

Editorial

Global Conversations – A New Philosophical Outlet

Global Conversations is a new academic journal for quality work in contemporary philosophy, human and social sciences, as well as any other field, with focus on global thought, culture, and values. It is a philosophical journal in the broadest sense centering on the idea of philosophy as conversation open to any viewpoint, school orientation, intellectual trend, and cultural tradition. It welcomes in-depth philosophical and theoretical discussions of relevant issues, as well as texts on issues in comparative philosophy, critical theory, art criticism, cross-cultural investigations, interdisciplinary research, or transcultural studies. The following are some notes on its origin and inaugural thematic issue.

An Inspirational Beginning

The journal *Global Conversations* was born out of the enthusiasm of the participants in the International Colloquium in Contemporary Philosophy and Culture with the heading “Converging Differences: Global Thinking and Local Existence,” which took place at “St. Cyril and St. Methodius” University of Veliko Tarnovo, March 21-23, 2018. Along with the university, the colloquium was co-organized by the Society for Philosophy as Global Conversation and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and gathered more than 20 participants from more than 10 countries from three continents from around the globe. It featured also an accompanying cultural program, which included a number of local and international artists who did not need more than just the idea to get involved. Amidst a number of intellectually stimulating presentations in a diverse and easy-going cultural atmosphere, many of us felt that the forum had seized upon a wave of enthusiasm that was not triggered simply by our call for papers but was underlain by a more fundamental need of global cultural awareness, exchange, and conversation, which – we were convinced – had become pressing and of import. Consequently, the ideas of regular conferences and a journal got circulated and ultimately embraced. It was agreed that the journal will be published by the Society for Philosophy as Global Conversation in Japan and that it will target articles not only from the area of philosophy but also from the rest of the humanities, as well as from other fields, which in one way or another support and address the idea of global cultural awareness, exchange, and conversation as medium towards a peaceful and prosperous world. It was also agreed that we will organize regular academic forums in different parts of the globe, which incorporate cultural programs featuring artists and other cultural figures, who embrace and support the idea. The cultural program aspect is meant to serve the double purpose of keeping philosophy in touch with the rest of the culture and of showing that the value of conversation can be advanced and affirmed – both globally and locally – in other ways as well.

If you embrace our basic idea of global conversation and you are willing to contribute to it, you are always very welcome.

***The Inaugural Thematic Issue – Converging Differences:
Global Thinking and Local Existence***

Philosophy has always been a conversation, one way or another, which today more than ever has become a global conversation. One can think of a *conversation* as a convergence of differences in this Saussurean sense in which in language there are only differences. One can regard a conversation as *global* when it takes up differences arising locally and shares them globally, or reversely – when it takes up ones occurring globally and rediscovers them locally. One can call a conversation *philosophical* not just in the narrower disciplinary sense, in which we speak, for instance, of Platonic (dialogical) and Hegelian (historical) dialectics, but also in the virtually unrestricted sense, in which any form of reflective difference takes place along the venues of the whole culture.

Whereas ‘global’ is sometimes understood as planetary, sometimes as universal, we endeavored to explore its postmodern sense as arising in the locality of the particular. This sense, towards which we have been most articulately swayed by Lyotard, has been long since circulated in the cultural traditions of both East and West. One could read it in the Ancient Greek *dialectic* (literally “speaking across, or conversation”), in Augustine’s view of *truth*, *good*, and *faith*, in Lao-tse’s *Tao* and *Te* relation, or in Hindu *Dharma* alike.

In the contemporary philosophy, the encounter of the ‘global’ with the ‘local’ finds its footing via an array of notions. From a certain vantage point, a critical reader could trace it in Kierkegaard’s *subjective truth*, Nietzsche’s *will to power*, Heidegger’s *Dasein* and its *Umwelt*, Jaspers’ *truth as communication*, Levinas’ *tiers dans le visage de l’autrui*, Gadamer’s *hermeneutics* and its *Horizontverschmelzung*, Wittgenstein’s *language games*, Habermas’ *communicative action*, Rorty’s *political pragmatism*, Foucault’s *genealogy of power*, Derrida’s *différance*, Cixous’ *écriture féminine*, Baudrillard’s *symbolic exchange*, amongst others. It could be also sought for in much of the rest of the culture – human and social sciences, literature, conceptual art, alternative theater, contemporary music, cinema, contemporary dance, fashion and design, architecture, cultural management, advertising, etc.

Among the selected eight articles addressing various aspects of theme, the first two focus on issues of comparative philosophy. The first article discusses the idea of global conversation as an interplay of both global and local significations. It brings together the philosophical views of three different thinkers from three different continents and times, identifying such significations in their key concepts, including Laozi’s *Tao*, *Te*, *Wu-wei*, and *Ziran*; Heidegger’s *Dasein*, *Umwelt*, *Being*, and *beings*; and Rorty’s *political* and the *greatest happiness for the greatest number*. It ultimately affirms that the single individual – regardless of his or her specific socio-cultural role – is the *modus operandi* of the interplay between the global and the local, who is always and inevitably involved in global conversation on the spot. In the second article, Tomokazu Baba focuses on Emmanuel Levinas’ reading of Hegel, which differs from those of the representatives of the so-called French “Hegel Renaissance,” with whom Levinas closely interacted. Baba’s insightful discussion examines Levinas’ main points of criticism of Hegel, which are based on these two thinkers’ completely opposite notions of

Judaism, as well as on Levinas' specific understanding of a Heidegger's lecture on philosophy as *Weltanschauung*. Overall, Baba lays bare the steps of Levinas' attempt to demonstrate what is called "elemental evil" as a part of the "philosophy as *Weltanschauung*" of Hitlerism.

Another pair of articles addresses issues of ethics and religion. Jon Mahoney discusses the interlinkage of religion, identity, and violence with the aim to differentiate the collective violence in the name of religion from other forms of collective violence. On a topic that has gained much attention in the last two decades, Mahoney argues that the collective violence in the name of religion is better understood as distinctive when we take into account the extent to which religion is a part of an identity. He illustrates the suitability of his identity approach for understanding religious violence with a case study on the collective violence of Uighur Muslims in northwest China. Micah Daily also addresses ethical aspects of co-existence of differences along Kant's notions of 'love thy neighbor' and 'quarrelsomeness'. She sees a possibility for Kant's moral philosophy and anthropology to provide a framework for understanding and treatment of the modern day hyperpolarization that has become apparent in various contexts. She argues that the natural inclination towards quarrelsomeness can become a subject of cultivation by the application of rational moral principles, so that the tension between quarrelsomeness and love of neighbor is reduced and hyperpolarization as a whole relieved.

A further pair of articles focuses on transcultural influences in literary writing. Francesc Passani explores the global impact of storytelling by drawing attention to two distinct trends of literary influences that – in a geographical sense – have moved in the opposite directions. The trend from East to West is linked with the reception of the stories of *The Arabian Nights* in the European literary culture of the Middle and Modern Ages, but Passani has traced its roots back to the Indian classics of *The Panchatantra* and Somadeva's *Kathasaritasagara*. The trend from West to East is linked with the influence of Nikolai Gogol and Jane Austen on the writers Lu Xun and Natsume Soseki, who have in turn left their marks on the subsequent literary developments of China and Japan respectively. For her part, Petya Tsoneva discusses the narrative perspective of Elif Shafak's novel *Honour*, which is linked to the cultural peculiarities of the Middle East region. Having a multi-cultural experience and adopting a multi-cultural approach herself, Shafak revisits the modern day country of her roots, Turkey, to uncover the multi-faceted encounter of the region's local culture with the global culture. Tsoneva traces the key to unlocking Shafak's perspective to the writer's conjecture of two uneasy to reconcile opposing visions of God – one as punishing and masculine, and another as maternal and all-embracing.

A final pair of articles focuses on attitudinal issues in society and culture. Alexandra Preitschopf takes a critical look at the popular cultural phenomenon of rap music in France and its complex relation with pressing social issues, such as poverty, migration, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia. In particular, the issues in question are often brought up by rappers with Muslim background, who while addressing them in their lyrics would draw on the Islamic religion and solidarity with Muslims around the globe, often at the expense of sensitive matters such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to the effect of promoting anti-Semitism. In this peculiar convergence of a local suburban culture with the global Islamic religion, Preitschopf sees reasons for concern and a need for a wider debate on issues of integration, religion, secularism, and multiculturalism, as the phenomenon she focuses on is limited neither to rap, nor to France. For their part, Mitko Momov and Mirena Patseva bring to our attention an

empirical study on attitudes concerning the reception of the notions of ‘foreigner’ and ‘motherland’ at different times during Bulgaria’s transition to democracy since 1989. In the early stages of this transition the attitudes towards the ‘foreigner’ have been more positive than those in the later stages more than two decades on; whereas with regard to ‘motherland’ the tendency has been the reverse. Momov and Patseva correlate the variations in attitudes toward ‘the own’ and ‘the foreign’ with oppositions to both the official state policies and a generally perceived crisis of values.

We hope that the articles in this first issue will stimulate the debate on today’s complex relation of global and local in an insightful and productive manner. Enjoy!

Rossen Roussev