Krishna between the *pandit* and the English traditions), criticism and debates emerge from both sides of Indian philosophy in an improbable dialogue without hierarchy or order. Their answers reflect their way of doing philosophy and they point at different angles of Potter’s assertions regarding their interests (sometimes about the general structure itself, sometimes about precise details of the various authors used by Potter). In so doing, the process of *samvad* itself takes charge of enriching Potter’s argumentations by pointing at its weaknesses (some of them will be accepted by him as modifications, some stay in the debate after his own answer) and giving it a full attention from various philosophical horizons. It creates an overall overview by merging different arguments that throw light on different sides of the argumentation of Potter. The authors are working from various horizons but they merge in the same world by creating together a processual and dynamic Indian philosophy through the various points of discussion that are operating in this work. The process is intercultural and renews Indian philosophy not necessarily because of the Westernization and the necessity of translating it to Western categories but from its dynamic development as a continual conversation that is worldly diverse and polycultural.

3.2.2.2 The Jaina standpoints (*nayas*)

Another possible intercultural model could be learned from the classical Jaina epistemology¹², something that has been perceived by Mohanty and Mall (Mall, 2005, p.58-59). Although we said that classical Indian philosophy does not take into consideration any conception of the alien, an exception can be made concerning the Jainas, not as an intercultural theory, but as a model of thought that opens perspectives for a future elaboration of theory. To acknowledge the counter-argument as being a part of the dialogue means to acknowledge that it is right from another perspective or another point of view. It offers a multiplicity that is rhetorically and logically enriching as it brings into consideration competing points and reasons. As Mohanty states:

“Philosophy can cope with the modern world only by comprehending the issue, and by taking a balanced position with regard to these opposing alternatives. Indian philosophy itself has offered many models, ranging from the Advaita denial of difference to the Mādhva dualism and the theory of *bheda*, and many well-known positions in between. But the one model that I consider most suitable for our present needs is the Jaina idea of non-injury applied to philosophical thinking. The ethic of non-injury applied to philosophical thinking requires that one does not reject outright the other point of view without first recognizing the element of truth in it; it is based on the belief that every point of view is partly true, partly false, and partly undecidable. A simple two-valued logic requiring that a proposition must either be true or false is thereby rejected, and what the Jaina philosopher proposes is a multi-valued logic. Philosophical standpoints are many and diverse-not mutually exclusive but rather complementary to each other. Reality has infinite aspects.” (J. N. Mohanty, 2000b, p.24)

The consequence of this proposition is to stress an effort towards the Other to seriously consider his contribution in the conversation or philosophical debate. The latter is therefore not composed by a series of more or less rhetorical oppositions, but by mutual appreciations that lead to a complementary conception of the debate. It consequently draws a complex pattern where the debate is not considered as A versus B, nor B following A in a successive order but A and B considered together as multiple perspectives, interwoven with regard to the truth that is composed of both standpoints and more. Such a model of thought brings forth a pertinent framework for the consideration of the conversation, which in its logical component should be able to assert truth to various points of view instead of trying to reach a unique absolute Truth.

We will leave aside here the ethical discussion regarding *ahimṣā** (non-violence), considered as the highest virtue in Jainism (J. N. Mohanty, 2000a, p.114) to which Mohanty refers above

¹²Detailed analyses of the Jaina philosophy can be found for example in S. Dasgupta, S. Radhakrishnan and P.T. Raju (Dasgupta, 1975;2006; Radhakrishnan, 2009; Raju, 1971, p.93-112). “The Jainas are the followers of Vardhamāna (Mahāvīra) (599 B.C-527 B.C), who systematized the doctrine of the three *tirthaṅkaras* (founders of the path), Rṣabha, Ajitanātha, and Ariṣṭanemi (all of ancient date mentioned in the Yajur Veda). The Jaina system does not accept the authority of the Veda. It comments the truth of its system on the ground of its accordance with reality. Its scheme of the universe is said to be grounded in logic and experience. Its central features are its realistic classification of being, its theory of knowledge with its celebrated doctrines of *syādvāda** and *saptabhāṅgī**, and its ascetic ethics.” (Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1957, p.250)

(though it should be remarked that the epistemology here is also supported by an ethical theory), and focus on the ontological multiplicity (*nayavāda**) that leads to the logical multiplicity of the seven propositions (*syādvāda**).

The classical Jaina philosophy includes a kind of perspectivism (if we take this concept in its basic meaning, i.e. that truth depends on perspectives and can be asserted only within one particular standpoint), which implies a recognition of a possible plurality of opinions and ideas without claiming for a unique Truth. This position is legitimated by the fact that reality can never be fully described by any of its property or component. To say it differently: any thing is more than the attribution of any property, so that it is at the same time also qualified by other properties. Therefore one has to consider many points of view that bring forth different properties or qualifications, which can never exhaust reality. A plurality of qualifications from different perspectives can therefore maximize the truth-value. For example, existence and permanence can be acknowledged together from different standpoints, so that different judgments or propositions can be made from different point of views, and considered true at the same time, without contradicting each other.

Malliṣeṇa (XIIIth), one of the most famous commentators within Jainas, wrote:

“There would be a contradiction¹³ in case existence and non-existence were referred to the same aspect. But that is not so here, because in whatever part existence is, non-existence also is not in that part. However, existence belongs to one aspect, and non-existence to another aspect. For existence [of an entity] is in regard to its own form and non existence in regard to another form.” *Syādvādamañjarī* of Malliṣeṇa, trans. in (Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1957, p.264)

Different examples can illustrate this theory, for example as quoted by Malliṣeṇa, a pot can be said to exist in reference to its place in Pātaliputra (ancient city in the actual state of Bihar), but not to exist in reference to its place in Kānyakubja (today in Uttar Pradesh), or it can exist in an earthen form in respect to substance, but not in an aqueous form, etc. (Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1957, p.264). Truth is relative here to a certain standpoint, so that both affirmations of existence and non-existence of the pot are valid, but in different standpoints. The truth is therefore conditioned by different standpoints, or point of views (*nayas**).

What is even more relevant for us here is the way in which Jaina synthesizes the opposition of predications that can apply to the different schools and systems of philosophy, a method known as “*syādvāda**”. Philosophical predications can have multiple truth values, and more exactly seven corresponding to the seven possible standpoints (*saptabhaṅgī**):

“Each such predication is conditional, relative to a standpoint, but if that condition is included in the predication, the judgment becomes unconditionally true. (...)

1. from a standpoint, x is F;
2. from a standpoint, x is not F;

¹³He answers here to the common counter-argument that Jaina logic is contradictory because it enables different judgment on the same thing to be true. But this criticism is a misunderstanding of Jaina logic, which states that contradictory statements cannot be about the same thing in the same sense and in the same time and place; but this is avoided if we consider statements to occur from different perspectives. (Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1957, p.262)

3 Beyond hermeneutics: limits, combinations and external considerations

3. from a standpoint, x is and is not F;
4. from a standpoint, x is indescribable;
5. from a standpoint, x is F and indescribable;
6. from a standpoint, x is not F and is indescribable;
- 7 from a standpoint, x is F, is not F, and is indescribable.”¹⁴ (J. N. Mohanty, 2000a, p.91-92)

This theory provides us a strong attention to the conditions, standpoints, and in some way, the context in which an assertion is made. It implies correlatively a pluralistic approach and a reflection on the possible attribution of truth in different assertions; it could be extended in an intercultural approach as a model to admit a pluralism of truth-values that could be attributed to different statements in different traditions of thinking, which would be expressed in variegated paradigms. It is a possible form of a conversation that guarantees pluralities of thinking and as well a model to connect these pluralities under the same conversation. It encourages to paying particular attention on the nature of these different standpoints, from which this model could be employed, in order to avoid contradiction but to be able to develop a pluralist and perspectivist approach of the truth in a judgment. Mohanty adds that it is a “model for philosophical liberalism” (J. N. Mohanty, 2000a, p.92), and we think it could also be a pertinent contribution for an intercultural structure, in particular to prevent any absolutisation of the truth by a particular tradition. It can connect different assertions, born in distinguished cultures and categories of thinking, by the intelligent articulation of different standpoints.

It may not be accepted in the West that we could need not only to study other philosophies as such, for the sake of the type of curiosity that has led to the conception of Indology, but also that it would enrich our very own structures of thinking. Moreover, it may be misunderstood in the East either as a conservative attempt to come back to the pure *doxas* (in the English world), or as a misuse of this tradition that is not adequate to its original tradition (in a more conservative perspective). All these views inaccurate. One should thus become aware that doing philosophy only through Western categories might at the end have certain consequences: first, one risks reaching a state where the different philosophical traditions and texts would be safely preserved, but where doing philosophy would mean more or less the same thing everywhere, at an academical level at least, in a sort of relative worldwide homogenization. This would certainly damage philosophical creativity regarding individual creativity as well as creativity of the philosophical exchanges. Then, in Western contexts, to philosophers oriented towards non-Western philosophy, the question “what for” is often raised, which means: why should we look to other traditions than ours to renew our categories? From a particular standpoint, the question is well-founded: deconstructions, ruptures and criticisms arise (also) within a particular tradition, and philosophy is made of these breakdowns, which operate as upheavals and create new schools, concepts, and thoughts. However a variety of models from different traditions can only enrich the scope of thoughts, for the simple reason that they bring forth other questions from different points of view that are not included in our own traditions. It is for this reason also that these models would immediately break, by their character of otherness, our own

¹⁴The original text is from the *Syādvādamañjarī* of Malliṣeṇa concerning the enunciation of the *nyayas* and the commentary can be read in English translation in (Radhakrishnan & Moore, 1957, p.260-268), esp. XXIII.

structures of thought, and provoke a shock (*Anstoß*) of consciousness that stimulates our creativity. From the composition to the concepts, i.e. from the very orientation of the fundamental philosophical questions to the argumentations of the answers, as well of course as the problems of translations, intercultural structures open a broader awareness of the complete and radical pluralities of thinking, therefore also a multiplication of creative potentialities. Finally, it is of course a question of a complete recognition of cultures and traditions; the recognition implied in interculturality should not stay as a state of an object, but should reach a complete state, where philosophies are not only studied, but practiced in the very way they are thought. In that case, it would be possible to communicate also in different ways and through different methods, themselves taken from different traditions.

3.3 Towards Hermetics: H.Rombach

As previously said, Klostermaier, at the end of his article, examines the conception of hermetics, or more precisely the conception of hermetics recently philosophically re-conceptualized within the work of H. Rombach. Ignoring the historical tradition examined in the work of F.A. Yates (Yates, 2009), we will focus below on the latter's main specific contemporary contribution. This section does not aim at an exhaustive presentation of the productive work of Rombach, neither does it seek to provide an exhaustive introduction to his thought. Instead, based on a number of singular concepts composing his thought, we want to highlight various criticisms addressed specifically to hermeneutics as well as some possible alternatives of thought for intercultural philosophy. This perspective has been extensively studied already by Stenger (Stenger, 2006). Our aim here is more modest, aiming only to reveal some primary possibilities of compensating the weaknesses of hermeneutics in a new orientation to think, or precisely to look for other modes of non-conceptual relations with cultural otherness. Hermetics agrees with some of the aforementioned arguments proffered in our study of cultural hermeneutics. However, we believe that it differs from hermeneutics at a crucial point, viz. it avoids the defect of trying to enlarge the narrow perspective of hermeneutics within the same domain regarding its interculturalization. On the contrary, hermetics functions as a structural criticism and refuses to address internal hermeneutic problems in order to open its concepts. Despite sustaining Western paradigms of thought, that is, also concerned with the former criticisms, hermetics is sufficiently aware of the plurality of worlds that are theorized to offer a pertinent approach to cultural otherness.

3.3.1 Plurality of Worlds

The very first opposition between hermetics and hermeneutics is the fact that, against a conception of individual *horizons*¹⁵ defined mainly as historical determinations (with restrictive

¹⁵The concept of horizon as it is employed now follows the definition of Gadamer: "Hence essential to the concept of situation is the concept of "*horizon*." The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. (...) Since Nietzsche and Husserl, the word has been used in philosophy to characterize the way in which thought is tied to its finite determinacy, and the way one's range of vision is gradually expanded. A person who has no horizon does not see far enough and hence over-values what is nearest to him. On the other hand, "to have a horizon" means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it. A person who has an horizon knows the relative significance of everything within this horizon whether it is near or far, great or small. Similarly, working out the hermeneutical situation means

dynamic changes), one has to think pluralities of different *world*¹⁶ oriented in a spatial configuration. In the former case, one considers a dualism between the world understood as one complete and subsuming entity and the particular various perspectives and interpretations that are the conditions of understanding of each “inhabitant” of this world. In the latter case, the different worlds are independent and singular; however, they comprise everything so that it is not possible that any element is located beyond or outside the worlds. It implies an absence of conception of the “whole”. More precisely, each world is a “whole” for itself; the concept of whole is itself relativized to each world. A conception limited to horizons - as in Gadamer for example - presupposes then a unique, singular world (whether a *Lebenswelt*, a cosmos or a universe defined by physical or ontological criteria), one in which the different horizons are dependent on each understanding. The world includes everything; however, our perception and understanding of the world depends on our particular position within it and constitutes our horizon. These two models are not opposite (but ordered - the worlds subsume the horizons -) if one considers that a multiplicity of horizons can be found within the same world, while a world exists necessarily outside a particular horizon. There is diverse interpretations within the same world, but there is also different ways to interpret, i.e. different structures of thought that characterize other worlds. This difference of articulating the concepts of worlds and horizons explains the difference between intercultural hermeneutics and hermetics.

Intercultural hermeneutics, consequently, must address the closure of individual horizons within the Gadamerian tradition. If horizons are mainly determined by individual traditions, the only possibility for intercultural understanding (i.e. to understand someone who does not share the same tradition) is to find the barest similarity between cultures in opposition to this sense of closure induced by Gadamer. For Mall for example, it is not possible for cultures to *not share* something, i.e. they are engaged in an overlap that *necessarily has to exist*. In that

acquiring the right horizon of inquiry for the questions evoked by the encounter with tradition.” (Gadamer, 2004, p.301)

¹⁶In an *intercultural* perspective (we focus therefore here on the cultural dimension - they would certainly be other possible accents for a use in different contexts), we would like to distinguish *cultures* and *worlds*, though both limits are difficult to draw in any case: a culture has for us a slightly more national connotation (with the example of the German culture, the Japanese culture, etc.), or at least more global (East, West), or even a defined and distinguished community/ethnic groups (Jewish culture, etc.). “Nation” is different as it denotes a political entity. “Cultures” includes on the contrary all symbolic parts of the existence and all customs or habits of a same group, analysed and observed from an outside perspective. With the introduction of the “world”, we would like to include also the *sub-cultures*, and moves the accent towards an inner experience from the centre itself and its surrounding, a processual experience. For example, the Indian culture can be considered as such in its unity, but one can clearly differentiate the North and South worlds (their languages do not share the same linguistic roots; a part of the history, some traditional arts, theater, literature and cinema, cuisine, etc. are strongly differentiated so that they themselves do not always agree on their feeling of appartenance to the same nation), and even in the North for example, one could distinguish in the same way the Bengali world, the Punjabi world, the Kashmiri world, the North-East world, etc. by their various languages, habits and customs, physical features, music and arts, cuisine, etc. Worlds appear to us to be more flexible and maybe more precise in its use, as well maybe as more dynamic. One has then the possibility of seeing different worlds within the same city, what would be for example the areas of Chinatown and Little Italy within New York, or even simply different districts that are not defined by any ethnic characteristic, such as Manhattan and The Bronx in a differentiation that would be more sociologically oriented (though one has to admit that sociology goes often with ethnies, even if it is less obvious than in the mention of Chinatown and Little Italy, a strong and unequal racial distinction can be easily made in this case). One could go on and on with examples and multiply the levels of constitution of worlds that actually form our category of thoughts by separation and distinction. One has also to remark that the borders between the worlds may be different in different worlds, i.e. the worlds may not have the same limits within different worlds. This is obvious in the case of Kashmir in India, torn apart between the Indian and the Pakistan nations, and Palestine.

sense the overlap is *a priori* in virtue of the fact that it is defined by its necessary condition to be found at the cross-roads between cultures in order to guarantee a possibility for intercultural communication. To say it differently: Mall's presupposition that there is *in any case* and for every culture an *a priori* possible overlap organizes the structure so that the possibility of the overlap, or the category of the overlap is present before the encounter of cultures as an *a priori* necessity or as a necessary condition. It implies then a certain static predetermination (not regarding the actual content of each overlap but the very concept of the overlap itself) as the overlap must already exist. Against this conception inspired by the concept of horizon, the encounter in Rombach determines by itself the conditions of the encounter that are different and renewed for every encounter. Worlds are *absolutely separate* to such an extent that our very way of grasping, ordering and moving in a world cannot, in any way, converge or become entangled with another world. That means that what we imagine when we employ the term "world" is already differentiated from one world to another. Even differences between these worlds could already denote that there is something sufficiently similar to warrant talk of differences, that is, that in virtue of a common core, all differences subsequently crystalize, for example in a comparative analysis. We should not speak of differences as long as differences imply similarities as a necessary oxymoron. It is beyond that, in the sphere of *the nothingness* of their proximity and relation¹⁷. Worlds cannot be shared nor understood, and certainly not be common. We are already and always moving within situations (Rombach, 2003, p.19-22), within different structures comprising different interactions with worlds. Stenger adds that "the worlds do not differ gradually from each other, but only "worldly" (*welthaft*)."¹⁸, which asserts additionally the impossibility of comparison or conceptual knowledge of other worlds as ways of grasping them. Conceiving such a radical world-difference precludes any reductionism with regard to cultural otherness, thus forcing a search for relations beyond simple comparison, connection or extension of one's horizon. Moreover, it forces the renunciation of our prejudices given that *nothing* from our acquired knowledge can constitute the ground of our understanding of the Other. Rombach clarifies this point nicely when he writes:

"The worlds, about which hermetics speak, have no relation to each other at all, not even the relation of no-relation. Worlds do not stand at all to each other in a comparative way, neither from the content nor in a formal way, they do not find themselves "next to each other", "one in the other", "one above the other", or "one after the other". This is due to the fact that each world has its own space, its own

¹⁷H. Rombach writes: "In hermetics I speak about "exclusiveness" and I mean with it the fact that each world excludes each other world, and that in a way that this relation of exclusiveness does not even stand anymore "between" them. For then, the between would be something that they have in common. "Between" them there is however "nothing"; this seems to make the hermetic difference null, but it precisely makes it the most fundamental and the most radical difference that there is." Personal translation. Original text: "Ich spreche in der Hermetik von "Ausschließlichkeit" und meine damit die Tatsache, daß eine jede Welt jede andere ausschließt, und zwar so, daß nicht einmal mehr diese Beziehung der Ausschließlichkeit "zwischen" ihnen steht. Denn so wäre das Zwischen ein gemeinsames. "Zwischen" ihnen steht aber "nichts"; dies scheint den hermetischen Unterschied zu einem nichtigen zu machen, macht ihn aber gerade zum fundamentalsten und durchgreifendsten Unterschied, den es überhaupt gibt." (Rombach, 1988, p.368). This text is also the only passage of H.Rombach (the conclusion of *Strukturontologie*) that has been translated in French by B.Stevens (Rombach, 1994b, p.467).

¹⁸Personal translation. Original text: "Die Welten unterscheiden sich nicht graduell voneinander, sondern nur "welthaft"." (Stenger, 2006, p.857)

time, its own “order”, the very horizon of comparison that would be necessary for standing together and for comparing them. One can indeed “compare” a world with another world, but one compares then in truth not the worlds, but only what can appear from a world into the other, with what this world thinks about itself.”¹⁹

One stands therefore always within a world, which is radically differentiated and isolated from the others. The constitutive gap between worlds is irreconcilable and irreducible and, according to Rombach, any attempt to overlap worlds yields an “injustice” (*Unrecht*) to one of them (this idea comes probably from Nietzsche).

The differentiation process drastically exceeds what hermeneutics permits in its concept of horizons and their fusion such that, even to mention a plurality of worlds, is misconceived. The multiplicity is total. One has to consider “*pluralities* of worlds”, as a consequence from the relativity implied previously. The plurality is itself a single view from variegated worlds, such that when one person *P* from a world *W* thinks about plurality, it does not mean that she thinks the same concept that a person *P** from a world *W**. The very notion of plurality differs from *W* to *W**. This has to be noticed as it is the case for any concept, including cultural otherness, whose conception will be different in every world. So plurality itself is not conceived in the same way, does not mean the same thing and is not found in the same place:

“But there is also not in them “a plurality of worlds”. A “plurality” is only possible where a comparison is possible, that is inside a horizon. What appears however inside a horizon, is precisely not a world. The plurality of worlds is not “one” plurality of the “many”, but “many” pluralities. In each world other worlds “appear” too, although not in their particular horizon and in their particular truth. In each world, the other worlds are respectively other worlds and their plurality is respectively another plurality. There is not in the worlds “The” otherness. Each has its own otherness. That is why one cannot change from one world to “another” world, but one can only be moved inside another world, so that one loses inside at the same moment the first world. To change from one world to another here is only possible in the mode of transformation, from which as much is taken than it is given. Namely endlessly much.”²⁰

¹⁹Personal translation. Original text: “(...), haben die “Welten”, von denen die Hermetik spricht, keinerlei Beziehung zueinander, nicht einmal die Beziehung der Nichtbeziehung. Welten stehen zueinander in keinerlei Vergleich, weder inhaltlich noch formal, sie befinden sich nicht “nebeneinander”, “ineinander”, “übereinander”, oder “nacheinander”. Dies liegt daran, daß jede Welt ihren eigenen Raum, ihre eigene Zeit, ihre eigene “Ordnung” hat, eben jenen Vergleichshorizont, der für das Zusammenstehen und Vergleichen von Welten notwendig wäre. Zwar kann man eine Welt mit einer anderen “vergleichen”, aber man vergleicht dann in Wahrheit nicht die Welten, sondern nur das, was von einer Welt in der anderen erscheinen kann, mit dem, was diese von sich selbst hält.” (Rombach, 1988, p.367); in French, (Rombach, 1994b, p.466).

²⁰Personal translation. Original text: “Aber auch in diesem gibt es eine “Vielheit der Welten” nicht. Eine “Vielheit” ist nur dort möglich, wo ein Vergleich möglich ist, d.h innerhalb eines Horizontes. Was aber innerhalb eines Horizontes erscheint, ist gerade nicht Welt. Die Vielheit der Welten ist nicht “eine” Vielheit der vielen, sondern “viele” Vielheiten. In jeder Welt “erscheinen” auch andere Welten, wenngleich nicht in ihrem jeweiligen Horizont und in ihrer jeweiligen Wahrheit. In jeder Welt sind die anderen Welten jeweils andere Welten und ihre Vielheit eine jeweils andere Vielheit. Es gibt in Welten “die” Andersheit nicht. Jede hat ihre eigene Andersheit. Man kann darum nicht von einer Welt in eine “andere” wechseln, sondern man kann nur so in eine andere hineingezogen werden, daß man darin zugleich die eine verliert. Weltenwechsel ist hier nur im Modus der Verwandlung möglich, der soviel genommen wird, wie ihr gegeben wird. Nämlich unendlich viel.” (Rombach, 1991, p.51)

This radical plurality of pluralities has not hitherto been addressed within the discipline of intercultural philosophy. It seeks to insert differences (beyond the common sense of difference in relation to resemblance) into the ontological structure of worlds, in the phenomenological apparition and the experience of the plurality, and in the method of apprehending these differences themselves. It means that the ideas of cultural otherness and of other worlds, which are integrated to one conception of the worlds (for example one situated in the “European worlds” who would think of “Japanese worlds”) are in themselves differentiated and they carry different conceptions of Others. Prejudices, clichés and stereotypes are the famous expressions of the Others that are thought within one world and are completely dependent of it, and therefore different in each world, but note that Rombach includes here *every* conception of the Other.

From such a model, Gadamer’s notions of the legitimation of prejudices (*“berechtigtes” Vorurteil* (Rombach, 1991, p.69)) and the possibilities of corrections within the hermeneutic circle, are repeatedly denounced by Rombach as simply being a particular conviction or judgment (*Urteil*) that has been forcibly legitimated on wrong basis. It closes hermeneutics within a particular horizon, one that grants itself the means to pretend its truth (via the possibility of being auto-corrected and enlarged in the circle) and prevents it from seeing pluralities of worlds and a complete sense of relativity of the differences. To say it differently: the Gadamerian hermeneutics developed a system in which prejudices (understood etymologically as *Vor-Urteil*) become valid through a circle that claims to correct them (*berechtigtes*) but only confirm them (because of its very circular trajectory). The movement of the circle is therefore only used for legitimating a particular judgment (*Urteil*) so that it appears objectively true. The incorrectness of hermeneutics consists in its attempt to assert its universal dimension of truth by elevating particular and worldly prejudices into universal categories. In so doing, it assesses these particular prejudices in a circular movement that claims to correct them but only verify them within the same horizon. In fact hermeneutics simply does not recognize that a prejudice is always a pre-judice but never an argument. It creates therefore a process that restricts the understanding to oneself and defines a horizon in such a way that it lacks the possibility to let other phenomena arise, or even to consider any pluralities beyond this simple horizon.²¹

Consequently, in such a pluralistic approach, there is a transfinite number of cultural otherness, as each world will consider this concept differently. It is therefore impossible to understand the Other in a hermeneutic way, as one is restricted to her own understanding. The Other escapes my horizon and, thus, no comparison can enable me to reach her. One cannot understand cultural otherness, as it implies the reduction of the other world to my own horizon. It does not, however, imply the abdication of the very idea of intercultural philosophy; rather, it enables an

²¹In opposition to the hermeneutic movement, here stands the opposition of the hermetic figure: “Here lies an essential difference to the hermeneutic experience, which one can “acquire” in an adequate way, for example through the actuation of the “hermeneutic circle”. The hermetic experience is not circular, but none-recurring and single-lane. It has the figure of of a flight. It imperceptibly raises, is already in a full journey when one perceives it in the first place, it then ascends to a steep ascension with such a big dynamics than the human being can not “ascend” anymore, even if he would like.” Personal translation. Original text: “Darin liegt ein wesentlicher Unterschied zur hermeneutischen Erfahrung, die man sich in geeigneter Weise “erarbeiten” kann, beispielsweise durch das Ingangsetzen des “hermeneutischen Zirkels”. Die hermetische Erfahrung ist nicht zirkulär, sondern einmalig und einbahnig. Sie hat die Figur des Flugs. Sie hebt unmerklich an, ist bereits in voller Fahrt, wenn man sie überhaupt erst bemerkt, steigt sodann meist in steiler Steigung und mit so großer Dynamik auf, daß der Mensch nicht mehr “aussteigen” kann, auch wenn er es möchte.” [Ibid, p.42]

approach to the Other that perturbs the hegemony of reason as conceived in western hermeneutics. Stenger states that the very foundation of hermetics implies that one has to capitulate whatever conception of reason under which one has hitherto operated²². Hermetics is the way to deal with this absolute difference constitutive of cultural otherness.

3.3.2 Seeing versus Understanding

We can conceive the difference between horizon and worlds as the delimitation of the singular perspective inside the pluralistic formations of worlds. The horizon determines *my* own world, is the sign of *my* limits and a standpoint for *my* understanding, and all differences are understood in relation to my own determination of the world (which equates an absence of radical difference). It is therefore individual, and such things as a “fusion of horizon” cannot exist as it is not possible to fuse various horizons from different worlds, as we showed earlier. It is situated *within* worlds, as a multiplicity of singular elements that are all constitutively different from each other, and therefore resist fusion. In this sense, they appear as obstacles for intercultural philosophy, while worlds, in virtue of their radical differences, are an intercultural structure (in this sense, intercultural means *intermundane*, or *interworldly* - “*Intermundaneität*” (Stenger, 2006)). Horizon is a restrictive and limit condition of my understanding. One’s horizon should be transcended towards a worldly experience in its its pluralities, i.e. to relate to a centre oriented towards exteriority.

The hermetic plurality of worlds is thus connected with an additional point, namely the insufficiency of the hermeneutic concept “understanding”. These two concepts, world and understanding, are correlatively and intrinsically dependent given that the object of hermetics is only a world (Rombach, 1991, p.34) as such and cannot be separated into a plurality of elements that one could grasp by deductions and analyses. Hermeneutics operates within a horizon, which enables the hermeneut to make sense of the multiple elements by ordering and uniting them to construct meaning. Grammar functions as its paradigm, with the constitution of meanings achieved through a decomposition of variegated elements that operates via their adjustment (a subject + a verb + an object = a sentence able to convey meaning). This process of isolation and interpretation is what enables reflection and, subsequently, understanding. That is precisely what is impossible in the case of a hermetic world²³

The following quote relates both points in their contrast with hermeneutics:

“The worldly character of experience does piece itself together by individual steps of experience (is not a “phenomenon of learning”), but it jumps up on a characteristic

²²Original reference: “Was sich hier meldet ist aber nichts weniger als das Grundphänomen der Hermetik, vor welchem das, was man gewöhnlich unter “Rationalität” versteht, kapitulieren muß.”(Stenger, 2006, p.846)

²³To say it differently with G. Stenger, original text: “Die hermetische Erfahrung geht durch und durch, (be)trifft personal, existentiell, eben welthaft; die hermeneutische Erfahrung hingegen greift nicht durch alle Ebenen hindurch, jedenfalls muß sie dies nicht, sie stellt eine Erweiterung dar bei mehr oder weniger gleichbleibendem Kern. Den Hermeneutiker wirft nicht wirklich etwas um, er “versteht”, und das, was er nicht versteht, bleibt vordraußen, bleibt auch als Nichtverstandenes irgendwie verstanden.” Personal translation: “The hermetic experience goes through and through, strikes personally, existentially, even worldly; on the contrary, the hermeneutic experience does not grasp through all the levels, at any rate it does not need to, it forms an extension of a more or less an unchanging core. Nothing really overthrows the hermeneut, he “understands”, and what he does not understand stays outside, remains even as something non-understood somehow understood.” (Stenger, 2006, p.872)

experience, if it jumps up at all.(...) A non-hermetic experience also experiences these states of affairs, but grabs them in the horizon of what is known, maybe even with the singular trait of something special or even bizarre.²⁴ .

In considering the radical differences that separate worlds, only a *jump* can enable one to overcome his own world to be in another one. It is no longer a question of conceptual understanding but, rather, the *experience* of otherness insofar as this leads us to *feel* the multiplicity of worlds. Ultimately, this feeling makes us *understand* the Other not rationally in a hermeneutic way, but rather via the presence and adaptation to the Other. There is no alternative to an experience of the Other and a feeling of the difference. One has to live within the worlds, which means overcoming one's horizon. Understanding and seeing are two different modes of being that refer respectively to hermeneutics and hermetics such that one can understand only within a particular horizon and *see* only worlds. In hermetics, one thus speaks of a jump into another world and into another horizon and another order. There is no learning or knowledge that could prepare someone for the experience of pluralities insofar as it is an experience to which my horizon cannot be extended. It functions as the transcendence of my own limits by the event of successfully completing the leap into another world. As Stenger says, "The "horizon of understanding" that yet understands itself as a dimension of justification of the "acquisition of objects" (*Gegenstandserfassung*) and the "category of judgment" (*Urteilstkategorie*), experiences itself once again undermined by the "experience of the world" (*Welterfahrung*) or better from the "rise of the world" (*Weltaufgang*) of hermetics. *Horizon of understanding (Verstehenshorizont)* versus *rise of the world(s) (Welt(en)aufgang)*, this is the main opposition between hermeneutics and hermetics.²⁵"

This forms the ground of a radical distinction made by Rombach between hermetics and hermeneutics, one that he summarizes as follows:

"The singular evidence of a world appears indeed on the details, but does not *consist* in them. In this respect there is nothing to *understand*. But there is something to feel, and in fact in the highest clearness and evidence.

In this evidence one can only break in or sink, i.e arrive in it so that this evidence looms *from itself*. There is no penetration, no grasping, no approximation to a world, because this world would be made impossible to grasp at the outset by every approximation-to-it and grasping-of-it.²⁶"

²⁴Personal translation. Original text: "Der Weltcharakter der Erfahrung setzt sich nicht aus einzelnen Erfahrungsschritten zusammen (ist kein "Lernphänomen"), sondern springt an einer charakteristischen Erfahrung auf, wenn er überhaupt aufspringt. (...) Ein nichthermetisches Erfahren erfährt zwar auch diese Sachverhalte, nimmt sie aber im Horizont des Bekannten auf, wenn vielleicht auch mit dem Einzelmerkmal des Besonderen oder gar Absonderlichen."(Rombach, 1991, p.35)

²⁵Personal translation. Original text: "Der "Verstehenshorizont", der sich selber schon als eine Begründungsdimension aller "Gegenstandserfassung" und "Urteilstkategorie" versteht, erfährt sich noch einmal unterlaufen von der "Welterfahrung" oder besser dem "Weltaufgang" der Hermetik. *Verstehenshorizont* versus *Welt(en)aufgang*, darin liegt der Hauptgegensatz zwischen Hermeneutik und Hermetik."(Stenger, 2006, p.873)

²⁶Personal translation. Original text: "Die eigentümliche Evidenz einer Welt scheint zwar an den Einzelheiten auf, *besteht* aber nicht in ihnen. Insofern gibt es da auch nichts zu *verstehen*. Aber es gibt etwas zu empfinden, und zwar in größter Deutlichkeit und Evidenz./ In diese Evidenz kann man nur *einbrechen* oder *einsinken*, d. h. so in sie gelangen, daß sie sich von sich her auftut. Es gibt kein Eindringen, kein Erfassen, kein Zugehen auf eine Welt, da diese durch ein Zugehen-auf-sie und ein Sie-Erfassen, d.h Nehmen, von vornherein ver-nommen wird."[Ibid, p.35]

The pluralistic conception requires taking seriously the radicality of the distinction between worlds, which consequently prevents the application and employment of conceptual understanding. It shows precisely the helplessness of reason given that the latter cannot reproduce its laws and procedures in different worlds wherein “reason” does not refer to the same thing. It therefore needs another way of approaching differing orders, languages and cultures put in different worlds.

That constitutes hermetic most penetrating criticism of hermeneutics and reveals a constitutive deficiency of hermeneutics. The only way to have an idea of a completely other internal organization of the world is then to fuse into those other worlds and to apprehend the reality by living it. Misunderstandings and non-understandings are therefore here the main processes that shape my behavior to adapt it to other worlds. Rombach draws the contrast between different kinds of perception and ways of approaching reality. He summarizes these in the following chart (translated in English, original [Ibid. p.90]):

Table 1:

	Forms of Reality	Forms of Perception	Form of the theory	Form of the relation
III. Level	Image / Picture	To see “Being”	Hermetics	World
II. Level	Figure of meaning Text	To understand “Reading”	Hermeneutics	Relation to the meaning
I. Level	Thing Object (<i>Sache</i>)	To look/To know To recognize	Epistemology	Relation to the thing

The paradigm for hermetics is the picture. One needs only one glance to enter (or not) into the world of a painting. “Entering the world of a painting” here means being “captured” by a painting. One cannot read a picture in the same way as one reads a text and, furthermore, it is not addressed to us by means of words to be combined in order to create a meaning. It speaks *at once* by what it provokes in the seer; it is an event that happens to us and we only respond to it; but in point of fact we do not choose this event’s occurrence and intrusion (in Waldenfels’ sense of responsivity). The sum of the elements of the paintings is not equal to the painting since it makes no sense to look only at some elements, say vertically or horizontally, in order to grasp its meaning. In a text, the sum of the elements is not immediately equal to its meaning (it depends on the interpretation and understandings, which are themselves dependent on the grammar), since a simple apposition of elements does not convey the overall meaning. However, if one tries to read Homer in the Greek for example, one will start looking for the verb, then its correlative subject (nominative case), followed by its accusative cases, which means that one analyses the structure of the text into discrete propositions (subordinate, coordinate, principal, etc.) in order to be able, once its grammatical skeleton has been revealed, to make sense of the various elements (in our native language, this process is completely internalized). The meaning depends, in that case, on the discrete elements ordered together according to their grammatical functions and constructed in order to convey their meanings. The mediation of the understanding is therefore strongly stressed by means of grammar and meaning.

In Art, one agrees or not. The basic experience of seeing a painting is whether one adheres to the picture or not. This feeling is rather difficult to explain, precisely because it escapes the

sphere of understanding and analytic explanation. It is a singular appreciation that makes the seer embrace the painting or reject it, i.e. enter in the world of the painting or keep distance from it. It is an immediate sphere of experience of “seeing the picture” in opposition to the process of analysis. There are, doubtless, possible analyses and precise discourses *about* the painting. But the painting itself is given in a direct perspectival experience that brings about a reaction. In this distance between the two different modes of operation of the paradigms, one can see the gap between hermetics and hermeneutics.

Rombach summarizes the pluralities of worlds and the impossibility of applying the hermeneutic method as follows:

“Such a common world [of the hermeneutics] of comprehension and of communication does not exist; there are only different worlds, to which in each case only the one belongs who “takes part” of them. The world of human beings is not common; everywhere where this is claimed, a particular world is made universally authoritative, and this is a fundamental injustice. The history of humanity so far is the revenge of the injustices, that human beings do to each other, by not paying attention to the world, in which each belongs and to which he “belongs”. One understands the other only when one has arrived in his world. But how does one arrive in another world, when already the “other” is differently the other in every world? One can arrive in another world, but not in the way of hermeneutics, not through “reading” nor “understanding”, but only through “being” in the implied, not ontological sense, in the sense of “to be” [seinen].²⁷”

He introduces a hierarchy of the two in a qualitative appreciation that is most likely a function of his argumentative strategy ²⁸. However, we will follow a different course. For our purposes, there are different modes of being-located in the worlds that correspond to different attitudes and situations in the worlds. To say it in Stenger’s words: “Thus between hermetics and hermeneutics there is not only a *dimensional* difference but also a difference of *phases*. While hermeneutics sees its main object in the mediation (*Vermitteltheit*) and the ability to mediate (*Vermittelbarkeit*), hermetics points to non-mediation and the ability not-to-mediate, which presents another level with its completely own contents of reality, a level that stays hidden from the hermeneutic interpretation and mediation.²⁹” One cannot simply annihilate reason

²⁷Personal translation. Original text: “Es gibt eine solche gemeinsame Welt [der Hermeneutik] der Verständigung und der Kommunikation nicht; es gibt nur unterschiedliche Welten, in die jeweils nur derjenige gehört, der an ihnen “teilhat”. Die Welt der Menschen ist nicht gemeinsam; wo immer dies behauptet wird, wird eine bestimmte Welt universal verbindlich gemacht, und darin liegt ein fundamentales Unrecht. Die bisherige Menschheitsgeschichte ist die Rache des Unrechts, das die Menschen einander antun, indem sie nicht auf die Welt achten, in die ein jeder gehört und der er “gehört”. Man versteht den anderen nur, wenn man in seine Welt hineingelangt ist. Aber wie gelangt man in eine andere Welt, wenn schon das “andere” in jeder Welt “anders” das andere ist? Man kann hineingelangen, aber nicht auf die Art und Weise der Hermeneutik, nicht durch “Lesen” oder “Verstehen”, sondern nur durch “Sein” im angedeuteten, nicht-ontologischen Sinne, im Sinne von “Seinen”. [Ibid, p.92]

²⁸Rombach’s denunciation of hermeneutics is severe and his appreciation can be easily seen with the following quote: “The relation from hermetics and hermeneutics has in particular arose therein, that hermeneutics is a a product of decadence (*Verfallsprodukt*) of hermetics.” Personal translation. Original text: “Das Verhältnis von Hermetik und Hermeneutik hat sich insbesondere darin gezeigt, daß die Hermeneutik ein Verfallsprodukt der Hermetik ist.” [Ibid, p.100]

²⁹Personal translation. Original text: “So gibt es zwischen Hermetik und Hermeneutik sowohl einen *dimensionalen*

and understanding, but they should not be the only possible modes of access and relations considered, as has been hitherto the case. The advantage of hermetics in this perspective is its ability to *see* the distance between worlds and horizons and therefore to state a plurality of models while hermeneutics, on the contrary, stops its consideration at the horizon to such an extent that it cannot even consider the notion of “worlds”. Or as Rombach states: “The hermeneut is not able to see where the difference between world and horizon is supposed to lie, and he is unable precisely because he cannot “see”, but only “understand”.³⁰”

Let us conclude these two points by means of a small detour to H. Michaux, the poet of *A Barbarian in Asia*, a work that will be examined in detail in the next chapter. However a short extract illustrates perfectly the plurality of worlds and the hermetic way to experience them, and connects them with the orientation towards a centre brought previously by Klostermaier, so that it relates the different ways hitherto explored:

“In America, there are some twenty races; in spite of that, the American exists, and more distinctly than many a race that is pure.

Even the Parisian exists.

With all the more reason, the Hindu. Gandhi is perfectly right to maintain that India is one, and that it is the White people who see a thousand Indias.

If they see a thousand Indias, that is because they have not found the center of the Hindu personality.

Nor perhaps have I found it, but I feel sure that it exists.” (Michaux, 1949;1988, p.71); (Michaux, 1967, p.104)

In this few lines, Michaux illustrates the pluralities of worlds as well as the way in which we move in them. There is neither an analysis nor even the mention of any understanding but, rather, a *feeling* born from an experience of having jumped in the Indian world. From the multiplicities one should look at a “centre” in a very close way to the “Hermetic centre” of Klostermaier. There is no horizon in these lines but pluralities of worlds that are absolutely differentiated one from another. This does not restrict anyone from entrance if one gives up understanding in a hermeneutic way (related to the circle), and jumps into the experience of living in another world.

3.3.3 Rightness Versus Improvement: Meliorisation

A pluralistic conception of the world implies a strong sense of relation, as well as a serious consideration of movement. Indeed, when Aristotle considers God (as the first cause) to be the first movement, he does not need any supplementary justification concerning movement after having established this fact. The movement of the world relies completely on this primary and *a priori* force that carries the whole and includes all differences. Substance and metaphysics (in

Unterschied als auch einen *Phasen*unterschied. Sieht die Hermeneutik ihr Hauptanliegen in der Vermitteltheit und Vermittelbarkeit, so weißt [*sic*] die Hermetik auf das Nichtvermittelbare und die Nichtvermittelbarkeit hin, die eine andere Ebene mit völlig eigenem Wirklichkeitsgehalt anzeigen, die der hermeneutischen Auslegung und Vermittlung verborgen bleiben.” (Stenger, 2006, p.879)

³⁰Personal translation. Original text: “Der Hermeneutiker kann nicht sehen, worin der Unterschied zwischen Welt und Horizont liegen soll, und er kann dies nicht, weil er überhaupt nicht “sehen”, sondern nur “verstehen” kann.” [Ibid, p.101]

a traditional sense) do not require theory of relations, influence, transformation, etc. It depends on a superior entity and the connections are one-sided: from the first entity to the rest of the world. One can take as a model the creation of the world in Christian theology, which renders this arrangement quite clearly. The association between the ontological disposition of the worlds and the phenomenological hermetic event is radically other. If there is a multiplicity of finite, complete and independent worlds, one might justifiably ask: how do they move into relation? How can they connect to each other? The movement becomes an included part of each world and their relation turns out to be the only possible mode of moving.

This leads us to the two next points: the direction of hermetics in contrast with hermeneutics, i.e. the principle that orientates any movement, namely "*Meliorisation*", and the relation between worlds within the hermetic framework, namely the *concreativity* ("*Konkreativität*"). Both are connected as the following quote shows:

"Concreativity" means that the increase (*Mehrung*) of the world is always at the same time the increase of the subject of the experience of the world, and that *vice versa* the increase of the "subject" of the experience is the condition of the increase of the "world". Only an experiencer who knows how to elevate himself can experience an elevation of the worlds in the "flight" of the genesis. He elevates himself with his world. The experience of world is always upheaving; this was known earlier, it has however disappeared when one has started to follow the "critical" experience, which is the hermeneutic one. "Height" is a pure hermetic category. Who repudiates height, repudiates hermetics.³¹

The movement is vertical (Stenger, 2006, p.867-873), which takes in consideration the "depth" and goes towards a "upheaving"³². In that sense the verticality of the hidden depth of the hermetic dimension stands against the horizon (in a spatial sense) of hermeneutics. What is implied here is the idea that the transcendence of one's world is the condition of reaching cultural otherness with the figure of the jump and the necessity of overcoming one's horizon. It is transcultural in the sense that interculturality depends here - if we follow Rombach entirely - on this movement of worlds, on the ability exceed our own world. It constitutes the core of the dynamics. Once this movement has been performed, then the reciprocal creative connection enables an intercultural consciousness.

However, the caution that led us in the introduction to favor the term "*interculturality*" on the ground that a vertical conception may lead to a universalistic approach or to the establishment of a new kind of hierarchy (on the basis of the past historical events) is here somehow already

³¹Personal translation. Original text: "Konkreativität" (...) besagt, daß die Mehrung der Welt immer zugleich eine Mehrung des Subjekts der Welterfahrung ist, und daß auch umgekehrt die Mehrung des Erfahrungs-Subjekts für die Mehrung der "Welt" die Voraussetzung ist. Nur ein Erfahrender, der sich selbst zu steigern vermag, kann eine Weltensteigerung im "Flug" der "Genese" erfahren. Er hebt sich mit seiner Welt. Welterfahrung ist immer "hebend"; das hat man früher gewußt, es ging aber im Verfolg der "kritischen" Erfahrung, welche die hermeneutische ist, verloren. "Höhe" ist eine rein hermetische Kategorie. Wer Höhe leugnet, leugnet Hermetik." (Rombach, 1991, p.52)

³²For example regarding a brief spatial characterization: "In der Hermetik gilt Erleuchtung, nicht Erkenntnis, Tiefe, nicht Horizont, Ergriffenheit nicht Begriff, Selbstverlust nicht philosophische Selbsterfassung." (Rombach, 2003, p.23) Personal translation: "In hermetics applies epiphany, not knowledge, depth, not horizon, emotion not concept, self-loss not philosophical self-gathering."

inoperative. “Universalistic” is a qualification that is, as we saw with the pluralities of worlds, now irrelevant considering the fact that “universalistic” does not refer to a physical universe but is equivalent to the constitution of a unique world. Concerning the danger of a new hierarchy, Rombach deactivates this risk in an interesting way, which goes with the upheaval when he writes: “In this world (in each “world”) nothing could be better than it is. Each world is the “best of all worlds”.³³” In other words: from each standpoint, one may consider his own world as the best of all worlds. After all, one is considering the other worlds from one’s own standpoint, and from this restrictive perspective, it may indeed appear as the best possible, simply because it makes sense as a whole, and it is the only world to make sense so clearly for the one who belongs to this world, and this world only. It is also a complete and finished world and from within, it may appear as if nothing could and should be different. It is arranged in a dynamic way that has been reached in this precise world only. But this radical superlative statement is also immediately relativized by the awareness of one’s standpoint. “*Each world is the best*” implies that the statement annuls itself by the logical impossibility of having a multiplicity of superlatives. The consequence of this disappearance of the superlative value is the impossibility of any objective or neutral hierarchy. What exists is the succession of points of view expressing different values that are relativized by their own context or their own world. As no above entity exists that would be able to represent a third party perspective, each statement stays pertinent in its own world and disintegrates itself as soon as it tries to reach a transcendent, universalistic or objective state. It does not mean that the claim cannot exist; but it is always understood either as a logical impossibility, or as a true statement in a particular world that can be *ad infinitum* multiplied and possesses a truth value strictly only inside of one’s own world. It is therefore not a valid tool of comparison, and comparisons are anyway *a priori* impossible according to hermetics.

Meliorisation therefore entails a vertical approach that implies an elevation but always as multiplicities of parallels that cannot be put together in any way, thus preventing any ideology of power in any world. One can make better sense of the multiplicities of hermetic worlds by thinking in terms of a field of rising blades of grass rather than as a single tree, given in the Dürers “Großes Rasenstück”, interpreted by Rombach in *Der Ursprung* (Rombach, 1994a, p.78).

The nature of the movement itself is described as follows:

“Above all the moment of the “elevation”, which means that a hermetic world can only be experienced in movement (of the elevation). It shines up in a “more and more”, which belongs essentially to the continued existence of the experience [*Erfahrungsbestand*]. The increase and the improvement (*meliorisation*) is therefore a feature and a characteristic. It means that the “object” of the hermetic experience does not appear as something closer or more right or more exact, but as “more”.³⁴”

³³Personal translation. Original text: “In dieser Welt (in jeder “Welt”) könnte nichts besser sein, als es ist. Jede Welt ist die “beste aller Welten.” [Ibid, p.37]

³⁴Personal translation. Original text: “So vor allem das Moment des “Aufgangs”, das besagt, daß eine hermetische Welt nur in der Bewegung (des Aufgangs) erfahren werden kann. Sie strahlt in einem “mehr und mehr” auf, das wesentlich zum Erfahrungsbestand gehört. Die Mehrung und Besserung (*Meliorisation*) ist darum ein Grundzug und ein Charakteristikum. Das bedeutet, daß der “Gegenstand” der hermetischen Erfahrung nicht etwa als näher oder richtiger oder genauer erscheint, sondern als “mehr.”

[Ibid, p.48]

The modes of appearance of the things are therefore not judged in terms of truth-values or exactitude but in what is revealed, in the quantity of what one is able to see. It goes with the idea of seeing hermetics through the paradigm of the picture previously explained (*cf Table 1*). The criterion therefore is not the adequacy between truth and tradition, nor scientific exactitude, but the unveiling of what is hidden. This detachment from a so called objective truth, which still determines our philosophical researches towards a dynamic of the “more” that does not contain a possibility to be imposed on other worlds as well as no pretence of superiority (only the movement is drawn in the figure of raising but not the content of what is obtained, so there is no definite norms of constitution for the world) frees philosophy from its paradigm of domination (if I have the truth, then you are wrong, or in its variant, my philosophy is the truth, therefore you cannot accede a philosophical status) and opens individual paths that are so irreconcilable that they cannot be reduced to any other and have to be seen and respected in their differences. The increase is a qualitative one (*melior*) that somehow turns towards the ethical dimension of philosophy of the Antiquity (Greek and Indian) that encourages human beings towards an improvement, considered as the final aim and the direction of its raising. But in an intercultural perspective, such an individualistic (in terms of worlds) orientation of the movement still keeps unresolved the question of the connection between the worlds, which is the core of our study.

3.3.4 Forms of continuous movements

Rombach proposes a particular movement in this context, named “*Konkreativität*”, which will be translated here as “concreativity” to follow Rombach’s neologism.

3.3.4.1 Idemität

To define the nature of movement, one should also see with which elements the movement is concerned, that is, *what is moving*. In so doing, one has to realize that though it seems to be simply a relation between worlds, as one should expect in an intercultural study, the hermetic context implies more than a neutral and external relation between variegated elements. It is another model than the previous schema of Wimmer expounded in the Introduction, namely “ $A \leftrightarrow B$ and $A \leftrightarrow C$ and $A \leftrightarrow D$ and $B \leftrightarrow C$ and $B \leftrightarrow D$ and $C \leftrightarrow D$ ”.(Wimmer, 2004, p.69), in the sense that each of these relations implies a transformation of each of its elements, so that the event of A meeting B changes the *whole* entities A and B and therefore also the forecoming encounter between A and C, and B and D, etc, in a perpetual movement. In the Introduction we remarked already that the arrow is a part of A and B and cannot be thought as external and objective, so that the encounter can bring new elements to both A and B, but A and B were still two recognizable entities that are in relation and share something. With Rombach, it is even more difficult to define precisely what is A and what is B as there is no more *entity* as such, but moments in motion (Rombach, 1988, p.25). Following this conception one could ask how we can *understand* A, B, C and D if none of them is a stable and definite entity (the centre is in motion and the relations are multiplied), and if each of them is at every moment already changed and changing altogether. Also, if they are bound to change immediately and constantly, how could

we even define the individual elements, that is how can we even give to the moving set any fixed *name A or B*, etc.? Thus, as stated, given that there is an irreducible difference between them, how can one agree with the fact that we speak now of a con-creativity, so a common change? To summarize these questions differently, it seems that the elements and the relations do not fall under the common conception nor the same philosophical definition of the concepts of identity and difference previously discussed. They rely indeed on another relation that has been called by Rombach “Idemität³⁵”, and this concept is crucial in order to get what is the concreative movement.

Rombach writes therefore in order to define Idemität:

“We distinguish Identity and Idemität, in which the former means the unity of a situation in a plurality of mediated and mediating circumstances, which all belong to one, namely *this* situation, which is *my* situation and thereby constitutes my “Identity”. The “Idemität” is similarly mediated, but through a “mediated Immediateness”, namely so that the conditions constitute a flowing coherence, in which the “I” is so fully and completely taken away, that exactly in this very same coherence it is fully and completely by itself.³⁶”

As we can see, we are now in a different paradigm of thought, which forbids the consideration of the two poles “identity” and “difference” as two abstract and fixed entities, so that the aforementioned questions are outdated. The defect that we found in Mall’s theory is the difficulty of a dynamic evolving in a space that is determined on both sides by two abstract entities, namely identity and difference, so that the movement is always limited to a balance between two predefined poles. Rombach renews this way of thinking: the movement is now inherent to the *idemität*. By deconstructing the term of identity, he enables to get rid of the oxymoron in the relation between identity and difference and in so doing, he annuls two poles that play the role of limits. Dynamics is then implied virtually everywhere³⁷. *Idemität* is in this case a structural

³⁵“Idemität” should be translated in English as “Idemity”. However, considering the fact that we are dealing here with a neologism that it is clearly understandable as such for an English speaking reader, we believe that a translation would not bring any clarity to an understanding and chose to keep the German term. One should simply consider the etymological ground “idem” (the same), and maybe the following remark to make sense of the construction of the word: “Die Teile sind mit dem Ganzen ganz dasselbe, idem sunt.” Personal translation: “The parts are completely the same than the whole, idem sunt.”

³⁶Personal translation. Original text: “Wir unterscheiden zwischen Identität und Idemität, wobei erstere die Einheit einer Situation in einer Vielzahl vermittelter und vermittelnder Gegebenheiten meint, die alle zu einer, nämlich *dieser* Situation gehören, die die *meine* ist und dadurch meine “Identität” ausmacht. Die Idemität wird ebenso vermittelt, aber durch eine “vermittelte Unmittelbarkeit”, nämlich so, daß die Gegebenheiten einen fließenden Zusammenhang ausmachen, in den das “ich” so voll und ganz hinausgenommen ist, daß es gerade darin voll und ganz bei sich selbst ist.” (Rombach, 1993, p.204)

³⁷G.Stenger offers another complementary perspective for the “dynamic” aspect of *Idemität*: “Thinking is itself more an “experiencing thinking” that does not already presuppose the identity and the difference, but sees them itself first emerging from the process of experience. Where both, although differentiated and yet constructing a “unity”, where they thus work beyond their difference and also beyond their identity, there they leave their static status. That means also that the dynamics does not supervene firstly, but that both could not be without the other at all, and also that the “and” in “identity and difference” is decisive, so that both are moved together beyond themselves, turns the dynamics into dynamics.” Personal translation. Original text: “Das Denken [ist] selber mehr ein “erfahrendes Denken”, das “Identität” und “Differenz” nicht schon voraussetzt, sondern aus ihrem Erfahrungsprozeß selber erst hervorgehen sieht. Wo beide, obzwar unterschieden und doch eine “Einheit” bildend, wo sie also jenseits ihrer Differenz und auch jenseits ihrer Identität arbeiten, dort verlassen sie den Status ihrer Statik. Das heißt dann auch, daß nicht erst Dynamik hinzukommt, sondern dies, daß beide gar nicht ohne das andere sein könnten, daß also das “und” in “Identität und Differenz” das Entscheidende

condition for the thought of a fully dynamic movement and the realization of concreteness. One has to give up the idea of understanding a fixed entity but to consider the identity as a constant event that would connect both the subject and its world, so that both are interdependent. Or as Rombach says it:

“In a hermetic world, all is so interweaved with everything else, that this same identity flashes everywhere. Every thing of this world carries the sign of the whole, the mark of this spirit and is, though it is a part, identical or better “idemical” with the wholes in the worthiness of its life. The parts are all completely the same with the whole, idem sunt. Human being and worlds find themselves in one common Idemität, for the human being is only an execution (*Vollzug*) of this world, and this world is nothing else than his body (*Leib*). The human being “accomplishes” the world, he does not stand as a mere exploiter vis-à-vis the world. That is why the world does not exhaust the human being, and the human being does not exhaust the world. The later fulfills him with an Idemität, which is at the same time his own and the one of his world.³⁸”

The deconstruction of the opposition between identity and difference follows the destruction of the relation between parts and wholes, which considers that ‘I’ is an independent part of the world, a single constituent between a multiplicity of various elements. This understanding considers a difference of nature between I and the world and only possible interactions (with the example of technology as a possible human interaction on the world, and nature in its variegated component as an interaction with human beings). In a hermetic perspective, it functions in the manner of a synecdoche: that is, the part is immediately taken for the whole, the whole is immediately taken for the part in the same expression. Both are connected in such a way that they can be fused into the same state or expression. *Idemität* is a kind of identity, in an etymological sense, that goes in a common movement so that parts and wholes are the same (but not necessarily congruent), in the sense that they go together and fulfill one another.

This implies also a temporal difference within the hermeneutic conception. Identity and difference are categories that can be employed only in comparison, once the entities have been delimited and analysed. I have a distance to the objects that I compare such that it is not immediate in time. The entities cannot appear contemporaneously when they are distinguished if we follow the categories of difference and identity. They cannot be an event. In hermetics, difference is annihilated in *Idemität*, as it is precisely in the movement and in the apparition that this concept operates. As we said, it does not work as comparison but in the immediacy of a synecdoche. Subject and world are therefore interwoven so that no analysis can be used.

ist, so daß beide aneinander über sich hinausgetrieben werden, macht die Dynamik zur Dynamik.”(Stenger, 2006, p.707)

³⁸Personal translation. Original text: “In einer hermetischen Welt ist alles mit allem so verwoben, daß überall dieselbe Identität aufblitzt. Jedes Ding dieser Welt trägt das Signum des Ganzen, den Stempel dieses Geistes und ist, obwohl ein Teil, mit dem Ganzen in seinem Lebenswert identisch oder besser “idemisch”. Die Teile sind mit dem Ganzen ganz dasselbe, idem sunt. Mensch und Welten finden zu einer Idemität, denn der Mensch ist nur ein Vollzug dieser Welt, und diese Welt ist nichts als sein Leib. Der Mensch “vollbringt” die Welt, er steht ihr nicht als Ausbeuter gegenüber. Darum erschöpft sie ihn nicht, und er erschöpft sie nicht. Sie erfüllt ihn mit einer Idemität, die zugleich die seine und die seiner Welt ist.”(Rombach, 1983, p.130)

As Stenger (Stenger, 2006, p.708) says, *Idemität* goes with an “emerging event” (*Hervorgangsgeschehen*) on the model of a painter and her painting, for example. They are going together in a way that one cannot exist as such without the other, interwoven, and furthermore, they are not “identical” in the sense that they are two distinguished entities, which are intrinsically on an existential level interdependent. It concerns also the way that “the whole is freed from its comparison with uniqueness and particularity on one side, and with normality and universality on the other side.³⁹” There is no hierarchy between the whole and the parts insofar as they go altogether. We can therefore also jettison the idea of an abstract universality, which plays the role of a unique truth, on the ground of any wrong perspective of comparison that aims at a hierarchization of cultures in particular. There is no criterion for relation of power between the worlds.

3.3.4.2 Concreativity

The relation that is of consequence is an adequate type of relation under the name “concreativity”. It mixes up the categories of subject and object, as well as any fixity and possibility of separating different singular elements. In hermetics the movement is omnipresent and reciprocal; it is already present in the formative process of the worlds and in the event itself.

“The con-creative viewpoint means, for example, that one moves toward the other in such a manner that within this encounter, the respective world-feature is triggered toward its emergence. This means that the accompanying value-ground itself may be ready to be at the disposal for the events, which means nothing less than that it too emerges from the encounter and from this event. It is only in the con-creative event itself that the very conditions of the event emerge in the first place. Thus the focus is on comprehending the other not only within this other’s world, but moreover— or previously—on helping the other into this world and on looking into it. A new, common world then emerges, a world from which both arise, rather than both participating in such a world to begin with. (Stenger, 2010, p.296)”

There are different implications from this definition by Stenger. First, in opposition to the common notion of relation, it is not directed from one set to another but the sharing is immediate. The upheaval is the only movement that one can feel so that the entities have been already modified and appear only throughout their common movement. Concreativity is thus an inherent movement, *a priori* there in the constitution of the worlds, in a way that it enables the very “conditions” of the event, namely the course of the movement itself. It implies, on the one hand, that one cannot separate the event from its movement (no conceptual analysis is therefore possible, but only a concreative experience) and, on the other, that a world is always and already an encounter with another world. It is not simply a question of participation defined as an external effort to be somehow involved in the movement but still detached from it, nor any rational decision from two singular and substantial elements that decide to create something in common. It is a condition, namely the necessity implied by our being in the pluralities of

³⁹Personal translation. Original text: “das Ganze wird aus seiner Gegenüberstellung von Einmaligkeit und Besonderheit einerseits und Normalität und Allgemeinheit andererseits befreit.” Ibid.

worlds. A new world emerges in common, which also brings the two individual elements into a *transformation* (*Verwandlung*) (Rombach, 1991, p.46). The most fundamental element of hermetics is this situation of being already in movement and an active part of the constitution of the world, as well as a part of the relation between the worlds. “Worlds emerge only in concreativity”⁴⁰, as Rombach writes. Precisely this movement can be invested by interculturality, or cultural relation.

It is not very difficult to draw the consequences of this movement in an intercultural perspective. One can see its advantages in comparison with a hermeneutic conception: in this constant movement there cannot be any classification or hierarchy of cultures, given the fact that they are moving together, and that nobody, as a stable subject, can extract himself in order to judge or order other worlds. There is a mutual process of answering, and it seems to us that this reciprocity is exactly what Waldenfels lacks in his responsive approach. Interculturality in the sense of *Intermundaneität* (intermundaneity, (Stenger, 2006, p.1023)), that is the relation between worlds, is a condition of the constitution of the worlds. Furthermore, worlds are increasing (qualitatively in the sense of *melior*) through their transformations, so that concreativity, and through it interculturality, forms the ethics of worlds. This last direction is crucial in interculturality and is doubled by the reflection on the nature of communication through the concept “*Gespräch*” (conversation), studied by Rombach (Rombach, 1995, p.117-149) and afterwards explicitly related to the intercultural perspective by Stenger:

“A cultural world is a lively event of communication between its particular dimensions. In this event, it is at the same time evident that it gains the conditions of its possibility from the event of communication itself. The particular dimensions approach each other in such a way that the creative moment leaps so to say from the reciprocal event of answering. What appears there, appears *con-creative*.⁴¹”

Without developing a complete account of this concept (Stenger, 2006, p.882-936), we can however underscore the important role communication plays both for the creative dimension and for intercultural studies. First, it appears clearly in the former quote that communication is an integral part of the creative movement. “Creative” qualifies any conversation in the sense that within the conversation *more* will be operative than what the two parts (narrators) respectively contain⁴². A conversation in that sense means the deployment of a creative

⁴⁰Personal translation. Original text: “Welten entstehen nur in Konkreativität. Dies besagt, daß sie nur dann aufgehen, wenn es dem Menschen gelingt, vorgegebene Möglichkeiten der ihn umgebenden Wirklichkeit so anzugehen, daß daraus höhere Möglichkeiten entspringen.” (Rombach, 1991, p.52)

⁴¹Personal translation. Original text: “Eine Kulturwelt ist ein lebendiges Kommunikationsgeschehen zwischen seinen einzelnen Dimensionen. Darin wird zugleich ersichtlich, daß es die Bedingungen seiner Möglichkeit aus dem Kommunikationsgeschehen selber erst gewinnt. Die einzelnen Dimensionen gehen so aufeinander zu, daß das kreative Moment aus dem gegenseitigen Antwortgeschehen gleichsam hervorspringt. Was da geschieht, geschieht *kon-kreativ*.” (Stenger, 2006, p.886)

⁴²“Ein gutes Gespräch erbringt immer mehr als man zuvor positional in das Gespräch miteinbringt. Zugleich aber behält es dieses “mehr” in sich zurück; es ist die Gesprächserfahrung, die, danach festgehalten, nicht dieselbe ist. Ihr Übersteigen besagt zugleich ihr in sich Einbehalten, bezeugt ihre “Zurückhaltung.” Hermetische Welten erkennt man u.a an dieser Grundhaltung.”(Stenger, 2006, p.878) Personal translation: “A good conversation generates always more than what one brings pre-positionally with him to the conversation. At the same time one retains this “more” in itself; it is the experience of the conversation, which after having been held, is not the same. Its transcendence means at the same time its retention in itself, indicates its “reservation.” One recognizes hermetic worlds, amongst others, by this tenor.”

situation in which each participant is not only a participant but is at the same time changed and changing the world, as well as the conversation itself⁴³. Indeed, it is an empirical fact that one would find new arguments for one's theory by *discussing* (in the sense of *Gespräch*) with some colleagues or friends. It is a common effort of thinking and through that process, mis- and non-understandings are the most important parts as they lead towards the establishment of new concepts or theories. It produces within the conversation a renewal of consciousness and attention that dynamizes the movement, as participants become more involved and their activity is increased to defend their own points of view. The reactions of mis- or non-understandings are, in this perspective, more prolific. The communication is in this sense a process of meliorisation and can be so only in virtue of its concreative dimension. Concreativity defines the paradigm of any conversation, necessary for cultural relations.

“The conversation conducts itself and conducts at the same time within it its participants so that it is constantly concretized, focussed and in a way, which always provides only one side (*Vereinseitigung*), is carried by the individual participants. The concreative conversation, and its phenomenology, results in concreativity, lets the worlds emerge as “worlds”, lets see themselves and the others inside themselves. The conversation means nothing else than this “to arise one from the other” (*Auseinanderhervorgehen*). To say it that way: The criterion, which lets the particular cultures rise as “cultural worlds” is this successful conversation of the worlds.”⁴⁴

Second, the necessity of finding a way to communicate with the cultural Other that avoids reductionism and “injustice” has been examined throughout this work and is definitively on the edge of this century the core of what is called “international relations” that should be nothing else but an application of intercultural philosophy. It is, however, generally oriented towards a conquest of power and domination of the world, just as it has been the case throughout history. Stenger develops in this direction some political examples taken from our 20th century political tragedies, from the history of the Balkans to the Israel-Palestinian conflict from a hermetic and concreative point of view with the dimension of conversation. We believe that the ideal dimension

⁴³Stenger defines the *conversation* as follows: “Discussion” respectively “discourse” see themselves more indebted to the concept of unity, the “dialog” opens itself more strongly to the thinking of difference. Both, one could say, favors one side of what I would call “conversation.” It would be however really incorrect to regard the conversation as a dialectic event of mediation from unity and difference. “Conversation” means much more the concreative event of deployment that effects itself, in which each participant of the conversation is so much taken away and brought beyond himself, that he learns out of it to understand himself deeper and better in his singularity. The conversation is an event, which even gains the conditions from itself by the motion of the conversation.” Personal translation. Original text: “Diskussion” resp. “Diskurs” sehen sich mehr dem Einheitskonzept verpflichtet, der “Dialog” öffnet sich stärker dem Differenzdenken. Beide, so könnte man sagen, favorisieren eine Seite desjenigen, was ich “Gespräch” nennen würde. Es wäre aber ganz unrichtig, würde man unter dem Gespräch ein dialektisches Vermittlungsgeschehen von Einheit und Differenz sehen. “Gespräch” meint vielmehr das konkreativ sich erwirkende Entfaltungsgeschehen, in dem jeder Gesprächsteilnehmer so mitgenommen und über sich hinaus geführt wird, daß er sich daraus in seiner Besonderheit tiefer und besser verstehen lernt. Das Gespräch ist ein Geschehen, das die Bedingungen seiner selbst aus dem Gesprächsgang selber erst gewinnt.” [Ibid, p.934-935]

⁴⁴Personal translation. Original text: “Das Gespräch führt sich selber und es führt darin zugleich seine Teilnehmer, so daß es stets durch die einzelnen Teilnehmer konkretisiert und fokussiert und in einer bestimmten Hinsicht, die immer auch eine Vereinseitigung darstellt, mitgetragen wird. Das konkreative Gespräch, und seine Phänomenologie läuft auf Konkreativität hinaus, läßt die Welten erst als “Welten” hervortreten, läßt sie sich selber und den anderen darin sehen. Das Gespräch meint nichts anderes als dieses “Auseinanderhervorgehen.” Um es so zu sagen: Das Kriterium, das die einzelnen Kulturen als Kulturwelten aufgehen läßt, ist dieses gelingende Gespräch der Welten.” [Ibid, p.935]

that is contained in Habermas' rationalization of the discourse can be overcome, precisely if we look in another sphere than the rational one, that is in hermetics. It does not mean to deny any positive effect to rationality but to include a variety of means and notions. What is created in a concreative conversation is what has been made in common, what is shared by the different members. Habermas depends on conditions that are fixed, *a priori* (reason) external criteria to be achieved and ideal states to obtain; contrary to this, a concreative conversation is always in the process of a creation that grants the conditions while simultaneously being constructed such that what emerges has been entirely constituted by the different participants. In other words:

“Indeed a world arises, and the rise of a world always occurs as the rise of a new world. This should in no case be understood as utopian or idealist, on the contrary it stays bounded to the whole of every cultural world, so much bounded that they take part to it with all their dimensions of depths and fundamental experiences. These dimensions experience themselves as freed in an event of communication, so that they are responsive to each other in a way, that they experience themselves as concretely gained and arisen from another⁴⁵.”

The concreative dimension yields therefore an orientation for the participants of the conversation, which is defining itself from a common view, insofar as that it requires a complete implication of each of them to be operative. It seems, however, to be the only mode of relation that is possible between such a disparity of worlds, and a necessary connection. As we said, the only way to practice it concretely is to be aware that it is the only possible connection that one could develop if one considers seriously the irreducible differences between cultures and the pluralities of worlds. Only a radical plurality and difference can be a satisfactory justification as it means that human beings do not have choice to concretely move and relate concretely. To be in any relation whatsoever with the cultural Other, one has to accept the concreative movement of the world, the direction of *meliorisation*, and therefore the evolution of one situation in the transformation. It does not depend on our will, nor on our participation but it is correlative with the awareness of the points aforementioned.

⁴⁵Personal translation. Original text: “Es geht in der Tat eine Welt auf, und der Aufgang einer Welt geschieht immer als Aufgang einer neuen Welt. Dies ist keineswegs utopisch oder idealistisch zu verstehen, im Gegenteil, es bleibt an das Gesamt jeweiliger Kulturwelten zurückgebunden, so sehr, daß diese mit all ihren Tiefendimensionen und Grunderfahrungen daran teilnehmen. Diese Dimensionen erfahren sich dabei selber in ein Kommunikationsgeschehen untereinander freigesetzt, so daß diese schon so aufeinander eingehen, daß sie sich als konkretiv erwirkt und auseinander hervorgehend erfahren.” [Ibid, p.918]

4 Beyond philosophy? A glance at literature as a possible synthesis for a philosophical intercultural method

4.1 Literature as an answer to the dilemma between hermeneutics and hermetics

4.1.1 Does literature operates as a “text” (figure of meaning) or as a “picture”?

Hermetics allows us to see the inherent difficulties in the constitution of hermeneutics with regard to its interculturalization. It is not however without problems of its own. It seems that hermetics employs various means to convey its messages that are improper to the content of the message itself.

More precisely, it stands against hermeneutics with regard to the conceptual aspect, against the analysis and understanding in a traditional rational sense, but it is itself expressed in at least two (*der kommende Gott* and *Welt und Gegenwelt*, as well as various other books that approach this subject) philosophical books. It is against a mental insights but it is exposed as a conceptual theory. We do not condemn it as such, as it is always necessary in order to practice or to integrate something to have been exposed to clear theories. We also expressed the necessity of including Indian Philosophy in the very conception of the method by isolating it as an object of theory, what we are saying that should be avoided, or is at least not enough. However, it should direct us to a proper expression of hermetics, rather than staying in the conceptual, analytical sphere. Thus, the problem in hermetics is deeper as it rejects any conceptualization, which results in the following paradoxical state: “While one can at any time speak about the structural ontology with people who are interested, one can speak about hermetics only with hermeticists. This means of course that one cannot speak at all about hermetics, unless one speaks to those who have already said to themselves everything that can be said here.¹”

Consequently, it seems that Art (we focus here on the case of literature and it has to be remarked that Rombach developed himself especially a picture-model) is an adequate means to convey hermetics, or a practice that is more in accordance with its content.

But if it has been made transparent in the case of pictures developed by Rombach, the case of literature is not obviously related to hermetics. Though Rombach uses poetry and literary

¹Personal translation. Original text: “Während man über die Strukturontologie mit interessierten Menschen jederzeit sprechen kann, kann man über die Hermetik nur mit Hermetikern sprechen. Dies bedeutet natürlich, daß man überhaupt nicht über die Hermetik sprechen kann, es sei denn, man spricht zu solchen, die sich all das schon selbst gesagt haben, was es da zu sagen gibt.” (Rombach, 1988, p.369); in French, (Rombach, 1994b, p.468)

analyses, one can raise different questions: First, how does the hermetic phenomenon operate in literature? Can we simply assert that hermetics can be conveyed by literature as such, even after having reproduced the chart (*Table 1*) from *Der kommende Gott*, in which Rombach describes *hermeneutics* as “a figure of meaning” that perceives through “reading” and “relates to the meaning” under the form of a “text”? *Hermetics* is then the paradigm of the picture that sees, while a text can be understood. Indeed, one cannot just ignore such a distinction and neglect the fact that literature also belongs to the category of text, the figure of meaning and the act of reading that is classified as “hermeneutics”. Literature would be then, or at least one can argue, between the two categories or connecting them, operating on a text that however suggests an immediate perception of the things described in it.

We should add a further warning here, one that is relevant insofar as it establishes a distance in relation to the hermetics of Rombach. He examines literature in his studies of various examples in *Welt und Gegenwelt*, like the figure of Faust (Rombach, 1983, p.62), or the poet Hölderlin (Rombach, 1991, p.26ff). The latter becomes the emblem of hermetics. However, the literature that we will take in consideration in the next section is not “hermetic” in the sense of the analysis that Rombach suggests of the poem “Bread and Wine”:

“But to us in her turn, so that in the wavering moment,
Deep in the dark there shall be something at least that endures,
Holy drunkenness she must grant and frenzied oblivion,
Grant the on-rushing word, sleepless as lovers are too,
And a wine-cup more full, a life more intense and more daring,
Holy remembrance too, keeping us wakeful at night.” (Hölderlin, 1990, p.181)

It is about the “night” as presence of the originary ground, and it is about that which it brings as a “favor”, namely the “on-rushing word”. By this, poetry is meant. Poetry, not anymore conceived as song of joy, of the day and of the presence of the divine, but as the poem of “holy remembrance”, which is at the same time “frenzied oblivion” and “holy drunkenness”. It is now about poetry in a new form. That which is all over evident is not named anymore, but named is that which says *itself* out of the deep primary ground through through the word of the poet. For this reason “frenzied oblivion”, namely the own oblivion of the “holy drunken” poet, who speaks the “on-rushing word”, the poem that says itself.”²

In our study we will not focus on the analysis of the night, nor on the hidden or the obscure that forms important points of the hermetic turn argued by Rombach, largely represented in

²Personal translation of the comment of Rombach (trans. by Eric L. Santner for Hölderlin’s poem). Original text (Hölderlin and Rombach): “Aber sie muß uns auch, daß in der zaudernden Weile,/ Daß im Finstern für uns einiges Haltbare sei,/ Uns die Vergessenheit und das Heiligtrunkene gönnen,/ Gönnen das strömende Wort, das, wie die Liebenden, sei,/ Schlummerlos und vollem Pokal und Kühneres Leben,/ Heilig Gedächtniß auch, wachend zu bleiben bei Nacht.”/ “Es geht um die “Nacht” als Präsenz des Urgrundes, und es geht um das, was sie als “Gunst” bringt, nämlich das “strömende Wort”. Damit ist die Dichtung gemeint. Die Dichtung, nicht mehr als Lied der Freude, des Tages und der Präsenz des Göttlichen, sondern die Dichtung als “heilig Gedächtnis”, das zugleich “Vergessenheit” und das “Heiligtrunkene” ist. Dies geht jetzt auf Dichtung in einer neuen Form. Es wird nicht mehr das überall Offenbare genannt, sondern das, was sich aus tieferem Urgrund heraus durch das Wort des Dichters *selber* sagt. Darum “Vergessenheit”, nämlich die Selbstverges-senheit des heiligtrunkenen Dichters, der das aus sich selbst strömende Wort, das sich selbst sagende Gedicht spricht.”(Rombach, 1991, p.28)

the poetic traditions. We are not looking for incarnations of hermetics but for intercultural expressions and the contribution that hermetics could make in this domain. We are therefore oriented towards encounters with cultural otherness, which will lead us rather towards “travel literature”, though admittedly Michaux, employed here as an illustration, is far more complex than this denomination. More precisely, we should also add that Michaux corresponds to the hermetic research of Rombach in the later parts of his writings³. If Michaux started with this travel literature (around 1930), he subsequently jettisoned actual travels after Asia and turned towards imaginary journeys in his writings. After 1956, he entered in the last phase, the “artificial travels”, in which he started experimenting with drugs, in particular mescaline in order to explore the meanderings of the spirit. He complimented his detailed accounts of drug use with an acute awareness of this gesture as an advantageous method of exploring the depths of the mind as the farthest journeys that one can undertake. In addition to his accounts of his drug use, and in the depth of his writings, he comes closer to what Rombach calls “hermetic poems”. But this is *not* the period that we will consider here as we are concerned above all with interculturality, and in this perspective we do not necessarily share the same interests nor conceptions than Rombach.

4.1.2 Hermetics and Hermeneutics

We are now faced with two difficulties: First, we want to consider the place of literature as being a part of hermetics (as an immediate feeling through the event of entering in the world of literature) or of hermeneutics (as the fact that we are dealing with a text and its interpretations), though we are ourselves taking distance from the concrete use of literature by Rombach, so that we do not necessarily consider the same hermetic expression in his reading of literature. We therefore have to clarify the relation between hermetics and hermeneutics in the strict perspective of our intercultural study, with special regard to the analysis of Michaux that follows this conceptual introduction. On which side, then, do we stand? And moreover, why do we turn now to literature that does not seem to be as such implied by Rombach?

On our account, literature has an invaluable place in intercultural study given the the difficult questions regarding the relation between hermetics and hermeneutics. The relational tension remains between an abrupt opposition (in the texts of Rombach) and a possible relation (in

³J-M Maulpoix starts his commentary of the last period of the writings of Michaux as follow: “Here we reach the steepest territories of the work of Henri Michaux, places of “the turbulent infinite” and the “knowledge by chasms”, of the loss of references, of the most vertiginous or the most hidden movements. Hallucinations, madness, difficulties, mystic, insubordination draw a ultimate map of the being under the intense and white light of the mescaline. Peaks, precipices, mountains, tidal waves, vehement and excessive architectures, oceans of light, a suite of adjoining corridors, vortex, carousels, it is through a fury of fantasy and tortured forms that the landscape of interiority, described by the ways of alienation, hurls its bursts of fascinating images. The whole work, beforehand effectuated by the imagination of the writing comes here true and is borne out: it encounters finally its proofs.” Personal translation. Original text: “Nous voici parvenus sur les territoires les plus escarpés de l’oeuvre d’Henri Michaux, lieux de “l’infini turbulent” et de la “connaissance par les gouffres”, de la perte des repères, des cheminements les plus vertigineux ou souterrains. Hallucinations, folie, difficultés, mystiques, insubordination, tracent une ultime carte de l’être sous la lumière intense et blanche de la mescaline. Pics, précipices, montagnes, raz de marée, architectures outrées et véhémentes, océans de lumière, couloirs en enfilades, tourbillons, carrousels, c’est par un déchaînement de formes fantastiques et torturées que le paysage de l’intériorité, décrit selon les voies de l’aliénation, projette ses rafales d’images fascinantes. Tout le travail préalablement effectué par l’imaginaire de l’écriture vient ici s’accomplir et se vérifier: il y rencontre enfin ses preuves.” (Maulpoix, 1990, p.155)

the interpretation of Stenger). Hermeneutics famously emerged as a philosophical methodology from within Biblical exegesis and has always been concerned with the reading, interpretation and correct understanding of texts. Its conception is based on textual interests. Previously, we drew the parallel with the function of grammar. At the same time, the case of literature exceeds this tradition as a special case of text that answers other aims, stakes and compositions. One cannot deny the common textual ground (stylistic analysis in literature depends also on the interpretation and the decomposition of the text in order to analyze its various elements) but taken as a whole in the most common act of reading a novel, literature enters in the sphere of a concreative immediate experience. Indeed, one can be “caught up by the story” (in French language, one is “taken by the story” - *”pris par”*- and “captivated by a book” - *”captivé”*-), which denotes the complete adherence of the reader to the story. It is a common empirical experience to be literally “captivated” by the story to such an extent that one no longer realizes that the story itself is delimited by the object “book” and depends only on signs and meanings contained inside a pragmatic sphere. One forgets during the act of “reading” the distance between his world and the world of the book, or to say it with Rombach, one jumps within the world of the book, so that he enters within the story im-mediately (the object book, which is the obvious mediation disappears in the experience so that it becomes *as if* it does not exist as object but as an existing realm). Consequently one *lives* the story, feels emotions that are correlative to the fictional situation of the book, and in a certain way, experiences the events of the book. It follows from this description that the world of literature tallies the hermetics conception where the pluralities of worlds can be represented as each book, absolutely differentiated from the other so that each of them constitutes its own rules, its own world, its own concepts and stories. They are hermetically closed to one another and one can jump from one to the other by the act of reading. It is a concreative situation in the sense that the book is dependent on the act of the reader who takes an active part in the process, in the sense that he creates his own story with the book in the realm of his imagination. Each reading will be different according to the reader who is an integrant part of the book. Or to summarize with Stenger:

“Language and hermetic phenomenon are by no means equivalent, because these phenomena emerge always as a particular global quality, which cannot be disintegrated, analyzed, that is grasped conceptually. Literary language comes far closer to these hermetics, because their “description” is actually a “written creation” (*”Er-schreiben”*) of a particular wordly rising. The reader is quasi involved in the world and only on this ground can the world emerge to him.”⁴

However, one question remains unresolved: does one see or understand in literature? Understanding is a part of literature that cannot be denied as it is a necessary condition of reading. One can see in literature in the sense of representing the story, that is, imagining the content of the text, feeling the emotion carried along the text and representing the context *only because* she can understand the ground of what forms a text, that is the words, the composition and

⁴Personal translation. Original text: “Sprache und hermetisches Phänomen sind keineswegs äquivalent, tauchen diese Phänomene doch immer als eine bestimmte Globalqualität auf, die sich nicht zerstückeln, analysieren, sprich begrifflich fassen lassen. Die literarische Sprache kommt diesen Hermetiken weit näher, da ihr “Beschreiben” im Grunde ein “Erschreiben” eines bestimmten welthaften Aufgehens ist. Der Leser wird in die Welt gleichsam hineingezogen und nur deshalb vermag sie ihm aufzugehen.” (Stenger, 2006, p.875)

the grammar. The understanding is here a *pre-condition* for the ability of seeing. A picture for example can be exhibited in every country of the world to be shown without explanation. Taste in aesthetics may have cultural elements such that the picture may not be appreciated in the same way everywhere. It is also possible that some cultures will not understand what the picture represents, but everyone can nevertheless form his or her own idea, entering in the world or refusing to enter in the world of a picture: everybody will be immediately provoked to a reaction, the picture will have an effect. In the case of the text, it is certainly different. Opening a book in Czech language, for one who does not speak Czech, disallows entrance into the world of the book given that conceptually understanding content of the text is, at that point, prevented given contingent language limitations.. Language is the first obvious barrier to the literary world, so that everyone knows that when one does not reach a sufficient level of language acquisition, one cannot have access to the world. This access is one of linguistic understanding that carries the meaning of the book. Literature is lead by meanings on a very basic level, including the domain that may be considered as an exception, namely poetry. If poetry plays with language to the extent of its decomposition⁵, which explains the endless and variegated interpretations of Mallarmé for example that none of them exhausts, one also requires certain linguistic requirements to even access to the feeling of beauty of the text that stays also to some extent a conceptual understanding. One requires a certain familiarity with the language and the text in order to appreciate it, to enter in its world, even if it stays hermetically closed in some parts. A complete absence of understanding is not possible even in this case.

As we said earlier with Stenger, hermetics and hermeneutics are different phases of being in a world, and also in a text: literature shows the limits of both, or more exactly, their gathering

⁵We would like to add here the very interesting case of The *Calligrammes* of Apollinaire. In this reflection of the place of literature between hermetics and hermeneutics, Appolinaire’s calligrammes incarnates the exact limit between poetic words and pictures, and the border between understanding the text and being provoked by a picture. It is more exactly both at the same time in a concreative movement, so that words and pictures are obviously different and at the same time constitute by the very act of their association and combination, the poetry. The poem is the association of words that compose a picture, so that the picture cannot exist without the words and the words without the forms of the picture. Apollinaire constitutes in this case the bridge between the irreconcilable hermetics and hermeneutics and a very pertinent concreative

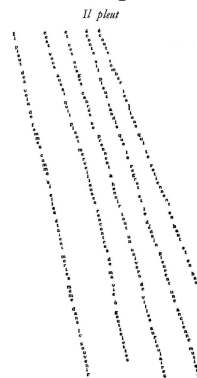


figure.

Text forming the rain in the picture: “Il pleut des voix de femmes comme si elles étaient mortes même dans le souvenir/ c’est vous aussi qu’il pleut, merveilleuses rencontres de ma vie. ô gouttelettes! et ces nuages cabrés se prennent à hennir tout un univers de villes auriculaires écoute s’il pleut tandis que le regret et le dédain pleurent une ancienne musique écoute tomber les liens qui te retiennent en haut et en bas.” English translation: “It’s raining women’s voices as if they were dead even in memory./ It’s raining you too, marvelous encounters of my life. Oh droplets!/ and those clouds rear and begin to whinny a universe of auricular cities/ listen to it rain while regret and disdain weep an ancient music/ listen to the fetters falling that bind you high and low.” (Apollinaire, 1980, p.100-101)

(hermeneutics as being a requirement to enter the hermetics). This chapter is considered as a possible concrete conversation between hermetics and hermeneutics and as a ‘in-between’ category that could solve in a particular way the strong opposition led by Rombach. Michaux is perhaps not hermeticist as Rombach would have conceived it; that is, he is not a hermeneut as Gadamer would accept it, but in his text *A Barbarian in Asia* it is possible to place him between hermeneutics and hermetics with regard to an intercultural perspective. Through a clear (in opposition to Rombach) poetical text that relies on meaning, language and understanding, as a necessary pre-requirement, he opens the space for an experience that one can see and feel. In a broad sense, we believe that hermetics can transcend the tradition of an obscure and hidden meaning on the side of the night that would be the case with numerous poets, from Hölderlin to Nerval or Mallarmé, to express an accessible creative experience of living the pluralities of worlds. The points that we studied previously are in this case perfectly visible and operative in Michaux’ text.

4.1.3 Metaphors and figures of speech in an intercultural perspective

Before we concretely study how interculturality operates in Michaux, we would like to make one last remark. We have claimed in various sections of this study that figures of speech play an important role in intercultural expressions, or at least that they are regularly but discreetly present in conceptual analyses. The clearest example is the use of metonymy as a category of overlap in the work of Mall. Waldenfels stresses also the importance of the “spatial metaphors” (Waldenfels, 2009, p.217-223), carrying on debates and studies on the phenomenological and hermeneutic fields (Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Lipps, Ricoeur, etc.). The reference to literary processes or terms can be seen also in the term “Xenopoetologie” (study of the alien poetry), mentioned in the cultural hermeneutics work (Grünwedel, 2008, p.68) by H. Grünwedel, and although it does not seem really convincing nor very clear, it shows still the mention of this realm in intercultural studies. K.H Potter, famous specialist of Indian Philosophy, proposes the use of metaphors as a means to overcome our cultural horizon and to understand the meaning of other philosophies based on different languages. He answers to the Quinian argument about the fallibility of the translation, re-enforced by the cultural boundaries between the English and Sanskrit realms, by his own experience. While he was in charge of a vast research about the notion of *Karma*, it burst into his mind that he was maybe not properly understanding the concept of *karma* because of its translation and association as “action” in English, and therefore with the associations that were led for his English speaking mind. He writes:

“When Sanskrit users say or hear the words based on the root *kr* they naturally - in other words, as a reflection of their conceptual scheme- expect that it will be possible to identify a maker (*katr*), some materials out of which the making takes place, a beneficiary for whom the making is intended, a purpose or purposes (*puruṣārtha*) being served by the making, an operation (*vyāpāra*) by which the making is carried out, and of course a resulting thing made (*karman*), which will serve the purpose or at least perform a function conducive to the eventual satisfaction ultimately sought. (...) A peculiarity about the conceptual system shared by users of classical Sanskrit is that just about all of the activities we would in English call “doing” are classed as

makings.” (Potter, 1988, p.26)

Potter uses the “metaphor of doing as making” [Ibid, p.29] as a way to overcome linguistic and cultural differences in order to really grasp the meaning of the Sanskrit term *Karma*. In so doing, he considers the metaphor to be able to draw an image, a graphic of concepts of one world that can be immediately related to another world through the interweaving operation in the metaphor between language and concepts. Metaphors are in this case flexible figures that are able to convey different conceptual schemes because they are not limited to analytical or logical framework. They can work within each conceptual scheme (or order in one world) as they do not ask to break the existing order or reason, but they can express something beyond it by bending the linguistic rule and pointing at another world. The metaphors of each world show some tendencies of the conceptual schemes in each of them, and they are translatable or understandable in other world as they do not rely on words only but on relation of meanings that can be found in various orders.

Those quick examples, as an overview of the underlying presence of figures of speech in the expression of intercultural methods, simply underscore the underestimated importance of literature within intercultural studies. Figures of speech such as the aforementioned metonymy, synecdoche, metaphors are the “image” of the text, that is, the hermetic part of the hermeneutic medium. They let us see beyond the words and worlds and, through the possibility of interweaving, they express the complexity of the relation of myself to the cultural other, which is never a simple address or a direction as the “to” seems to imply, but rather a combination of various figures, complex, moving and interwoven. In echo to the section on the Indian intercultural contribution, we can also note that metaphors are themselves intercultural categories and were used and studied in Indian philosophy at a very early stage for example by Bhartṛhari (Al. George, 1993 - 1994) . Various figures of speech including metaphors fall under the Sanskrit name of *lakṣaṇā*, ⁶tropes that are largely employed throughout Indian philosophy.

These broad indications are not meant to be developed here, as they refer to various motivations, operations and meanings that go beyond the scope of this study and should be independently analysed in a detailed study. We prefer to focus on a concrete application in literature that will finally stop speaking *about* hermetics, hermeneutics and literature and implement those categories in a complex intercultural process to approach concretely their developments and relations. However, we wanted to point out the implicit implication of metaphors and figures of speech that are underlying the different theories beyond their own philosophical differences (whether they are embedded in phenomenological, hermeneutic, hermetic, Indian or Western, etc theories). We believe that they can effectively show the superpositions, complex processes, intersections, palimpsests and dynamic expressions of the cultural other, that they make perceptible (in the sense that we “see” them when we receive their information) to the reader or

⁶K.Roy explains: “Most of the Indian philosophical systems admit the prevalence of such metaphors and consequently delineate with them. It is possible to distinguish between three types of *lakṣaṇā*: a) *Jahat lakṣaṇā* is that which takes into account the secondary meaning of a term by completely giving up the primary meaning. b) *Ajahat lakṣaṇā* does not abandon the primary meaning of a word or a sentence but is substantially modified, according to the requirement of the contexts. c) The third variety of *lakṣaṇā* is *jahadajahat lakṣaṇā* where only one part of the primary meaning is retained, and the other part is abandoned.” (Roy, 1993, p.76) Cf also J.Grimes’ dictionary(Grimes, 1996, p.173).

listener in a text. They come closer to the immediacy of the picture. They allow *more* than a static concept as they are composed by several significations at the cross-roads of words and meanings, and that they are not closed in cultural boundaries. Figures of speech and metaphors are therefore a possible bridge or a possible jump from one world to another within the realm of the texts. In that sense, literature that is the world of figures of speech can constitute an *immediate medium*, as a pragmatic object (book) highly worked and re-worked through the literary style, fixed on a support through language and writings (so that unlike hermetics we can actually speak about literature and metaphors, they are not hidden nor closed) but immediate as it works precisely to make its reader come the closest from the feelings, the story, the characters, i.e. from the world contained inside the book. It is mediated through the style and the work in order to make it feel immediate. It reveals a possible path to reconcile us with the textual mediation of the hermeneutics and at the same time to go towards an abrupt experience.

4.2 Application: *A barbarian in Asia* from Henri Michaux: The encounter with India

H. Michaux, a French poet (1899-1984) whose work is characterized as “marginal, unclassifiable and disconcerting” (“[à l’oeuvre] marginale, inclassable et déroutante”(Maulpoix, 1990, p.11)) set out at the age of thirty on a journey to Asia, from which comes the work *A Barbarian in Asia*⁷. Without dwelling on tedious details, we can translate here some words of his biography that he himself wrote in the third person singular in 1958. It is remarkable for its brevity, its uncluttered style and its detachment. Here is what he has written about his trip to Asia:

“1929. Death of his father. Ten days later, death of his mother. Travels in Turkey, Italy, North Africa...

He travels *against*.

To expel from himself his homeland, his ties of any kind and what has been in him and in spite of him attached of Greek or Roman or Germanic culture or Belgian habits.

Travels of expatriation.

The refusal however starts to give in a little to the desire of assimilation.

He will have a lot to learn, to learn to open up. It will be long.

1930-1931, in Asia: Finally *his* journey.

India, the first people who, as a whole, seem to answer to the essential, who in the essential seek gratification, finally a people who deserve to be distinguished from the others⁸”

⁷It is deeply unfortunate that only a few translations of H.Michaux are available. It therefore falls to us to have to clumsily translate on our own an important amount of the beautiful lines quoted in this section. It is even more unfortunate that the translation of *A Barbarian in Asia* that we use does not include the important preface written by H.Michaux which we will be referring to frequently. To translate in a foreign language (English for us) is never easy, and to translate properly poetry or literature is even more complicated. Consequently, we give in this section the complete French original text when we cannot find an official translation and we simply refer to the original edition when we do provide the text of *A Barbarian in Asia*. We encourage our reader to read the original French text in the first case, and we apologize for any clumsiness in the style of the translation.

⁸Personal translation. Original text: “1929. Mort de son père. Dix jours plus tard, mort de sa mère. Voyages

These judgments, written almost thirty years after his journey, should however not erase the violence of H.Michaux' first impressions in Asia, when he writes for example about India:

“For the Hindu and the Bengali, between eight and sixty is the awkward age. He looks silly. Life is for him the awkward age. (...) Those degraded, degenerate faces, that silly look, those low simpleton's foreheads- but I am not making it up. (...), that impertinence, the shamelessness (they absolve themselves of everything), the air of greed (...), a look of conceit, flashy, pretentious, egotistical, makes millions of faces ugly.” (Michaux, 1949;1988, p.58); (Michaux, 1967, p.86-87 (FR))

4.2.1 The complex status of cultural otherness in H.Michaux' work

So the judgments of Michaux about India and Asia in general come sometimes very close to insults. Politically incorrect, resulting from the violence of his not-understanding or his exasperation in front of such a difference, far from any moderation or self-censorship, they make everybody feel ashamed, including himself at the end. R. Bellour, his most eloquent commentator says that *A Barbarian in Asia* is “from all books written by Michaux the one with whom he sustained the most difficult relation.” (Michaux, 1998;2001, vol 1, p.1108). This text has indeed been considerably reworked, has been successively edited four times, has been extended by two prefaces that act like “*Mea culpa*” (Michaux, 1967, p.13), but unfortunately not translated in the English edition, where he wrote:

“ This book that does not suit me anymore, that bothers me and shocks me, that makes me feel ashamed, allows me to correct only trifles most of the time.

It has its resistance. As if it were a character.

It has a tone.

Because of this tone, everything graver, more reflective, more thorough, more experienced, more educated that I would like to introduce as its counterweight returns to me, is sent back to me... as if it does not suit it.

Here, barbarian we were, barbarian we have to stay.⁹”

Here stands the enormous difficulty to express cultural otherness, and it applies also to literature: to show the Other in its otherness, in what precisely escapes our understanding and makes him alien to us, and to be at the same time right, without reducing the Other to the same or without staying at a superficial level of stereotypes. Michaux obviously wanted to consciously break with the long tradition of travel literature about the Orient, where the Orient almost always appears

en Turquie, Italie, Afrique du Nord.../ Il voyage *contre*./ Pour expulser de lui sa patrie, ses attaches de toutes sortes et ce qui s'est en lui et malgré lui attaché de culture grecque ou romaine ou germanique ou d'habitudes belges./ Voyages d'expatriation./ Le refus pourtant commence à céder un peu au désir d'assimilation./ Il aura beaucoup à apprendre, à apprendre à s'ouvrir. Ce sera long./ 1930-1931, en Asie : Enfin *son* voyage./ Les Indes, le premier peuple qui, en bloc, paraisse répondre à l'essentiel, qui dans l'essentiel cherche l'assouvissement, enfin un peuple qui mérite d'être distingué des autres.”(Michaux, 1998 ;2001, vol I, in "Quelques renseignements...", p. CXXXIII)

⁹ « *Ce livre qui ne me convient plus, qui me gêne et me heurte, me fait honte, ne me permet de corriger que des bagatelles le plus souvent./ Il a sa résistance. Comme s'il était un personnage./ Il a un ton. / A cause de ce ton, tout ce que je voudrais en contrepois y introduire de plus grave, de plus réfléchi, de plus approfondi, de plus expérimenté, de plus instruit, me revient, m'est renvoyé...comme ne lui convenant pas./ Ici, barbare on fut, barbare on doit rester.* »(Michaux, 1967, p.14)

as the earthly paradise, the return to the original Unity of life, which reaches its paroxysmal expression with Romanticism. The nostalgia of a golden age that would rise again against the Western civilization, the purity and the exoticism already seen *ad infinitum* within the history of literature, that is precisely what H. Michaux rejects, to whom the conventional does not suit. He was already writing during his previous travel book in Ecuador:

“A letter this morning. Someone writes to me “You will miss Ecuador and the Native Americans ! I have seen some of them (in wax) at the museum of Berlin. What poetry they contain!”

I have already said that I hate Native Americans. No, I have to make the smart traveler, the amateur of exoticism. “I have then a countenance!” But I hate Native Americans, I say. To be citizen of the Earth. Citizen! And the Earth! “Native American”, “Native American”, you want to stun me with that. A Native American, well a man! A man like all other men, prudent, without any start, who does not get anywhere, who does not look for anything, a man “like that.” (as to say that I will get used to that...) These people do not have any saint, and thus how could I get along with those brachycephalics ?

Once for all, here is: the human beings who do not help my improvement, zero.¹⁰”

One can imagine well that the reception of these two books has been complicated. Bellour relates the persistent feeling of humiliation of the Ecuadorans when he went there for a conference. Later, in the 1960's, when a special edition of a Franco-Bengali paper (*Le 24*) dedicates a number to Michaux, the latter is nicely warned that no passage from his *Barbarian* would be included or translated. Finally, while he is invited in Delhi, he provokes worries in the Indian audience who are then wondering, following the conclusion of the previous quote: “will he find us as ugly as he said?” (Michaux, 1998;2001, vol 1, in Notice and Note sur le texte, 2 p.110 and p.118-119)

However, in this passionate work that claims neither to be intercultural nor intellectual, where the love for Asia is never far from its violent criticisms almost unspeakable for contemporary readers, one can read the unfamiliar feeling (*dépaysement*¹¹) of experiencing cultural otherness in all its paradox. This violent tension and ambivalence between the different poles of this feeling of disorientation is given without lie or concession, which results in the fact that one cannot

¹⁰Personal translation. Original text : « Une lettre, ce matin. On m'écrit « Vous regretterez l'Équateur et les Indiens [d'Amérique] ! J'en ai vu (en cire) au musée de Berlin. Quelle poésie ils contiennent ! »/ J'avais déjà dit que je détestais les Indiens. Non, il me faut faire le voyageur intelligent, l'amateur d'exotisme. « J'ai là une mine ! » Mais je déteste les Indiens, dis-je. Etre citoyen de la Terre. Citoyen ! Et la Terre ! « Indien », « Indien », vous voulez me stupéfier avec ça. Un Indien, un homme quoi ! Un homme comme tous les autres, prudent, sans départs, qui n'arrive à rien, qui ne cherche pas, l'homme « comme ça. » (Quant à dire que je m'y habituerai...) Ces gens n'ont pas de saints, et puis la manière que je m'entende avec des brachycéphales ?/ Une fois pour toutes, voici : les hommes qui n'aident pas à mon perfectionnement, zéro. » (Michaux, 1968, p.191)

¹¹The feeling of experiencing cultural otherness (concerning people or cultures in general) has a particular word in French language, namely “dépaysement”(*dé-pays-er*, i.e. literally the action of taking someone out of his country). It means to break one's habits by finding oneself in a very different country or culture. It can then in some contexts have a slightly positive connotation, as it is often related to holidays. But it denotes especially, in a different use of the term, being disorientated by the change of scenery that occurs to oneself, as well as the variegated feelings encountered in this new situation, i.e. being upset, lost, perplex, shocked, troubled, etc. This word for which we do not find a proper translation expresses according to us the feeling of experiencing concrete cultural otherness, and it is the core of Michaux' experience and work.

judge whether this work is unacceptable or has a unique reverence to Asia, and this makes it worthy according to us to be studied in this terse style that describes feelings as they come. At the end, it illustrates perfectly the intercultural theories of the encounter with the cultural other. What philosophy analyzes conceptually seems here to be condensed in the writing of a personal experience that shows actually what is the event, the response and the radicalism of the cultural Other, as well as the concrete *jump* into the Other's world. The reader feels uncomfortable because it expresses the effects of the experience of cultural otherness in its distressing and difficult aspects. The narrative is always in movement, and the changes are often abrupt, without transition, which shows the sudden breaks in the narrator's feelings, the impossibility of analyzing them in a hermeneutic sense, of *understanding* the Other as such, and the complexity of *living* the alienness. It illustrates also, through the narrator's frustration, the impossibility of his assimilation with the people as well as the refusal for any appropriation or reduction of the Others and their differences. This awareness of an irreducible difference excludes him from the Others and gives him the possibility of discoveries (since he does not know anything) as well as the frustration for not being able of *belonging* to another culture, not being able of escaping his own, precisely what his aim was as mentioned in the biography. It thus reflects the impossibility of giving a fixed judgment on cultural otherness that is a characteristic that we described during this study, as the dynamic of hermetics showed us. Cultural otherness provokes a disorder and an appeal from the other to react, or with Waldenfels' words, a responsive approach: "The alien becomes what he is nowhere else that in the event of responding. It means that we can never determine him in a complete and unequivocal way. The one whom we answer always transcends whatever we respond about him. We cannot find an answer about the alien as we can find one to a particular question; we cannot solve him as we can solve a particular problem. This confrontation with the alien does not exclude to having conceptions and interpretations of the alien, but it precedes and exceeds them all.¹²" It means that no matter how much one says about the Other, or no matter one interprets to Other, or how many questions the Other raises, the Other always transcends everything that one can say about him/her.

Michaux tallies precisely with this quote. He gives various answers to the cultural other. They can be primary and lapidary, wrong, naive or judicious, they originate before any philosophical analyzes (that has been declared inadequate anyway by hermetics) as the very spontaneous answer to the phenomenon of the Other that delimits him as an alien and send him back to his difference. An expression of this feeling of exclusion (born from the awareness of his difference) can be read throughout this work, starting at its very beginning:

"Never, never, will the Hindu realize to what a degree he exasperates the European.
The spectacle of a Hindu crowd, of a Hindu village, or even crossing a street where
the Hindus are in their doorways, is irritating and odious.
They are all constipated.

¹²Personal translation. Original text : "L'étranger ne devient ce qu'il est nulle part ailleurs que dans l'évènement du répondre ; c'est-à-dire que l'on ne peut jamais le déterminer de manière complète et univoque. Ce à quoi nous répondons déborde toujours ce que nous donnons comme réponse. On ne peut pas trouver de réponse à propos de l'étranger comme on peut en trouver à une question particulière ; on ne peut pas le résoudre comme on résout un problème particulier. Cette confrontation avec l'étranger n'exclut pas des conceptions et des interprétations de l'étranger, mais elle les précède et les excède toutes." (Waldenfels, 2009, p.66)

You cannot get used to it.

You always hope that by the next day they will have recovered.

This constipation is the most irritating of all, constipation of the breathing and of the soul.

They look at you with self-control, a mysterious locking-up, and though it is not clear, give the impression of interfering somewhere inside one, as it would be impossible for oneself to do.”(Michaux, 1949;1988, p.6); (Michaux, 1967, p.23 (FR))

We want to give here a philosophical account of this work that is for us an attempt to think a poetic interculturality. Interculturality is here understood as a poetically structured encounter, i.e. a creation that is used as an in-between, as a medium between the own and the alien. However, considering the criticisms and the violence dispersed in the work, the path towards interculturality is with Michaux neither obvious nor easy. The notion of “barbarian” of the title, quoted above, suggests already to examine it carefully. But who is this barbarian who also wrote “I arrive in India, I open my eyes, and I write a book” (Michaux, 1949;1988, p.67); (Michaux, 1967, p.99), i.e. the one to whom Asia¹³ gave the inspiration and the awareness by “opening his eyes”? We should therefore try to respect the complexity of Michaux, who has obviously been torn between the different aspects of the experience of being thrown in a different world (*dépaysement*) and who summarizes them as a whole in a single page. Is Michaux - the one who sometimes rejects India but also recognizes in his biography the mention of “his *journey*” - inter-, anti- or anti-intercultural?

4.2.2 An ethnographic novel?

We focus first on the ethnographic dimension of this work. Writings about other cultures, in particular when they are by a poet, are never a objective description of the reality. They are combined with an intermediary space where the Other is mixed with the author, in the feelings of the latter, his perceptions and his experiences, and where he himself merges in the world of the Other, in his journey, his encounter, his loss of familiarity (*dépaysement*), and his jump in the Other’s world. From these two directions emerges a work between two cultures, or at least that plays with both.

Based on two long journeys, Michaux wrote two books: *Ecuador* in 1928 and *A Barbarian in Asia* in 1933. The first can roughly be described as travel literature, however always complex in case of the poet. He writes at least in the Preface: “A man who knows neither to travel, nor to keep a diary has composed this travel diary.¹⁴” In spite of this warning, *Ecuador* is more or less

¹³Michaux’ work includes the following sections: *A Barbarian in India* (88p.); *Himalayan Railway* (10p.); *Southern India* (14p.); *A Barbarian in Ceylon* (6p.); *Natural History* (8p.); *A Barbarian in China* (52p.); *A Barbarian in Japan* (20p.); *A Barbarian with the Malays* (17p.). Though he traveled through several countries in Asia, we focus in our study on the remarks concerning India for several reasons. First, it is the most extensive report and constitutes about half of the book. Then, it presents also the most complex and passionate feelings, between reject and admiration. On the contrary for example, Michaux completely condemns Japan, or fully appreciates Malaya. The difficulty to make any definite judgment about India makes it more interesting for our study, which is moreover already our topic. However, we may refer sometimes to other examples, and we may also comment quotes about India with the mention of Asia in general. It does not mean that we reduce Asia to India, but that the concerned remark can be applied within Michaux’ work to the whole book beyond the sole example of India.

¹⁴Personal translation. Original text: “Un homme qui ne sait ni voyager ni tenir un journal a composé ce journal de voyage.”(Michaux, 1998;2001, vol 1, p.139)

punctuated by the dates of the journey, relates more or less his feelings and his environments at that time, and the impressions, most of the time hostile, that he got from Ecuador.

However, the register of the *Barbarian* is completely different, probably due to the failure of his first journey. The work is extended and is open to exteriority. Far from being a description of landscape, it is somehow more similar to an essay that would try to catch the features of the Other, the different people, their customs, culture, etc. It turns out to be a reading of other cultures, a description of different peoples, a narration of the cultural encounter.

4.2.2.1 Anthropological dimension

We do not pretend that Michaux' work is an anthropological essay as such. Literature is distinguished from the scientific norms that are expected from ethnography, and it is precisely this gap that is primary for us in this study. We speak therefore of an anthropological "dimension" or an "aspect" that one can find here. As we already mentioned in this study (in cultural hermeneutics), we acknowledge the diversity of different schools of thought in anthropology. We do not want to enter here into details, and we simply distinguish with L.Bonoli (Bonoli, 2007a, p.108) anthropology as production of theories that aim at understanding and studying human beings in their various cultural organizations, and ethnography as the production of scientific writings that aim at describing the culture, on which anthropology is based.

In general, anthropology recognizes now that it is not an absolutely neutral study from which the cultural other is perfectly re-transcribed in its otherness, undistorted by the writing and the theorization of the anthropologist. Bonoli writes: "The [anthropological] knowledge stops to be conceived as the gathering of direct representations that are appropriate to the other culture in order to become an activity of construction of symbolic forms that are able to give an account of the encounter of our symbolic system with the symbolic system of another culture. (...) The aim of such a symbolic construction is not to directly re-present the foreign culture, but to show or to present the cultural diversity through the experience of the anthropologist, and therefore to give an intelligible form to the reader."¹⁵

Following this definition, Michaux comes closer to ethnography that reflects cultural pluralism and relativism. Of course the work of the poet corresponds also to other specifically literary genres that will be of our interest later on. Nevertheless, it is absolutely possible to read his experience as a description of cultures in a sense that we can call general anthropology. J.P Martin speaks about the work of Michaux as a "cartography of mentalities" (Martin, 1994, p.376) that also conveys this idea of encounter and description of cultures. We can find variegated examples throughout his work in various domains, for example when he tries to show the difference in religious feelings between India and the West:

"There is something incomparably splendid in this whole Hindu people, that always seeks the most and not the least, that has been the foremost to deny the visible

¹⁵Personal translation. Original text: "La connaissance [anthropologique] cesse d'être conçue comme la récolte de représentations directes et adéquates de l'autre culture pour devenir une activité de construction de formes symboliques en mesure de rendre compte de la rencontre de notre système symbolique avec le système symbolique d'une autre culture. (...) Le but d'une telle construction symbolique n'est pas de re-présenter directement la culture étrangère, mais de montrer ou présenter la diversité culturelle à travers l'expérience de l'anthropologue, et d'en offrir ainsi au lecteur une forme intelligible."(Bonoli, 2007a, p.113)

world, for which, not only spiritually, but physically, it does not care, the people of the Absolute, a radically religious people.(...)

“*De profundus clamavi ad te, Domine.*” Here are words that release a fundamental Christian feeling, humility.

When you enter the cathedral at Cologne, no sooner inside and you are at the bottom of the ocean and only above, high above, is the gate of life...: “*De profundis*”, you enter and you are immediately lost. You are nothing now but a mouse. Humility, “praying Gothic.”

The Gothic cathedral is built in such a way that he who enters it is overcome by weakness.(...)

The Hindu religions (Buddhism excepted, but long ago Buddhism abandoned India. Too pure for them) on the contrary do not bring out the weakness of man, but his strength. Prayer and meditation are the exercise of spiritual *forces* [attitudes]. Besides Kali one may see the table demonstrating the attitudes of prayer. He who prays well makes stones fall, perfumes the waters. [He *forces* God.] A prayer is a rape. Good tactics are required.¹⁶”

The text displays numerous literary devices to *capture* the Other: generalization of the text from one’s own experience (ellipsis, general present, impersonal structures, etc.), characterization of the Hindu people, which goes with a blatant use of typology (it is besides often misused, as it confuses Indian and Hindu, which shows then the mixed nature of the social and religious dimensions); attempts to describe the religious feeling and practice (an activity that forms a long part of his writing) often in a precise way; the didactic and referential use of Western comparing (that betrays his culture and also shows who the expected reader is); the insistences by various breaks of the text and repetitions of the main concept, *force*. Michaux writes often in a certain ethnographic way, in this modern definition that allows subjectivity. He practices himself the *rape* that he is speaking about, which consists in jumping in the world of the Other to grasp various targets from the centres, which produces “a kaleidoscopic view that constantly brings us to the essentials.¹⁷”(Perrin, 1992, p.32)

4.2.2.2 To write cultural otherness: from anthropology to literature

A Barbarian in Asia is thus a *certain* ethnography, or as J.P. Martin states: “An ethnographic discourse - let us clarify that it is an untamed [*sauvage*] ethnography, which wants to be essentially guided by immediate impression - rubs out most of the time the story or the anecdote.¹⁸” It is a condensed ethnography that praises aphorisms, for example, which aim at reproducing

¹⁶We changed the official translation, as it has been without any justified reason modified from the French original text. H. Michaux writes “Il *force* Dieu” (He *forces* God) as such, and insists on that verb. We believe that no matter what the reason is (and especially if the reason is puritanism), one cannot just erase an important assertion and move the emphasized word “force” to a previous sentence, “spiritual forces”. The French original text was saying “des attitudes de prière” that can be translated as “spiritual exercise”, or more literally as “attitudes of prayers.” In any case, it seems important to reestablish the original meaning. (Michaux, 1949;1988, p.13); (Michaux, 1967, p.14)

¹⁷Personal translation. Original text: “une vision kaléidoscopique nous ramenant sans cesse à l’essentiel.”

¹⁸Personal translation. Original text: “Un discours ethnographique - précisons qu’il s’agit d’une ethnographie sauvage, qui se veut guidée essentiellement par l’impression immédiate - gomme le plus souvent le récit ou l’anecdote.” (Martin, 1994, p.376)

directly the experience with the cultural other, rather than giving an objective account of him. The anthropologist takes notes on the field in order to publish later a book on the basis of what he has written, but only once he has reworked, organized, systematized and re-thought the notes, as well as adapted them for a reader of his own culture. It is a two-step process. For Michaux on the other hand, his hard work concerns before all his literary style. It changes completely as compared to the anthropologist in the sense that Michaux does not try to make the path towards cultural otherness easier or more intelligible for his reader. On the contrary, he can even complicate it in order to show all paradoxes and contradictions of the encounter with the Other. It does not aim at a clear theorized report but at giving an account of the first impressions and feelings as they have been experienced from the very beginning, including the dimension of discoveries (and their naivety) and the possible shocks. The work is not made in order to summarize or to reflect on the global experience, but precisely to make the reader feel the very first impressions and their further evolutions. While the scientific work would be more synthetic and thematic, the literary work is more linear in its development and fluctuates in the deviation of his thought. His attempt at re-appropriation and modification of the text have anyways been a failure, as the Preface states:

“As one can see, this journey was off to a bad start. I will not put it right. I could not. I would often like to, but it is impossible to put anything back on one’s shoulders. We can only remove, clear, cut, touch-up, put something quickly in a suddenly awkward void, but we cannot change it, cannot reorientate it.”¹⁹

Herein maybe stands the advantage of this literary ethnography, for he does not have the ambition or the obligation to submit himself to the norms of this field: so he can play with cultures. He can be the irreducible Westerner who does not disappear in front of the Other, but he can also show the Indian point of view in a kind of mirror play, for example when he knows that he is seen as much as he sees, and in a literal sense:

“If a European is questioned on his return from India, he does not hesitate; he replies: “I have seen Madras, I have seen this, I have seen that.” But this is not so; he has been seen, much more seen than he has seen.”(Michaux, 1949;1988, p.88) (Michaux, 1967, p. 121 (FR))

The Indian point of view of course stays dependent on Michaux’ Western conception, even when he keeps distance from himself. He does so especially through humor, which is an interesting and underestimated way in intercultural philosophy to deal with cultural difference and to tame it by creating a mutual relation by laughing together. In so doing, he has also to simplify the situation by describing the experience from a particular point of view. Let us illustrate this with the passage where he formulates the advices to the foreigner who would arrive in India, from an Indian perspective, highly reduced and stigmatized for the sake of humor:

“A man traveling for the first time in India, with not much time to spare, should be very careful not to spend it on the railway.

¹⁹Personal translation. Original text: “Comme on le voit, ce voyage était mal parti. Je ne vais pas le rattraper. Je ne le pourrais pas. Je le voudrais souvent, mais impossible de rien remettre sur ses épaules. On peut seulement retirer, dégager, couper, faire quelques raccords, vite fourrer quelque chose dans un vide soudain gênant, mais non pas le changer, non pas le réorienter.” (Michaux, 1967, p.14)

Twelve thousand kilometers are not unusual - nor are they obligatory. (...)

And above all he will get into his head, once and for all, that he is an alcoholic, and if he takes no alcohol, that he is an alcoholic without being aware of it, and that his sort is a thousand times more difficult to threat.

He needs seek no further - meat is the alcohol.

If the stares of the natives annoy him, he will not lose his temper, he will not say: "Those mules' eyes make me furious", he will know that their eyes annoy him because they have in them an element that may be elevated or not elevated, but which *he does not grasp*.

He will get it carefully into his head that meat is an evil, an evil determined to come out into the open. It comes out in gestures, wickedness, work. And cursed be these three!"(Michaux, 1949;1988, p.42-43) (Michaux, 1967, p.67-68 (FR))

This playing around with the points of view and the various perspectives used in the text should before all point to the fact that the India of H.Michaux is not and has never been real, a fact that we cannot ignore and that the reader should keep in mind in order to avoid any misinterpretation. It is clearly expressed in the Preface:

"When I saw India, and when I saw China, for the first time, peoples, on this earth, seemed to me to deserve to be real.

Joyful, I charged into this reality, persuaded that I was bringing back a lot of it.

Did I completely believe it? Real journey between two imaginations.

Maybe deep down, I observed them as imaginary journeys that would have realized themselves without me, with "others". A country that another would have invented. It was a surprise, an emotion, an annoyance.

*The fact is that a lot is missing for this journey to be real. I knew it later. Did I leave aside on purpose what precisely was going to make in several of this countries the new reality: the politics?"*²⁰

Asia is ambivalent between reality and imagination, by its detachment from political contextualizations, from the surrounding context. The dimension of imagination should then not be understood as a unrealistic fantasy, but as "the access that it makes possible, via its shift [*décalage*], to this real that evades reality and yet does not cease to appear.²¹". This ambiguity of the status of culture that Michaux is supposed to study makes the text waver between ethnography on the side of the real, and poetry on the side of the imaginary. From the perspective of the writing two consequences appear, which concern the relation between the own and the

²⁰One has to remember that this trip of H.Michaux happened in 1930, before the many revolutions and changes in Asia, starting with the independence of India in our case. Personal translation. Original text: "*Quand je vis l'Inde, et quand je vis la Chine, pour la première fois, des peuples, sur cette terre, me parurent mériter d'être réels./ Joyeux, je fonçai dans ce réel, persuadé que j'en rapportais beaucoup./ Y croyais-je complètement? Voyage réel entre deux imaginaires./ Peut-être au fond de moi les observais-je comme des voyages imaginaires qui se seraient réalisés sans moi, avec « d'autres ». Pays qu'un autre aurait inventés. J'en avais la surprise, l'émotion, l'agacement./ C'est qu'il manque beaucoup à ce voyage pour être réel. Je le sus plus tard. Faisais-je exprès de laisser de côté ce qui précisément allait faire en plusieurs de ces pays de la réalité nouvelle : la politique?"*(Michaux, 1967, p.14)

²¹Personal translation. Original text: "l'accès qu'il rend possible, via son décalage, à ce réel qui se dérobe à la réalité mais pourtant ne cesse d'apparaître"(Assoun, 1992, 55)

foreign: the first is the consequence of being an alien in a different culture (the way I appear to the cultural others, and the reactions that emerge from me), and the second is the writing of alienness in itself - how do cultural others appear to me.

Asia in Michaux: the alienness in itself- The journey in Asia means before all the irreducibility of oneself, the impossibility of being the Other, and the necessity to be confronted with this fact. This revelation is very often the core of the violence of the poet as the mark of his condition, his cultural limits and his sense of belonging to a determined world - precisely what he would like to escape. Michaux is then taken by the ambiguity of trying to “become-other” while he is held tight to himself. This traditional ambiguity, for the question of cultural otherness, can be expressed as follow: how to avoid betraying myself while at the same time adapting myself to a complete cultural otherness? Bellow comments on this paradox in the case of Michaux: “But this duty of understanding and transmitting, without being able or wanting to deepen as it should be, puts him in a wrong position from which it seems to him he cannot get out: he feels, he knows that he is unfaithful to Asia where he can only stay as the barbarian, because of faithfulness to what he imagines he is; though he would like to confuse the improbable truth of Asia with what it became for him during this journey.²²”

The distance and the impossible assimilation, so much spoken throughout our study, finds in this work a perfect illustration of the dilemma that it creates.

However, even if it is a constant feeling of the author during his journey, it operates in his work in a slightly more complex manner: by mixing up cultures, and in spite of the cultural difference that distinguished him from the other culture, Michaux applies an *imaginary distortion* that according to us enables him to avoid the presupposed radicalness of a cultural difference and to jump in the world of the other in spite of his horizon. Michaux does not relate as an ethnologist his encounter with a member of this or that people with the limitation of his understanding or the conceptual problems that he encountered. He expresses features that give an account of the essence of the properties of people, through their abstract generalization and the search of a “centre” of a culture (as quoted with Rombach). The context is the fact of the imagination, or at least reality and imagination interlace. It is precisely this role of the imagination of the poetic style that enables him to escape the Gadamerian prejudice. Indeed, the poet is after all the only one to construct the cultural borders, he can draw them as he pleased, and can then move from one point of view to another, to incarnate Chinese wisdom, use the Indian precepts, speak in the name of one or the other, etc. Every reference is his own, constructed within a text, and in that sense, the alien belongs already to the own and Michaux jumps easily in many different worlds. By the writing, the Other is not assimilated, Michaux shows him as “brute” in his otherness, in the event of the encounter, without trying to make him understandable. He describes him in his difference and in his irreducible dimension, but he can also reverse the dimensions and create new ones, so that he becomes the barbarian himself. This creation is what distinguishes him

²²Personal translation. Original text: “Mais ce devoir de comprendre et de transmettre, sans pouvoir ni vouloir approfondir comme il le faudrait, le met dans une fausse position dont il lui semble ne pouvoir sortir : il se sent, il se sait infidèle à l’Asie dont il ne peut que rester le barbare, par fidélité même à ce qu’il imagine être soi ; alors qu’il aimerait pouvoir confondre la vérité improbable de l’Asie avec ce qu’elle est devenue pour lui au cours de ce voyage.”(Michaux, 1998;2001, vol, 1, in "Notice", p.1109)

from anthropology, except if we follow this definition: “Literature can border on ethnography - providing that we do not consider the later as a science, but as a *brute art*.²³” We could then say that Michaux practices a “cultural disobedience” in the sense of R.F. Betancourt: “So human being is culturally located from his birth, but it is not a fate because through the aforementioned process of appropriation, he can redefine his cultural environment. (...) He can, to do so, either restore the memory of truncated or oppressed traditions of his cultural universe, either turn to the interaction with another cultural tradition, or invent new perspectives from his antecedent experience.²⁴” We should replace here *appropriation* by *creation* or imagination: by practicing the culture of the Other, by being an interpreter, intercultural mediator in poetry, Michaux is himself and the Other at the same time. He can choose the world that he wants to create by his encounter with India.

Imagination as a writing of cultural otherness- This creative dimension of imagination is really the core of a particular ethnographic approach that brings us back to the problem of description of another culture by someone who is foreign to it. Waldenfels studies in depth the paradox of xenology: the phenomenon of xenology disappears as soon as it is analyzed, written and tamed. Science of the foreign, it loses its alien when it elucidates it. The alien is always upstream of me, before my experience, and of course before my discourse. He therefore concludes: “A phenomenology that would like to feature a true xenology must, in a kind of responsive *epoche*, break off the objective experience of the alien and his determination, and show how the experience of the alien peaks in a becoming-alien of the experience and phenomena.²⁵”

This definition, even considering its phenomenological expression, seems to perfectly fit the work of Michaux and his “imaginative responsiveness” to express it in Waldenfels’ categories. The becoming-alien of Michaux is such that it becomes literal while taking a literary form. This becoming-alien of the experience shapes in the writings its own experience of the otherness that makes it resist any attempt of appropriation or modification afterwards, as he expresses it in the Preface written thirty years later. The book itself became alien, which is why Michaux is ashamed of it but cannot modify it. “*It has its resistance./ As if it was a character./ It has a tone.*” (Michaux, 1967, p.14) The book is a proof of his inadequacy, of his alienness that made him be and stay “barbarian” with the strange self-referencing of this qualification.

We can here come back to something that we mentioned already regarding cultural hermeneutics, namely the importance of the *shock* in the experience of cultural otherness, originally mentioned by Gadamer and studied by Bonoli (Bonoli, 2007b, p.5-7). The shock (*Anstoß*) is a burst of consciousness, an experience that challenges our prejudices by the push that it provokes, which

²³Personal translation. Original text: “La littérature peut avoisiner l’ethnographie - à condition de ne pas envisager celle-ci comme une science, mais comme un art brut.”(Martin, 1994, p.381)

²⁴Personal translation. Original text: “Ainsi, l’être humain est culturellement situé dès sa naissance, mais il ne s’agit pas d’une fatalité, car au travers du processus d’appropriation évoqué, il peut redéfinir son environnement culturel. (...) Il peut, pour ce faire, soit restaurer la mémoire des traditions tronquées ou opprimées de son univers culturel, soit recourir à l’interaction avec d’autres traditions culturelles, ou encore inventer de nouvelles perspectives à partir de son expérience antérieure.” (Fornet-Betancourt, 2011, p.138)

²⁵Personal translation. Original text: “Une phénoménologie qui voudrait prendre les traits d’une véritable xénologie doit, dans une sorte d’époché responsive, rompre l’expérience objective de l’étranger et sa détermination, et montrer comment l’expérience de l’étranger culmine dans un devenir-étranger de l’expérience et des phénomènes.” (Waldenfels, 2009, p.130)

effects a break with our every-day habits and makes us re-consider the event with possibly new and external inputs. This experience has then to be translated for an audience that belongs to our own culture, so as to re-transcribe this shock in an intelligible language. Bonoli underlines therefore the fictional dimension of ethnography (Bonoli, 2007b, p.114-116) to suit this aim, and the efforts that have to be made to translate in an ordinary language this extra-ordinary experience. He stresses then the importance of the linguistic *rule-bending* that should lead the expression of the previously experienced shock and the search for new linguistic expressions to fit the radical novelty of the experience. Concerning this point, Michaux exceeds by far any ethnologist and possesses an immensely richer extension of rule-bendings as exemplified in his poetic work and genius.

Let us give an example of the rule-bending with a case that is usually an important problem for the ethnologist, i.e. how do we render the difference between the foreign and the familiar language in an intelligible way? i.e., how can we express precisely what the reader cannot understand in a way that the reader is able to understand - the complete alienness of the other language? Here is a short-cut to a longer beautiful answer of Michaux:

“The Tamil language is composed of words having, on an average, six syllables. Several have fourteen. When there are less than four syllables it is not a word any more, but a detritus. The English language seems to them a ruin. What are those senseless little bubbles called the preposition, the article, etc.?”

Tamil is an agglutinating language. You solder everything you can together. One word is made out of three.

In this way, though it is slightly more complicated, no doubt, the ten or fourteen syllables are formed.

These words are borne away at top speed. You touch the first syllable and you go galloping off. When you get to the end, you can take a rest. That is where little gaps in the conversation occur. However, some go at such headlong speed (most of them) that they do not stop. So you listen to this marvelous mechanism which, at a superhuman pace, accomplishes its natural purpose, without faltering.”(Michaux, 1949;1988, p.89-90); (Michaux, 1967, p.122 (FR))

He actually spends several pages to give an account of the linguistic plurality of India according to his feeling (Hindi, Bengali, etc.), so that the reader can realize and almost hear their differences and particularities by the rhythms, the alliterations and consonances, and the metaphors employed to describe the sounds, to which we could definitely grant a complete stylistic analysis. He makes the reader listen to them by his poetic play with them.

Finally, what distinguishes Michaux from anthropology is paradoxically his affinity with Asia. He escapes the scientificity of ethnography by himself becoming interculturality, by including the Other in his writing, by creating a dialogue from various point of views. Bellour writes: “There is in the thought and the art of feeling of Michaux something that we could qualify as “Chinese”: an innate sense of the implicitness, of the detour and the indirectness that contributes to his frank writing, his rare naturalness. In the wish shaped by the necessity where he found himself to have to mark gaps between worlds, Michaux suffered then in writing this book to have to

demonstrate and argue, without really agreeing to the ways to do it.²⁶” The specificity of the poet is then to depict foreign people in their very being, at the same time as he sets aside the ethnographic norms. He integrates the foreign in the own and makes his reader enter Asia without prelude and with all the violence of the shock of entering another world or in Rombach’s terms, in directly jumping in the other world. In so doing, he answers through his writing to the primary request of the alien, as Waldenfels states: “This attraction or this request [expressed under the forms of attraction or rejection] to which the look answers belongs neither to the alien culture nor to the own culture; it is the intercultural phenomenon *par excellence*.²⁷”

4.2.3 The failure of Asia, the failure of Europe, or the failure of an “in-between” the journey?

What if this escape into the realm of imagination means a failure of the journey, a failure of Europe or a failure of Asia? It has been underlined by all the critics of Michaux that after his *Barbarian*, he started to write only imaginary journeys and renounced real journeys (*En Grande Garabagne, Au pays de la magie, Ici Poddema*). His previous travel diary was already a failure, but Michaux, attracted by Asia, thought that he would find there something else, that he would realize himself. The *Barbarian in Asia*, if it is slightly more moderate, does not really encourage, in conclusion, the encounter with the Other, the intercultural experience or even the journey, and ends as follow:

“And now, said Buddha to his disciples, when about to die:

In the future, be your own light, your own refuge.

Seek not another refuge.

Go not to seek refuge other than in Yourselves

Pay no attention to another’s way of thinking.

Hold fast in your own island.

GLUED TO CONTEMPLATION.” (Michaux, 1949;1988, p.186); (Michaux, 1967, p.233 (FR))

How can we understand this call for sedentariness, for the exclusion of any cultural otherness that just concludes the long journey of this work and is moreover expressed through an Asian figure? It reminds also the contradiction from the title, A Barbarian (traditional expression of violence as well as rejection due to alienness) but a Barbarian *in Asia*, hence with a presence and a will to discover the Other that makes the Barbarian leave the West for Asia. How should we then understand this situation and the postscript of the work?

²⁶Personal translation. Original text: “Il y a dans la pensée et l’art de sentir de Michaux quelque chose qu’on pourrait dire spontanément “chinois” : un sens inné de l’implicite, du détour et de l’indirect qui participe de son franc-écrire, son rare naturel. Dans le désir fait de nécessité où il s’est trouvé de devoir marquer des écarts entre des mondes, Michaux a donc souffert en écrivant ce livre d’avoir à démontrer et à argumenter, sans accepter vraiment les moyens de le faire.”(Michaux, 1998;2001, vol 1, in "Notice", p.1114)

²⁷Personal translation. Original text: “Cette attirance ou cette requête [exprimée sous forme d’attirance ou de rejet] auquel répond le regard ne fait partie ni de la culture étrangère ni de la culture propre; c’est le phénomène interculturel par excellence.” (Waldenfels, 2009, p.124)

4.2.3.1 The failure of Europe

The first failure is of Europe. The journey in Orient is traditionally coupled with a criticism of Europe, according to what is in French called “*procédé de l’œil neuf*” (literally, “process of the new eye”), aforementioned in the introduction. This process aims at showing - through an alleged naivete that is laced with humor - the inconsistencies or the absurdities of one’s own culture in contrast to the encountered culture. A quite famous illustration of this process is the *Persian letters* from Montesquieu, which severely though indirectly criticized his own culture through a portrait of the Orient (the criticism appears in the comparison), in order to avoid censorship. To a certain extent Michaux also brings into play this naivete of the very first impression of cultures, and even claims it. He writes an apologue of a horse and a monkey that are observing each other very carefully at the time of their encounter, noticing all the differences between them, while the habit of living together leads to the erasing of those differences, as the acclimatization prevents any of the aforementioned “shock”. From the very alert consciousness of the time of the encounter until the familiarity and the habits of the every-day time, Michaux concludes finally: “If one only knew what the horse thinks of the monkey at this moment, quite probably it would say: “Ah...dear me, I’m not so sure.” As for the moral of the apologue:

“Knowledge does not progress with time. Differences are overlooked. You compromise. You come to an understanding. And you cease to come to conclusions. This fatal law acts in such a way that the permanent residents of Asia and the persons who are most thrown together with the Asiatics are not at the exact point where a focused vision can be retained, whereas a passerby, with his innocent eye, is able sometimes to lay his finger on the center.” [Ibid, p.68-69; Fr, p.100-101]

This fact is underlined in case of philosophy by its weakness, or maybe more exactly its lack of interest, in discerning the development of the temporal transformations of the alienness, its changes and process of reduction through the familiarization. What interest philosophers indeed (in particular Waldenfels) is the event of the otherness, the emergence of the alien. Any continuation of a living-together, that is any emergence of a relative familiarity, any inclusion of the otherness in an every-day order, is underestimated in the analyzes. This fact is especially visible in Waldenfels’ analyzes, where the alien is simply dissolved in its study, which stops all reflection at that time. In that sense, Michaux is the spokesman of a radical otherness that an indologist probably is not able to describe.

However, Michaux moves definitely away from this tradition of a naive outlook with regard to the consequences that he draws. The traditional criticism works in a process of *differentiation*, which means that it is only in contrast with the Orient that the defects of the Occident can be revealed. In the poet’s work, it is actually the contrary that is operating: the criticism of Europe does not flow from the differences that can be found with Asia, but from the *resemblances*. It is when Asia betrays its duty of being a radical different world, when it turns out to be an illusion and a vague exotic dream, and when Asia is characterized by the same defects as Europe that one can find the most violent failure of Europe, which is at the end the same as the failure of Asia. This brings about a visceral rejection of an extreme violence. His most explicit condemnation applies concerning the Japan of the thirties that he characterizes by its military interest. When

Michaux writes in the Preface, “*It is dated, this book. From the age when this continent was at the same time numb and tense; it is dated. From my naivety, my ignorance, my illusion to demystify, it is dated. It is dated from an excited Japan, overexcited, speaking about wars, promising wars, parading, bawling out, vociferating, threatening, harassing, holding in reserve bombings, destructions, invasions, assaults and terror.*”²⁸, how cannot we see a description of Europe at the same time (the 30’s), coming out of one war and going into another? He admits it explicitly when he draws the parallel between Japan and Europe:

“A people, in fact, devoid of wisdom, of simplicity and of depth, over-serious, though fond of toys and novelties, not easily amused, ambitious, superficial and obviously doomed to our evils and our civilization.” [Ibid, p.156-157; Fr, p.200.]

Reproaches made to Asia are clearly the defects of Europe, and the worst for Michaux then is to follow the European civilization on the decline on account of its own harm. Indeed he is not really wrong about Japan. He himself accepts in the Preface that he added later on to the “Barbarian in Japan” the incredible changes that this country has seen, which makes it unrecognizable for any contemporary traveler (in the sixties) and make his descriptions inadequate, dated and shameful, which stuns him when he reads again his work. In his attempt to apologize for his earlier writing, he adds in the Preface to the “Barbarian in Japan”:

“It is clear now that at the other side of the planet, Europe found a neighbor.

Its multiple researches, the topicality of its works, its boundless curiosity in so many domains of sciences and arts - and the newest - where we watch each other, emulators or admirers, arouse a strange connivance that is growing.”²⁹”

In this *mea culpa* that was actually done in the background of his second visit to Japan - slightly difficult when one carries with him the previous condemnation - one can guess that Michaux saw the realization of the danger that he foretold at first, which was the object of his criticisms: Japan became for Michaux *de facto* too close, far too close to Europe, by following the worst path, namely one of westernization. Beneath the positive mention of the “neighbor”, this closeness between Europe and Japan is Michaux’ biggest regret as it means that only Japan changed to reach Europe, but Europe did not reach Japan. Behind the reject of Japan and some other parts of Asia, his original criticism is the one of a rapprochement under the sole rules of Europe as he wrote *a posteriori* in his late Preface:

“*I would have liked at least India and China to find the way to become newly rounded out, to become in a new way great peoples, harmonious societies and regenerated civilizations without westernization.*”

²⁸Personal translation. Original text: “*Il date, ce livre. De l’époque à la fois engourdie et sous tension de ce continent; il date. De ma naïveté, de mon ignorance, de mon illusion de démystifier, il date. Il date d’un Japon excité, surexcité, parlant guerre, promettant guerre, défilant, hurlant, vociférant, menaçant, harcelant, tenant en réserve des bombardements, des destructions, des invasions, des assauts, de la terreur*” [Ibid, p.11]

²⁹Personnal translation. Original text : “*Il est clair à présent qu’à l’autre bout de la planète, l’Europe a trouvé un voisin./ Ses multiples recherches, l’actualité de ses oeuvres, sa curiosité sans borne en tant de domaines de science et d’art - et les plus nouveaux -, où on s’entre-regarde, émules ou admirateurs, suscitent une étrange connivence qui augmente.*” [Ibid, p.196 (Fr)]

*Was it really impossible?*³⁰

Michaux emphasizes here a fact that nobody can deny. For ideological stakes, but in particular for personal reasons (as he travels out of expatriation away from his native Belgium), he rejects any point of encounter, any intertwining or overlap, any analogy on which the Occident and the Orient could meet as such. Maybe he would accept a point where the Occident would join the Orient, since what he finds unacceptable is the movement of the Orient towards the Occident. Nevertheless, that does not happen and it seems that the encounter between those different worlds operates here only out of violence, what means that interculturality as thought by Michaux is a blatant failure, as violence and erosion of civilizations happen everywhere. The only meeting point is that of westernization, the biggest failure of both the East and the West altogether.

4.2.3.2 **The failure of civilizations: the figure of the Barbarian**

This failure is then increased by a failure of the notion of civilization that is clearly expressed just before the postscript about Buddha at the very end of the work:

“What is a civilization? A blind alley.

No, Confucius is not great.

No, Tsi Hoang Ti is not great, nor Gautama Buddha, but since then nothing better has been done.

A people should be ashamed to have a history.

And the European just as much as the Asiatic, naturally.

It is in the future that they must see their history.” [Ibid, p.185; Fr, p.232]

The annihilation of the concept of civilization here hinders philosophy since Hegel, which is thought through a strong historical paradigm. It also hinders cultural philosophy and anthropology, and is in any case difficult to tolerate and to understand. Michaux points out its errors and conflicts, and invites us for a renewed outlook. To say it differently: “do not see a Hegelian end of history, but more exactly a surprising Future, enigmatic and distant (...). This capital History, whose fate would snatch the cultural subject from his very narrow condition, swallows the small history of civilizations, of their conflicts and their misfortune, the ridiculous rank that they deserve.³¹” Would it mean an awakening of the civilizations rather than their end? If we follow the Preface added to the American Edition (the translation used in this study) in 1949, it seems to be so, probably influenced by the new politically radical configuration of the world (from 1933 to 1949):

“The most urgently needed science is one that will show us how to make civilizations.

³⁰Personal translation. Original text : “*J’aurais voulu que l’Inde au moins et la Chine trouvent le moyen de s’accomplir nouvellement, de devenir d’une nouvelle façon de grands peuples, des sociétés harmonieuses et des civilisations régénérées sans passer par l’occidentalisation./ Etait-ce vraiment impossible ?*” [Ibid, p.13 (Fr)]

³¹Personal translation. Original text: “n’y voyons pas une fin hégélienne de l’histoire, mais plutôt un Avenir surprenant, énigmatique et lointain (...). Cette Histoire majuscule, dont le destin arracherait le sujet culturel à sa condition exigüe, ravale l’histoire petite des civilisations, de leurs conflits et de leurs malheurs, au rang dérisoire qu’elle mérite.” (Martin, 1994, p.396)

Man needs a vast, far-sighted aim, extending beyond his lifetime. A training rather than a hindrance for the coming planetary civilization.

To avoid war-construct peace.” (Michaux, 1949;1988, p.VI)

One should therefore look at this shortcoming of civilizations as a call for regeneration for the future, about which we should think in a Nietzschean³² way, against an immobilizing history that keeps its own defects (or a hermeneutic circle) and deals only with mechanical reproduction of itself. It is rather seen here as the affirmation of a positive creation.

This regeneration can be connected to the concept of *barbarian*. The barbarian plays an important role in Nietzsche too, especially in his early works, exemplified by the powerful immoderation of Dionysus, which in this case is similar to the power of the radical alienness in its extra-ordinary character: “The Apolline Greek, too, felt the effect aroused by the Dionysiac to be “Titanic” and “barbaric”; at the same time he could not conceal from himself the fact that he too was related inwardly to those overthrown Titans and heroes. Indeed he was bound to feel more than this: his entire existence, with all its beauty and moderation, rested on a hidden ground of suffering and knowledge which was exposed to his gaze once more by the Dionysiac. And behold! Apollo could not live without Dionysos. The “Titanic” and “barbaric” was ultimately just as much of a necessity as the Apolline!³³” (Nietzsche, 1999, p.27) Though the barbarian is here still conceived in a Greek context with a strong etymological influence in its understanding, its situation in Michaux’ text includes these pre-conceptions, as the power of seeing beyond habits, to challenge, to regenerate culture (one’s own culture of course more than the alien culture, though possibly in a creative movement, as the other is also concerned and moved by the changes). Here is perfectly expressed the ambiguity of this concept: the Barbarian, who means the irreducibility of the otherness, the ineluctable separation between the Other and myself, the ignorance and the naivete (traditionally, before all a barbarian is one that does not speak the same language) in all the negativity of its perception and connotations, and the impossibility of interculturalization, becomes with Nietzsche, and as we believe, with Michaux as well a necessary source of knowledge and experience.

However, as for Nietzsche, this “knowledge” (understood in a broad sense) is applicable before all to oneself, what the expression of Buddha was already suggesting. To be a barbarian means before all to discover the barbarism in oneself, i.e one’s primary and essential otherness, that makes Michaux a self-qualified barbarian. In this singular self-reference of barbarism one can read also an allusion to Lévi-Strauss (Gervais-Zaninger, 1992, p.45). The anthropologist writes: “By refusing humanity to those who appear as representing the most “savage” or “barbarian”,

³²Let us remember for example what Nietzsche says in this regard: “Knowledge of the past has at all times been desired only in the service of the future and the present and not for the weakening of the present or for depriving a vigorous future of its roots.”(Nietzsche, 1983, p.77); Original text: “die Kenntniss der Vergangenheit [ist] zu allen Zeiten nur im Dienste der Zukunft und Gegenwart begehrt, nicht zur Schwächung der Gegenwart, nicht zur Entwurzelung einer lebenskräftigen Zukunft.”(Nietzsche, 1988, p.271); French edition, (Nietzsche, 1977, p.110)

³³Original text: “„Titanenhaft“ und „barbarisch“ dünkte dem apollinischen Griechen auch die Wirkung, die das D i o n y s i s c h e erregte: ohne dabei sich verhehlen zu können, dass er selbst doch zugleich auch innerlich mit jenen gestürzten Titanen und Heroen verwandt sei. Ja er musste noch mehr empfinden: sein ganzes Dasein mit aller Schönheit und Mässigung ruhte auf einem verhüllten Untergrunde des Leidens und der Erkenntniss, der ihm wieder durch jenes Dionysische aufgedeckt wurde. Und siehe! Apollo konnte nicht ohne Dionysus leben! Das „Titanische“ und das „Barbarische“ war zuletzt eine eben solche Nothwendigkeit wie das Apollinische!”(Nietzsche, 1988, p.40); French edition, (Nietzsche, 1977, p.41)

one only borrows one of their typical aptitude.³⁴” What if one claims it? Then one implies barbarism in all cultures, so in the end results the equality of cultures and the disappearance of the concept in multiple perspectives. Each world is barbarian for another world, barbarism exists in all worlds as an empty category of everything that is foreign (and therefore suspect), and will be filled and thought differently in each of these worlds according to their definition and understanding of the concept. It will not mean the same and may not be expressed the same way, so that the one who considers the other a Barbarian may himself become a Barbarian for another world. Barbarism is the natural state of the traveler. Just as each human being is a potential alien, each human being is a potential barbarian. In this sense, the hostility towards interculturality disappears in the plurality of worlds and possibilities of being.

By assuming the irreducible difference of Asia and Europe, Asia finds a more privileged place than seemed at first: “the Other, the Orient, neither ignored nor mythicized, is situated where after having found a worthy opponent to confront, it can answer as “barbarian” with this “disrespect that has enabled it to make its way”³⁵” The violence of the barbarian is thus the expression of his passionate relation to India, to which he knows that he is a foreigner, the very fact that he cannot accept. In this sense and in spite of his resistance, “the analysis of the relation of Michaux to the Orient, essential to understand the working of his thought, refers to two distinct thoughts that an uncompromising dialogue holds always linked.³⁶” India must be written and thought in the movement of a common and shared creation, and an endless conversation (in the sense of a *Gespräch*). Here comes the intercultural dimension of Michaux: there is no outlook that embraces any unity, no definitive or absolute affirmation, no complete agreement between India and the barbarian, no denial of his original world, but there is also no renunciation in a dialogue or in a discussion. It is precisely the movement from one aspect to another, a mutual criticism, the alternation of points of view, peoples and feelings that connect him to India, that opens space for an in-between of cultures. The evolution of his thoughts and feelings is made perceptible through the writing as the transcription of an intercultural exchange that the analytic distance of philosophy delays. It is the experience that the hermetics is looking for without being able to incarnate it in its philosophical presentation. The cultural otherness is not found in Michaux in its conceptual abeyance, but it is located in the living experience that is transmitted in order to make the reader feel what has been felt by the author.

The interculturality in literature is therefore slightly different than the one that has been studied in philosophy. It should not be considered as the search for overlaps or analogies (Mall) that would lead to a basic common element, *after all and a priori*, in variegated cultures. It is also not hermetic (understood in the common meaning of the world) in that sense that it has to be hidden, it can be openly shared also in the locus of a book and in its reading (Rombach). It is already the expression of feelings, doubts, relation to the others, a movement of capturing the

³⁴Personal translation. Original text: “En refusant l’humanité à ceux qui apparaissent comme les plus “sauvages” ou “barbares” de ses représentants, on ne fait que leur emprunter une de leurs aptitudes typiques. Le barbare, c’est d’abord l’homme qui croit à la barbarie.”(Lévi-Strauss, 1952;1987, p.22)

³⁵Personal translation. Original text: “L’Autre, l’Orient, ni ignoré ni mythifié, est à la place qui lui permet, ayant trouvé un digne adversaire à affronter, de répondre en “barbare” avec “cet irrespect qui après tout fait faire du chemin.””(Halpern & Mihailovich-Dickman, 1996, p. 23-24)

³⁶Personal translation. Original text: “L’analyse de la relation de Michaux à l’Orient, essentielle pour comprendre le fonctionnement de sa pensée, renvoie à deux pensées distinctes qu’un dialogue sans concession tient toujours liées.” [Ibid, p.23.]

other that however can never grasp him totally, and is therefore always correcting itself. It is a construction of answers to the call of the otherness (Waldenfels) and a concreativity (Rombach).

In conclusion, one can admit that to enter in Asia with the *Barbarian* of Michaux is not something easy. The poetic expatriation that he gives us to read is a succession of contradictions, as an interculturality that would exist but is neither evident, nor available. It is a paradoxical construction made of hindrances and difficulties that result from the renunciation of any kind of orientalism or any utopia of the Other, which was the romantic dream. The love of Asia is colored for Michaux with the rejection of its weaknesses and the disappointment of its reality, as a real encounter in the domain of his imagination. The interculturality of Michaux is the one that makes him say:

“I don’t travel anymore. Why should travel interest me?

It’s not that. It’s never that.

I can fix it myself, their country. I can sort it out myself.

The way they go about it, there is always too many things that do not carry.

They went to a lot of troubles for no purpose, these New-Yorkers with their skyscrapers, so easily over-flied, these Chinese with their very special pagodas and their civilizations. Me, I put China in my courtyard. I feel more comfortable to observe it.³⁷”

He renounces then any “moral of the journey, any ideology of nomadism that would pretend to counter the static thing and to fix it by a ceaseless exploration of the outside. On the contrary, this last literary journey has led to the necessity of wrenching any external hold, of a circulation inside of oneself, free of mediation.³⁸” But this contemplation is formulated in Buddhist or Asiatic terms. It is through Asia that Michaux finds the futility of traveling, and it is in Asia that the traveler becomes a “barbarian”. His misinterpretations, his ignorance, his irreducible western character are what leads him to the apprehension of the Other, to the encounter and the transcendence of his own familiarity (*dépaysement*), and are therefore what creates in the space of the writing and through imagination, an intercultural space that leads to an “in-between.”

³⁷Personal translation. Original text: “Je ne voyage plus. Pourquoi les voyages m’intéresseraient-ils ?/ Ce n’est pas ça. Ce n’est jamais ça./ Je peux l’arranger moi-même, leur pays./ De la façon qu’ils s’y prennent, il y a toujours trop de choses qui ne portent pas./ Ils se sont donnés du mal inutilement, ces New-Yorkais avec leurs gratte-ciels, si faciles à survoler, ces Chinois avec leurs pagodes et leur civilisations de derrière les fagots. Moi, je mets la Chine dans ma cour. Je suis plus à l’aise pour l’observer.” (Michaux, 1998;2001, vol II, p. 164)

³⁸Personal translation. Original text: “(...) une morale de voyage, à une idéologie du nomadisme qui prétendrait contrer le statique et le figer par une exploration incessante du dehors. C’est au contraire à la nécessité d’un arrachement à toute emprise extérieure, d’une circulation à l’intérieur de soi libre de toute médiation, que le dernier voyage littéraire a conduit.”(Martin, 1994, p.399)

5 Conclusion: On the need of Intercultural Philosophy

5.1 Elements for the elaboration of an intercultural philosophical method

This study has made use of a large scale of references, from Antiquity to modern times and from Europe to India. We had somehow to shorten some of them, to select elements, arguments or criteria from some of the authors, or to choose oriented shortcuts. That has however always been made explicit. One could not have embraced the whole in such a short space, and as we said already, we wanted to offer a broad scope of possibilities, and moreover, to connect these possibilities with each other into a common discussion about the method of intercultural philosophy. One can find in this range some inspirations and expounded paths for a further deepening of one particular author or theory; one can find some possibilities of developing another method for intercultural philosophy; and one can already find, at least we hope so, a sketch and a direction, from the very choices of reference, from the very perspective of presenting the authors and theories, from their order, from their comments and their conceptions, from their presentation and our reflection. If none of these authors has been studied in complete detail, their place in the discussion and the orientation of our study brought some elements of answers, as well as numerous questions, about the methods of Intercultural Philosophy. Let us recall the way that we drew until now and present what can be now underlined to be the most important elements:

The introduction (*cf 1. Introduction: the problems of thinking an inter-cultural tradition and the emergence of cultural otherness*) considers the problematic traditional position of philosophy and the difficulty of understanding its heritage with regard to the concept of cultural otherness. These problems concern as well the reflection about the authority of tradition and its consequences for individuals of different cultures to overcome the conceptual limits of their horizon and to understand each other, as well as the development of the philosophical tradition itself and its own internal denial or rejection of interculturality, on the side of Western as well as Indian philosophies. It describes the complex ground and the difficult starting point for intercultural philosophy through which it raised voice against the traditional closure or ignorance of a variety of philosophies and the complete absence of relation or domination as relation that was the norm therein. The introduction thus speaks in favor of awareness of cultural otherness and of differences, the recognition of plural philosophies and the urge for intercultural philosophy to establish new methods of thinking cultural relations. Due to its aims as far as the history of philosophy is concerned, intercultural philosophy is therefore an ETHICS.

R.A Mall's intercultural hermeneutics has played, in the elaboration of our study, the role of standpoint and reference, pertinent as it has directly to deal with the hermeneutic heritage and therefore with the authority of the prejudices theorized by Gadamer. It finds a solution in the figure of the overlap that has been developed previously (*cf 2.1 The concept of "analogous hermeneutics" as an intercultural method; analogy as a connective figure of difference*). Mall's main focus concerns the importance of avoiding any radicalism, that is, to find a balance (an "adjustment" in a Schelerian expression) between identity and difference. For him, philosophical propositions have privileged always one side (the side of identity for Gadamer, the side of difference for postmodernism for Plessner), but it is in the moderation of the two poles that one can see a possible interculturalization of philosophy, especially in avoiding any assimilation between truth and tradition, or theoretical absolutization. Intercultural philosophy is therefore RELATIVE (on the side of a relative identity and a relative difference, which is not a complete relativism, itself located on the extreme of difference).

The criticism of R.A Mall's theory by Graduate College of Erlangen-Nürnberg (our study focused on the articles of C. Ernst, H. Wagner, H. Grünwedel and T.Kempa, *cf 2.2 "Cultural hermeneutics" (Kulturhermeneutik) as a criticism of intercultural hermeneutics*) introduces as a counterweight to Mall's limited movement between two defined poles a full dynamism of structures of understanding that are in motion and a reflection about the body as an interesting medium of intercultural relations, within the hermeneutic field itself. These figures, crucial for the elaboration of a complete picture of the cultural other, stress the importance of the living dimension of the encounter with the Other. Though they claim themselves to be a part of hermeneutics, it is obvious given their interests and references that they connect phenomenology (with special reference to B.Waldenfels), post-modernism and hermeneutics and underline the necessity of crossing methods to grasp cultural otherness. Intercultural philosophy is therefore a DYNAMIC PROCESS.

Cultural hermeneutics methodological combination opens the way for other ways of looking at intercultural philosophy as represented by the article of K. Klostermaier (*cf 3.1 The problems of the hermeneutic circle. Can hermeneutics overtakes its own limits?*), as an illustration and an application of the theories conceptualized in the third chapter. It puts forwards Indian philosophy as a way to overcome Western limits of thought and argue towards the conception of a "hermeneutic centre" against the famous problem of the hermeneutic circle. He renews therefore the hermeneutic limits of thought - not through a hermeneutic reflection that would internally criticize some concepts - through Indian philosophy and hermetics that criticize the very movement of hermeneutics. In so doing, he actualizes the methods of practicing intercultural philosophy in his very argumentation. Klostermaier's article is not merely about intercultural philosophy, but is intercultural itself. Intercultural philosophy is therefore a PRACTICE.

From his particular reflection, we enlarge the debate towards Indian philosophy (*cf 3. 2 On the needs and possible intercultural methods from Indian philosophy*) and its possibility of bringing new intercultural elements and methods into the discourse. Although classical Indian philosophy can be said to suffer from the same defects of the absence of the cultural other like European philosophy (except the interesting possibilities taken from Jaina philosophy), the contemporary debate is deeply aware of the plurality of worlds, obviously as the consequence of the British

presence and residues on the Indian territory. India has then been busy reflecting on this forced hybridity and on the tension between its own tradition and the Western world, with whom it has developed a long conversation, fumbling between nationalism and westernization, and the need to find an in-between. The intercultural reflection does not necessarily follow the same orientation, as it starts in Europe from the awareness of its difficult past of colonization, the “crisis” of Europe and its relativization that made it look for the Other, while in India it emerges from the *de facto* intrusion and presence of the otherness in the own, and the need to redefine itself through this alienness. Europe looks at alienness to overcome its weaknesses while India looks at its grounds and conceptual categories with the awareness that they are partly alien (or that they became the own through the alien). Indian philosophy through this perspective brings a lot to “intercultural philosophy” defined as such, born in Europe (it obviously does not mean that it cannot be found elsewhere under other forms, but that the “school” that we studied is established in Europe). In return, intercultural philosophy has to admit that India and non-European countries are not merely intercultural objects to be studied but that the construction itself of an intercultural method has to be intercultural. Intercultural philosophy needs therefore an INTERCULTURALIZATION OF THE METHOD itself.

The hermetics of H. Rombach (*cf 3.3. Towards Hermetics: H.Rombach*) that has been introduced in Klostermaier’s article deserves further developments as it severely criticizes hermeneutics as having constitutive insufficiencies. It emerges then as a pluralistic conception of worlds - as against the individuality of the horizon - that are irreducibly different from each other, so that no understanding can be rightly claimed but only an experiential way of “seeing” the worlds. This lively procedure (as against a conceptual analysis) is constituted by continual motions that enable a communication through jumps from one world to another, under the form of a concreative conversation (*Gespräch*), a transformation of the worlds and the subjects instead of the distance that separates them. This is operative in the vertical direction of a Meliorisation that keeps the worlds towards a qualitative orientation to prevent any domination and guarantee an intercultural process. Intercultural philosophy is therefore a CONCREATIVE STRUCTURE.

The limits of a hermetic theory, which is almost an oxymoron as such, lead us to incarnate it in a realm that is more adequate to convey intercultural hermetics: literature (*cf 4. Beyond philosophy? A glance at literature as a possible synthesis for a philosophical intercultural method*). In so doing, we have tried to reconcile hermetics and hermeneutics as different stages of the structures that can be combined in the textual and meaning-oriented sphere that enables us to have a lively experience of the encounter with the cultural other. Michaux relates what it is in *praxis* to be a cultural other or a Barbarian, how it feels, which frustrations it can create and whatever internal connections and transformations emerge from this encounter. He makes the reader live the intercultural experience. Literature can in this way free the conceptual mediations of philosophy so that it *is* itself intercultural, as a direct experience or better, as an IMMEDIATE MEDIATION.

Intercultural philosophy is consequently defined as a concreative structure that is always developing itself in a theoretical practice directed towards an ethics (as a constant meliorisation). It is a dynamic process that requires to be interculturalized at all levels of its constitution and conception in its very method in order to become an immediate mediation.

5.2 Interculturality today: looking at the past to create a radically new present

At the end of our journey between Indian and Western philosophies, we would like to come back on the general grounds that motivated our undertaking. Our reader could have distinguished two underlying trajectories in this work, which represent for us two directions for intercultural philosophy.

To critically re-interpret the traditions- On one side, it appears crucial to us to critically interpret, read and understand the roots of a mutual integration, encounter, and conflict throughout the history of ideas. Numerous problems result, which are responsible in a large way for the contemporary resistances against intercultural philosophy, or in general for a lack of respect and recognition of cultural otherness and a plurality of philosophies. We believe that analyzes of the respective traditions and heritages, as well as their mutual understanding (Halbfass, 1988), in order to be able to show any mark of centrism in any history, bring most of the actual difficulties and conditions for an understanding and possibilities of relation with the cultural other. Historical practices and beliefs lead us to a complex contemporary situation where the cultural other and the process of interacting have to be redefined. It can however be beneficial only when we are able to question all cultural presuppositions, so-called universal beliefs, and have the ability to understand differences. In so doing, we hope to overtake ideologies, clichés and vicious and subtle residues of colonization, closure, inclusivism, reduction, assimilation, and prejudices. To analyze the actual difficulties in the light of our inheritance of thoughts, the connotations of our concepts brought about by the history of their use, the images of the Other understood via traditions, in order to deconstruct them, and to start over on the basis of a critical and open mind towards the cultural other, was our initial motivation developed in the first part “1. Introduction: the problems of thinking an inter-cultural tradition and the emergence of cultural otherness.”. It was particularly the case regarding intercultural hermeneutics and its re-interpretations of the problematic Gadamer in “3.1.1 Gadamer’s hermeneutic circle. How can we interpret the hermeneutic inheritance?”. This discussion about the influence of the closure of tradition continues during the whole work, as intercultural philosophers are rooted in a certain past and a particular tradition of thought, and have to deal with influences, past and previous philosophical systems. We mentioned the Husserlian influence on B.Waldenfels, the Gadamerian, Plessnerian and Schelerian influences on R.A Mall, the Gadamerian influence (via its opposition) of H.Rombach, the reflection from Deconstruction of “Cultural hermeneutics”, etc. As we said in the introduction, we have to be aware and to reflect upon those necessary, inevitable and rich, however not neutral, influences.

Towards a new model- At the same time, what the research by contemporary intercultural philosophers shows is precisely an actual and radically new model or structure to construct relations between cultures. From the awareness of our new global situation, new partners and configurations, we also know that it is absolutely necessary to re-think the concept of cultural otherness in a relation of equality and recognition of the Other. One cannot avoid the rapprochements and links between nations and continents, and structures from the past, such as

colonization, should become obsolete. We have to start over in new approaches and new reflections that can actually match the contemporary concept of cultural otherness, until now unthinkable. To do so, it is necessary to develop new creative and lively processes and dynamics to connect cultures; multiple directions, multiples relations and multiple concepts have to be renewed, from “understanding” to “living together”. This is the aim of intercultural philosophers, and to critically transmit their results in an intelligible way was the aim of this work, from R.A Mall to H. Rombach.

It would be, we think, a mistake to separate those two directions. To forget the inheritance would be to underestimate our prejudices and presuppositions, something taught to us by Gadamer, who himself caused many of those difficulties of inheritance in an intercultural context. Unfortunately, these prejudices are generally still in place, and it would be misleading to neglect or deny this fact. Intercultural philosophy must start at the beginning, and move forwards carefully with an awareness of the lack of its foundation and the difficulties generated by its past. To focus only on this heritage on the other side, would obviously turn out to be a fixation to this tradition, and a lack of creativity. To blame ourselves, or to lose ourselves only in the past would not result in any concrete change, any new direction or any new philosophical turn. We have to be aware of the heritage of our models of thinking and at the same time, we have to aim at new models. The two attitudes are correlative and interdependent, and are therefore the conditions for intercultural philosophy.

5.3 The question of the method

We think that the problem of the method of thinking intercultural philosophy is primordial, as it precisely reflects and relates the two sides aforementioned, situated at the parting of the ways. It raises the question of the past in the context of re-interpreting traditional philosophical methods (we started from the re-interpretation, and came to the problems of hermeneutics in this work before all, with the main figure of Gadamer), to the exclusion of the cultural other in classical philosophies, Western and Indian. This study does not and cannot do justice to the details, the consequences and the criticism of each problem of the past; one could continue this work with another approach starting from phenomenology, and the surprising judgments of its leaders. The intended exclusion of the East in their works (Heidegger and Husserl before all) appears indeed always as if it results from a very rational and logical argument, which is however neither intelligibly articulated nor clearly understandable. It seems to us to be the silent weak point of phenomenology, which however carries strong consequences for philosophy. In any case, these limits call for an intercultural renewal, as it took form in our work with the different propositions of an intercultural hermeneutics (2.1 *The concept of analogous hermeneutics as an intercultural method; analogy as a connective figure of difference.*), a processual dimension of the methods (for example in hermeneutics with its redefinition as a “Cultural hermeneutics” through the contributions of the University of Erlangen (cf 2.2 *Cultural hermeneutics (Kulturhermeneutik) as a criticism of intercultural hermeneutics*), the proposition of hermetics (3.3 *Towards Hermetics: H.Rombach.*), the need of polycultural methods (3.1.2 *To recentre the circle through interculturality with K.Klostermaier, and generally 3.2 On the needs and possible intercultural methods from Indian philosophy.*), and the pertinence of literature in this debate.

5 Conclusion: On the need of Intercultural Philosophy

This work has tried to lead a reflection on the foundation and the definition of a new intercultural method. It shows first the need for a new method, that we hope to have proved, as well as the first possible steps for its elaboration. We wanted indeed to create a discussion between the different researches and propositions already existing in intercultural philosophy, in order to critically evaluate their advantages and inconveniences by relating one to another, hoping in so doing to underline an adequate and pertinent way towards cultural otherness. We believe that methods can also be interculturally combined, from different influences and classical references, and from different traditions, in the same way that we believe that there is no “pure” culture. This work aims to start from the considerations that are available. They are however insufficient to us if considered separately. We therefore tried to raise therefore the main problems and difficulties of intercultural philosophy, and to orientate ourselves towards new leads for an intercultural method that would get rid of the past prejudices, and be adequate to the unique contemporary situation. It asks for new tools of thinking.

In general, intercultural philosophy will continue with a critical spirit, open to the worlds and cultures, the past traditions as well as the creative possibilities of the future. We believe that we are on the edge of the biggest challenge of the 21th century, and that intercultural relations are and will continue to be the core of this century, under the forms of international organizations, diplomacy or identity, religious and cultural conflicts. In order to avoid a situation where domination and conquest by power continue to be the prevailing (not to say the unique) paradigm of thought for any intercultural relation, philosophy must now take this challenge seriously, and work for the defense of a diversity of cultures on the ground of respectful relations in a globalized world, and for the renewal of cultural relational models. Intercultural philosophy has to distinguish itself from international politics by an ethical transformation of individual consciousness and mentalities, beyond the privileged roles of the national leaders. In that sense it goes further than national consciousness, and must infiltrate deeper inside cultures and worlds in the collective spheres of mentalities to deconstruct social and individual prejudices and stereotypes.

Its path must go far, through every world to find its own models to make sense among pluralities. It must resound in multiple echoes beyond borders and not rest until it reaches the depth of individuals, so that one day recognition and mutual respect of pluralities of cultures and philosophies, and consequent construction of intercultural relations would be a common incarnated experience, and intercultural philosophy would be useless. But this journey takes long.

“The time that my journey takes is long and the way of it long.

I came out on the chariot of the first gleam of light, and pursued my voyage through the wildernesses of worlds leaving my track on many a star and planet.

It is the most distant course that comes nearest to thyself, and that training is the most intricate which leads to the utter simplicity of a tune.

The traveller has to knock at every alien door to come to his own, and one has to wander through all the outer worlds to reach the innermost shrine at the end.

My eyes strayed far and wide before I shut them and said “Here art thou!”

The question and the cry “Oh, where?” melt into tears of a thousand streams and deluge the world with the flood of the assurance “I am!””

Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali* (Tagore, 1949;1963, §12 p.34-35)

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Glossary of Important Sanskrit Terms

- Ahimsā:** noninjury; nonviolence (from the verb root hims = to injure + the prefix a = not). It represents one of the great vows (mahavrata) of the Jainas. It is the law of compassion in body, mind, and spirit. Negatively it means refraining from causing any injury, and positively it stands for the practice of love toward all living beings. It is also a high virtue in the Yoga system. In modern times, it has been made popular in a politic sense by Gandhi., page 84
- Atman** spirit; self; soul; breath (from the verb root at = to breathe) or (from the verb root ap= to pervade, reach up to), page 66
- Bhāṣyas** commentary. K.Roy explains the specific kind of commentary that represents bhāṣyas whose primary aim is to elucidate the contents of a sūtra (often unintelligible due to its brevity and conciseness). A bhāṣyas is then composed of a combination of literal exposition and personal interpretation. The difference with Western hermeneutics is that the individual part will be implicit in the comment as if commentators only convey the Vedas though they bring significant changes, page 76
- Brahman:** the Absolute; the Supreme Spirit; the ultimate Reality; the ground of the universe; the Divine; great (from the root brn = to expand, greater than the greatest), page 39
- Darśana:** sight; view; vision; philosophy; system; sensation; apprehension; intuition (from Drs, voir)
It has two different meanings:
1. Seeing or being in the presence of a revered person, sacred idol, or sacred place. It refers to both seeing and being seen.
2. A standpoint or a system of thought. The various philosophical schools are known as darsanas, and it refers mainly to the six orthodox schools, page 39
- Dharma:** that which supports; ethical law; duty (literal translations). Mainly used as a translation for religion. It means a norm and can be used in a juridical, moral or religious sense. The Mimamsa school made it a philosophical concept by its studies of the valid rules and norms of understanding of the religious laws., page 13
- Jīva:** empirical self; life; embodied self; living entity (from the verb root jiv = to live), page 66

Jñāna:	consciousness; knowledge; cognition; comprehension (from the verb root jñā =to know). Its understanding is the ground of discussions between the different schools, it can mean the ultimate means to liberation (Advaita Vedanta), knowledge as a mode of the self (Mimamsa), as an act or a process, etc. The different forms or modes of cognition lead to the whole theory of knowledge and the study of the categories and their validity., page 69
Karma:	action; activity; process; past actions in their potential forms or states, page 65
Mleccha:	foreigner; an alien; barbarian; someone who does not belong to Hindu culture, who does not speak Sanskrit; an outcast., page 13
Mokṣa:	liberation; salvation; emancipation; spiritual freedom; release; the final goal of human life (from the verb root moks = to liberate). It constitutes the core of metaphysics, and the various solutions to reach this state forms the differences and specificities of every school, as well as their debates, page 66
Mukti:	liberation; release (from the verb root much = to liberate); same as mokṣa, page 66
Naya	standpoint; opinion. According to Jainism, a particular opinion or viewpoint is a partial truth about an entity. It is the knowledge of a thing in a particular context or relationship. It may be divided into two kinds: artha-naya, and sabda-naya. Artha-naya is concerned with the meaning of objects while sabda-naya is concerned with the meaning of words. Naya has also been divided into two categories: dravya-artha, which considers an object from the standpoint of substance, and paryayarthika-naya, which considers an object from the standpoint of its modifications and conditions., page 85
Nayavāda	Doctrine of tropes, of modalities, of points of view. Theory of relative pluralism in Jainism (see naya), page 85
Nirvāṇa:	extinction; perfection; the Great Peace; freedom from suffering; blowing out; cooling (from the verb root vii = to blow + nir = out). In a Buddhist context, it is the goal of life, the cessation of the cycle of existence, the final state of peace. Its discussion is one point of division between Mahayana and Hlnayana schools, page 66
Pandit	learned individual; scholar; pundit (Master in Sanskrit language and knowledge, Hindu classical text and Indian Philosophy), page 78
Puruṣa:	ātman; person; man; individual soul, page 66
Sūtra:	thread, string; aphorism, page 75
Samsāra:	empirical existence; the wheel of birth and death; transmigration; the flux or the flow of the world; the objective universe; this world (from the verb root sr = to flow and sam =together); worldly illusion, page 65

Samvad (or Samvada) agreement; correspondence, page 81

Saptabhaṅgī the seven propositions (see syādvāda), page 84

Syādvāda Doctrine of conditioned predication, the theory of may be.

As Reality is a complex phenomena, according to the Jainas, no one can express the nature of reality fully. The term maybe (syād) is prefixed before seven propositions giving each one a conditional point of view. Each proposition affirms something only in a relative point of view and, thus, the definite Jaina point of view is that there is no one definite point of view of Reality. All knowledge is relative, page 85

Tīkā subcommentary; gloss, page 76

This glossary provides definitions along with some explanations of the Sanskrit terms used in this study and rests on the works of different specialists. It is a compilation of various literal translations by J.N Mohanty (J. N. Mohanty, 2000a) and J.Grimes (Grimes, 1996), of extended commentaries of M. Ballanfat in his vocabulary of Indian philosophy (Ballanfat, 2003), and can sometimes refer to the historical and hermeneutic development that one can read extensively in W. Halbfass (Halbfass, 1988).

(We apologize in case of occasional problems in the retranscription of the correct devanāgarī spelling.)