

Editorial

Introduction

The second thematic issue of *Global Conversations* features articles in the areas of philosophy, literary criticism, and interdisciplinary research. They were selected from the responses to our call for submissions on the broadly defined theme of “Home and Journey around the Globe,” which falls into the general scope of interest of the journal in global philosophical thinking and cultural exchange.

The unifying idea of the issue was provisionally outlined in most general terms based on landmark conceptual pointers from both Western and Eastern intellectual traditions, including the originary Ancient Greek sense of ‘philosophy’, certain aspects of the thought of the 20th-century philosopher Martin Heidegger, and the key notion of the Ancient Chinese classic of *Tao Te Ching*, also referred to as *Laozi*. As we know it, the first record of a conjoined usage of *philos* and *sophia* is found in Herodotus’ *Histories* from the 5th century BC. Herodotus uses there the verb *philosophēin* (φιλοσοφῆῖν) broadly in the sense of love to learn or desire to find out and links it to ‘traveling over the world for the sake of seeing it’ (I, 30). In a similar vein, the latter Heidegger relates *way* (*Weg*) and *waying* (from the Alemannic-Swabian *wēgen* and *Bewēgung*) to language and thinking, as well as to the ineffable sense of the *Tao* of *Laozi*. Heidegger has also designated the fundamental motivation for any thinking and philosophizing with terms like *the uncanny* (*Unheimlichkeit*) and *homelessness* (*Heimatlosigkeit*), and he has likewise discussed its ends in terms of *home* (*Heim*) and *homecoming* (*Heimkehr*).

In this sense, philosophy can be seen as a journey around the globe, which is at once also homecoming. In our view, in this homecoming journey, philosophy takes essentially the form of a conversation, much like the one described by Herodotus between Solon and Croesus in Sardis on the meaning of happiness, or like the one of exchange of differences of significance on the level of culture. In this sense, understanding philosophy as conversation means embracing differences of opinions that come from all levels of society and culture, as well as from all societies and cultures, to contribute to productive debates, insightful reflections, and practical solutions.

The opening pair of articles focus directly on the thematic relation of philosophy and journey. In the first one, Tomokazu Baba explores the notion of ‘philosophy as journey’ drawing attention to the association of knowledge with ‘travel’ in the work of key figures of the intellectual culture. He brings into his discussion aspects of Plato’s allegory of the cave, Kant’s differentiation between philosophy as system and philosophizing, Heidegger’s concept of ‘home’, Levinas’ sense of the ‘need to escape’, as well as a number of other points coming from thinkers such as Aristotle, Augustine, Petrarch, Hegel, Husserl, and Ritter, to identify a close relation of the sense of ‘philosophy’ with that of ‘journey’. A key element in Baba’s perspective is the notion of ‘exodalgia’, which he advances – in parallel with that of ‘nostalgia’ – to recapture the Levinasian ‘need to escape’ as a prerequisite for travel and thus for philosophizing. For its part, the second article explores the aptness of the metaphors of ‘way’, ‘home’, and ‘journey’ for understanding our reflective activities of thinking and philosophizing. It dwells over aspects of Heidegger’s ‘way’ and ‘home’ related vocabulary, the peculiar relation of *Tao* and *Te* – the basic notions of the *Laozi* classic, as well as the association of ‘philosophy’

with ‘journey’ in the work of Herodotus, to assert their interrelation, compatibility, and complementarity. In this way, the article also conveys an argument on behalf of the viability of understanding philosophy – by way of a metaphorical apperception – as the ‘journey of waying and homecoming’.

The thematic focus of the next pair articles is broadly on the relation of home, journey, and literature. In the first article, Fabien Durringer explores the intersections of the life and work of the journalist and writer Lafcadio Hearn, which were marked by his remarkable journey around the globe – from the place of his birth on the Greek Island of Lefkada through Ireland and the United States to Japan, where he eventually settled. The author analyzes the process leading to Hearn’s decision to make Japan his ‘home’ and links it to his ‘falling in love’ with the culture and the people of this country. A highly significant point that Durringer makes is that Hearn’s experience in Japan, which inspired his writings that were largely intended to make its culture known to the Western readers by having them ‘undertake a journey’ to the country with the means of literature, also led him to a reassessment of ‘the presumed superiority of the Western culture over its Eastern counterpart’. In the second article, Fiona Tomkinson explores the influences of East and Central Asian thought on the British Literature from the last century focusing on the cases of Iris Murdoch, Lawrence Durrell, and Ted Hughes. She sees Murdoch’s assimilation of Anselm’s ontological argument and Plato’s idea of the Good through Katsuki Sekida’s concept of pure cognition, Durrell’s fusion of Buddhist, Greek Apollonian, and gnostic perspectives to convey the interconnectedness of his characters, as well as Hughes’ invocation of elements of Hindu, Buddhist, and shamanic thought in his poetry to engage with the harshness of the issues of life and death, as questioning well-established precepts of the Western culture while searching for alternatives in the Eastern culture. One of Tomkinson’s most astute insights is that while these authors may have thus aimed to counter an undue puritanism of their own culture, they do not advance an ‘opposition’ but rather an ‘intertwining’ of elements of the two cultural traditions, which also appears to be the more complex sense that she would like to see in the metaphor of ‘the silk road’ as ‘the fusion of Apollo and the Buddha’, rather than that of the road to ‘holism’.

In the final article, Nicholas Birns offers an interdisciplinary perspective on the notion of *hyperlocal*, its aspects of ‘elasticity’ and ‘intimacy’, as well as its complex relation to notions like ‘place’ and ‘identity’, drawing on sources from geography, music, art, literature, philosophy, cultural and political history. Paying special attention to the period of ‘middle modernity’ (1700-1850), he brings into his discussion elements of the empiricism of Locke and Berkeley, the monadology of Leibniz, as well as the aesthetics of Kant among others, to differentiate the character of the hyperlocal from any sense of parochialism, regionalism, nationalism, or colonialism, furnishing numerous examples of European settlers’ experience, sense of identity, and mutual reception with indigenous people in geographical regions like North America and Australasia. A highly suggestive point that Birns makes is that while the resource of the hyperlocal is modest and is not to be overrelied on for purposes of ideology, its ‘elasticity’ is a capacity that enables it to ‘operate on the scale of the global’ and thus to promote democracy and internationalism.

We hope that these articles will incite your interest and contribute to the ongoing discussions on the philosophical thought and cultural exchange of an ever more globalized world. Thank you for your time!

Rossen Roussev