The Ethics of Transversal Communication

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HWA YOL JUNG

If you are silent and never speak, what will the next generation transmit?
— *Han-shan ("Cold Mountain")*

If we keep on speaking the same language together, we're going to reproduce the same history. — *Luce Irigaray*

INTRODUCTION

I t is never trite to emphasize that communication is the *fundamentum* of the condition of humanity: to be human is to communicate. Everything we do and think depends on it. The American pragmatist John Dewey was unimpeachable when he characterized the art of communication as "the most wonderful" of all human affairs. Just as philosophy began in wonder in the West, communication is full of wonder. It is most wonderful when we watch and hear infants begin to learn with zest and fidelity how to speak by singing their first words. Communication is indeed the master key to unlock the mystery of humanity and the universe.

The late Canadian philosopher of communication Marshall McLuhan birthed and promoted the idea of the world as "a global village" — that catch-phrase which has become everybody's everyday parlance. He was well aware of the fact that in the twenty-first century, communication through electronic media would usher us into the world as a global village. It would be a mistake, however, to think of the metaphor of "village" as something territorially archaic and circumscribing and culturally parochial. As a matter of fact, it means to inculcate and propagate a cosmopolitan idea. What is emphasized in it

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is the idea that the expansive globe has shrunken into an intimate place which is within the reach of touch, as it were. It garnishes the intimate sense of proximity rather than distance. In the age of electronic media, communication fashions the deep sense of community. So McLuhan believed. He was fond of describing TV as the medium of tactility that transcends visual typography exemplified in printing technology since the Gutenberg era.

In what follows, I will discuss the meaning and end of globalization in today's world which is not one but many, that is, multicultural. First, I will begin with the concept of Interbeing which characterizes and typifies the way of East-Asian thinking (Section II). Second, transversality serves as the endearing term of interconnecting diverse cultures beyond ethnocentrism, e.g., Eurocentrism and Sinocentrism. "Transversality," Calvin O. Schrag (2003: 23) declares, "serves to delineate the space and movement of communicative praxis, in its ethicopolitical dimension." In other words, transversality is the most fitting response to the problematique of multiculturalism (Section III). Third, transversality is in need of dialogue on a global scale which is interfused with the ethical (Section IV).

INTERBEING: THE TAO OF EAST-ASIAN THINKING

A few years ago the Singaporean intellectual/statesman Kishore Mahbubani asked: Can Asians think? Or can Asian societies be Asian rather than just Western replicas? He challenged and prodded Asians to think about the question. Mahbubani represents a significant group of Asian intellectuals both past and present who question a blind faith in modernization/ Westernization and its values without falling into a black hole of nativism or exceptionalism. I discovered the fitting response to Mahbubani's thought-provoking question in one elegant word: *Interbeing*. Interbeing is *inscribed* and *incorporated* in Sinism.[1]

Interbeing is the term used by the Vietnamese Zen Buddhist Thich Nhat Hanh who established the religious order with the same name. Sinism is the term which was coined by the sinologist H. G. Creel to specify that cluster of characteristics which are peculiarly Chinese. Despite its origin in China, the *dispositif* of Sinism, however, is not confined to China alone. It encompasses Korea and Japan as well (i.e., East Asia or Far East)—namely, the geographical region where Chinese ideograms or sinograms have been and are in use. The sinographic disposition is embodied and exemplified in Confucianism, Taoism, and the hybrid religion of Ch'an/Sun/Zen Buddhism.

Sinism may be summed up in the fourfold proposition that (1) where there is no social process, there is no reality, (2) where there is no differentiation or gradation, there is no necessity for sociality, (3) sociality is extended to include interspeciesistic as well as interhuman relationships, and (4) as the body is the material condition of our interbeing in the world, social reality is necessarily an embodied phenomenon. As the body is the seat (*cathedra*) of human existence, social reality or Interbeing begins with bodily contact or intercorporeality, that is, it is first and foremost a carnal interconnection. The body defines and makes what the late French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu calls "the performative magic of the social." In summation, therefore, Sinism and Interbeing go hand in hand: they are inseparable twins. In Sinism as relational ontology, everything is said to be connected to everything else in the universe, and nothing exists in isolation. As such the fitting orientation to comprehend Interbeing is also *intertextual* — to use the fashionable language of contemporary philosophy. It begins with communication as the thread which weaves/interweaves the fabric of Interbeing both interhuman and interspeciesistic.

THE TAO OF TRANSVERSALITY

Today's world of multiculturalism calls for a radically new way of conceptualization. Transversality is the most fitting response to it. It is most fitting for intercultural communication in the globalizing world because it decenters cultural essentialism or ethnocentrism. Truth knows no one privileged center: it is everywhere. Transversality is a term of connectivity, of diagonal or lateral connectivity. It makes connections in light of difference in the world where everything is interconnected. Thus transversality is conceived of as an "adventure of difference" in the pluralistic and interconnected universe: but for difference, there would be no need for either communication or connectivity. Heidegger's way of defining *Differenz* as *Unterschied*, which is an interplay between the two words, is impeccable in pointing to the inseparability of difference with the relational (*unter*).

Most importantly, transversality is used here as a deconstructive concept. It dismantles or unpacks the status quo and then goes beyond what is given, received or established by constructing a new formation of concepts. As a term of interruption (inter/ruption), transversality challenges the conventional wisdom and the assumed transparency of truth as universality and overcome the limits of universality as the Eurocentric or "Orientalist" canon of truth

in Western modernity. It no longer essentializes the West as the universal center of truth or the "Rosetta stone" of universality. It means to decenter Europe as the univocal site of "universal truth" whose identitarian and unitarian motivation fails to take into account the multivocity of non-European others. Thus transversality should be spelled "trans(uni)versality" which means to transcend universality as the Eurocentric canon of truth and demythologize what the British postcolonial theorist Robert C. Young calls "white mythology."[2]

The French philosopher and sinologist François Jullien calls the effort of decentering Eurocentrism or Western modernity — with Kant in mind — "a new 'Copernican reversal.'" He contends that in "shaking up" Western modernity, China becomes a "philosophical tool," that is, he uses Chinese thought (or Sinism) to interrogate Western philosophy and to liberate it from its own "mental cage." Most radically, he wishes to replace the concept of "truth" itself with that of "intelligibility" because the trekking of truth is bound up with the history of Western philosophy. Jullien puts Foucault to full test in order to vindicate the Eurocentric "legislation" of truth for all global humanity. In his 1978 visit to Japan, the vintage Foucault commented that as knowledge and power are interwoven as one seamless fabric, European imperialism and the era of Western philosophy come to an end, that is to say, the cognitive and political hegemony of the West as "a little peninsula of Asia" — to borrow the expression of Nietzsche — has come to a close. Foucault is not alone in conjecturing that philosophy of the future must be born "outside Europe" or in the "meetings and impacts" between Europe and non-Europe.

Long before Foucault and Jullien, Merleau-Ponty spoke of the "lateral universal" and the lateral continuity of all humanity both "primitive" and "civilized" across history and geography. He was unmistakably a consummate transversalist *avant la lettre*. The lateral universal is for him a new paradigm for worldmaking as well as philosophy. "Lateral"/horizontal rather than "linear"/vertical thinking is paradigmatic in that instead of digging the same hole deeper and deeper in which there is no exit in sight, it digs a new hole in another place. For Merleau-Ponty, all history is not only contemporaneous and written in the present tense but also an *open notebook* in which a new future can be inscribed.

Merleau-Ponty's deconstructive effort in philosophy is evidenced in his critique of Hegel's Eurocentrism. He is critical of Hegel who arbitrarily draws "a geographical frontier between philosophy and non-philosophy," that is, between the East and the West. Merleau-Ponty argues that philosophy is

destined to examine its own idea of truth again and again because truth is
"a treasure scattered about in human life prior to all philosophy and not
divided among doctrines." If so, Western philosophy is compelled to reexam-
ine not only its own idea of truth but also related matters and institutions
such as science, economy, politics, and technology. Besides philosophy's own
constant vigilance on what it is doing, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological
orientation demands its attention to the ethnography of the socio-cultural
life-worlds without which philosophy is a vacuous if not a fatal abstraction.

The way of ethnography's thick description practiced by Marcel Mauss
and Claude Lévi-Struass, who also taught at the Collège de France, provides
Merleau-Ponty with the idea of the lateral continuity of humanity between
the "primitive" and the "civilized," that is, with the incessant ethnographic
testing of the self by the other and the other by the self which has a "diacritical
value" for humanity's coexistence and its planetary solidarity. Ethnography
redeems Western narcissism precisely because it is the human science of
understanding the "foreign other." Merleau-Ponty contends that while for
Hegel philosophical truth as absolute and universal knowledge is notarized
and certified by the Occidental seal of approval alone, the Oriental past must
also have an honored place in the famed hall of philosophies to celebrate
its hitherto "secret, muted contribution to philosophy." He (1964: 139) writes
resolutely: "Indian and Chinese philosophies have tried not so much to dominate
existence as to be the echo or the sounding board of our relationship to
being. Western philosophy can learn from them to rediscover the relationships
to being and an initial option which gave it birth, and to estimate the possibilities
we have shut ourselves off from in becoming 'Westerners' and perhaps reopen
them." "If Western thought is what it claims to be," he challenges further,
"it must prove it by understanding *all* '*life-worlds*'" (italics added) as multiple
geo-sociocultural realities. Thus Merleau-Ponty suggests that in contrast to
the "overarching universal" of objective sciences or, we might add, Western
metaphysics, the "lateral universal" is acquired through ethnographical
experience as the way of "learning to see what is ours as alien and what
was alien as our own." Through the foreign other, we discover what is lacking
in ourselves. His lateral universal is a passport, as it were, that allows us
to cross borders between diverse cultures, enter the zone of intersections
and discover cross-cultural connections and convergences. While the European
geophilosophical politics of identity claims its validity as universal truth, the
lateral universal takes into account "local knowledge" prior to planetary
knowledge (dubbed by some as "*glocalization*") and allows the hermeneutical
autonomy of the other who may very well be right. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty's

lateral universal is contextualized as an open-ended and promiscuous web of temporal and spatial (i.e., chronotopic) interlacings.

THE TELOS OF COMMUNICATION AS GLOBAL DIALOGUE

Universality as the Eurocentric canon of truth has failed to take into account seriously the question of diversity or plurality in the world which is unquestionably multicultural. From the standpoint of Western epistemocracy since Descartes, the way of Sinitic thinking with its preoccupation with the socio-ethical dimension of human existence is deemed non-philosophical: what epistemology in the West is to philosophy, social ethics in the East is to non-philosophy. The Enlightenment is the soul of mainstream Western modernity. Its legacy continues today. Some speak of modernity as an unfinished project, a second modernity, even the modernization of modernity, or the second coming of Enlightenment itself. They have an unblinking faith in it as the absolute "end of history." Enlightenment's unbridled optimism is alleged to promote and crown the Promethean progress of humanity based on the universal cultivation of pure and applied reason. Kant, who had a dim view of non-Europe (especially Africa — a "blackout" from the circle of civilization), spelled out the civilizing mission of Enlightenment in the clearest and simplest term: to sanctify the autonomous benefaction of reason in rescuing and emancipating humanity from the dark grotto or slumber of self-incurred immaturity. In so doing, he institutionalized the major agenda of European modernity whose rationality was never seriously challenged until the auspicious advent of postmodern thought in Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean-François Lyotard, Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida, and others in the twentieth century. While privileging and valorizing the autocracy of reason for allegedly human progress and emancipation, European modernity unfortunately overlooks, marginalizes, and disempowers the (reason's) other whether it be the Orient (or so-called non-West), body, woman, or nature at the genuflected altar of Enlightenment's reason. Orient, body, woman, and nature are not randomly isolated but are four interconnected issues.

The legacy of Enlightenment is deeply anchored in the Cartesian *cogito* which has become the canonical institution of modern philosophy in the West. The theoreticism of the Cartesian *cogito* has mesmerized and hypnotized Western modernity. By identifying my being/existence or interbeing/coexistence with what I think of it, the *cogito* valorizes that mind which is at

once disembodied, monologic, and ocularcentric/panoptic. As it is the activity of the mind as "thinking substance"(*res cogitans*), the *cogito* is inherently monologic because it is always and necessarily *ego cogito* —the epitome of an "invisible man" who is isolated from others, both other minds and other bodies. It is *cogito ergo non-sum*. Once the self and the other are viewed as disembodied substances (*res*), two self-contained substances, monologism or even solipsism in extremis is inevitable. For Descartes, moreover, the mind as *cogito* erects and monumentalizes the privatized, insulated, and echoless chamber of "clear and distinct ideas" (three visual terms) in which nobody else can live. The self-imposed mind is incarcerated behind the iron curtain of the Panopticon. As a matter of fact, Cartesian panoptic metaphysics goes hand in hand with the monologism of the *cogito* because vision tends to deny or dominates the sociability of the other senses. To put it simply, there is an identity between the "I" and the "eye." The "eye-viewpoint" of the Cartesian *cogito* highlights the subjectivism or egocentrism of modern Western philosophy, of the modern age itself. To sum up in the language of Merleau-Ponty, the *cogito* scandalizes sociality. By incarcerating itself, the incorporeal mind as *cogito* denies the possibility of contact and communication with the external world of other humans and other things both living and nonliving.

In Sinism, there are no hard-headed Cartesian logocentrists who separate the mind from the body. The famed French sinologist Marcel Granet contended that the separation of the soul (spirituality) and the body (materiality) are totally foreign to Chinese thinking. In Sinism there are four human "dignities" which are all bodily postures and movements: standing, walking, lying, and sitting. Among these "dignities," sitting as in *zazen* (seated meditation) in Zen is best known to the Western audience. Without *zazen*, there would be no possibility of "awakening" (*satori*) which, as a thoroughly embodied phenomenon, may be juxtaposed to the logocentric and disembodied European "Enlightenment."

As *hara* (abdomen) is the center of the body, there is the interesting Japanese expression *kufu* which is identified with "thinking with the abdomen." *Kufu*, not unlike Auguste Rodin's sculptural masterpiece *The Thinker*, depicts thinking itself as an embodied or enfleshed activity. Furthermore, the Japanese are known for their effort and skill to negotiate conflict and reach consensus by avoiding any conflictual deadlock. They have an interesting expression, *haragei* or "the art of the belly" to intimate the coming together of minds nonverbally or viscerally. It signifies a mistrust of verbal maneuvering with the thought that verbal interaction tends to show superficiality in contrast

to inner, less articulate feelings which are communicated by inference or nonverbal means. This gives indeed some credence to the belief that silence is to East Asia, what talk is to the West.

The language of ideograms partakes of the soul and body of Sinism. Therefore, it may appropriately be called sinography. Language and culture are inseparable doubles. Language is a product of culture as much as culture expresses itself through the communicative medium of language: as Merleau-Ponty puts it, what the mind is to the body, thought is to language. The American philosopher Ernest Fenollosa is the inventor of "etymosinology" in which the study of things Sinitic is correlated to the etymological anatomy of ideograms. Chinese ideography — calligraphy in particular — is a kinetic art: it is the human body in graceful motion. The East Asians revere the art of calligraphy as much as, if not more than, painting: calligraphy is the stylized and ritualized drawing of ideograms. In the genealogy of form, calligraphy precedes painting. In very significant measure, Chinese ideography is a choreography of human gestures (including *jen* or the human rendered in its upright posture) and, as a family of signifiers, "a conversation of gestures" which, because of the presence of embodied meaning, is not to be confused with or reduced to human physiology alone. It is not at all surprising that there is now a Chinese (Taiwanese) "cursive" dance troupe on tour. Pablo Picasso's *Swimmer* and *Acrobat* are two choreographs of the human body in fluent and rhythmic motion which approach ideography or calligraphy. They are, in essence, balletic and frolicking anthropograms. Marshall McLuhan, who had the romantic vision of writing his anti-typographic treatise called *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962) in the ideogrammic medium (with the sensorium of touch as its synaesthetic epicenter), thought of the Chinese ideogram (sinogram) as "a vortex of corporate energy" — corporate in the double sense of being "bodily" and "collective." In the end, sinography as corporeal writing is the encoded medium of cultural transmission that combines and performs two functions (two in one): *inscribed* practices and *incorporated* rites.

The dialogical is an indispensable element in the harmonics of intercultural relationships. It is coeval with the unending process of "Becoming." Not unlike the Chinese *yin-yang* logic of correlation in which everything is said to be changing except change itself, "Becoming" has to go on: the dialogics of multiple differences knows no final ending — no Hegelian and Marxian "dialectical" or identitarian synthesis which may be identified with the identity of identity and difference. For Hegel, the dialectical consummates in the State (secretarian nation-state or perhaps unitarian world-state) as the march

of God in history, whereas for Marx the dialectical is primed for and perfected in "class essentialism" which favors the utopian and soteriological dream of the proletariat becoming one "universal class." For Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin, on the other hand, everything ends when dialogue ends. Thus dialogue cannot and must not come to an end.

The phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty, too, speaks of the "hyperdialectic" which is "unstable" or on a constant move. It is the dialectic without the conceptual trap of synthesis which is capable of envisaging the "ambiguous" plurality of relationships or transversing "the spatial and temporal multiplicity of the actual" without restriction. Unlike the Hegelian and Marxian dialectic but like Bakhtin's dialogism, Merleau-Ponty's hyperdialectic seeks convergence with contingency: there is "no science of the future." It explores the "algebra of history" as an encompassing horizon of the multiple rather than a totalizing series of events. "History," Merleau-Ponty (1963: 52-53) underscores, "has no meaning, if this meaning is understood as that of a river which, under the influence of all-powerful causes, flows towards an ocean in which it disappears. Every appeal to *universal history* cuts off the meaning of specific event, renders *effective history* insignificant, and is *a nihilism in disguise*" (italics added). Furthermore, the dialogical context for Bakhtin knows no limits. Even past meanings are forever unstable, never foreclosed, and undecidable. They may be retrieved and renewed for the present at any time. The indeterminacy of Bakhtin's dialogical principle applies to backtracking as well as foretracking. According to him, there is neither first nor last word in dialogue whose contexts include the deepest past and the most distant future. Even past meanings will always be recovered and renewed in later dialogues. No meaning, past or future, is predetermined and can be grasped once and for all, i.e., it is undecidable. In the end, the dialogical is "unfinalizable" (Bakhtin's own term) or "nondialectizable" (Deleuze's word). Bakhtin could not agree more with the American novelist William Faulkner's epigram that "the past is never dead, it's not even past." The spirit of Bakhtin's dialogical principle is best expressed in a Zen *koan*: "When you get to the top of the mountain, keep climbing."

Dialogism or dialogical communication is preeminently ethical. The Confucian formulation of the "rectification of names" (*cheng ming*) ─ calling things and events by their right (rite) names ─ exemplifies the performative ethics of language. The rhetoric of the sinogram is performative in the fullest sense of the term ─ that is, being active, corporeal, and above all ethical─ all at once. *Paideuma* ─the journal whose scholarship is devoted to the work of the American poet Ezra Pound who was the literary executor of Fenollosa─

uses the Confucian "rectification of names" as its motto. Chinese orthography is for Pound "a discipline of morale and of morals." The rectification of names, which makes its brief entrance in the *Analects* only once among all the writings of Confucius, points to moral orthopedics by the use of "rite words." It signifies the accountability of speaking and writing as moral performance which is also affiliated with the moral concept of fidelity or faithfulness (*hsin*) — etymologically speaking, "man standing by his word." Sincerity (*ch'eng*) as a cardinal moral virtue in Sinitic thought, too, means "we mean what we say" or "we perform in action what we promise in words," which spells syntactically "word" and "performativity." In other words, it actually embodies an index of morals whose key word is performativity.

The primacy of the other takes center stage particularly in Bakhtin's "heteroglossia" and Emmanuel Levinas's "heteronomy." Heteroglossia is the embodied soulmate of Bakhtin's "translinguistics" (*metalingvistika*) as pragmatic hermeneutics which is imbricated with the ethics of dialogue, while heteronomy is inscribed in the most visible surface (sur/face) of Levinas's ethics which is "de-ontologized," that is, without and beyond ontology. The primacy of the other in dialogue commands an ethical imperative, the ethics of responsibility. It was stipulated initially by Ludwig Feuerbach in his philosophy of the future which has now come of age. Since in Bakhtin's heteroglossia and Levinas's heteronomy, alterity is elevated to a higher place (i.e., altar as in the religious rites of Russian Orthodoxy and Judaism), it may properly be spelled "*altarity*." Levinas (1999: 97) resonates Feuerbach's seminal or Copernican discovery of "Thou" when he declares: "When I speak of [ethics as] first philosophy, I am referring to a philosophy of dialogue that cannot not be an ethics. Even the philosophy that questions the meaning of being does so on the basis of the encounter with the other." The political theorist Hannah Arendt's controversial "reporting" of Adolf Eichmann's "banality of evil" is often misunderstood because banality as the source of evil is for Arendt one's *inability to think* and perform in terms and for the sake of the other. Ultimately, evil is committed because we do not take responsibility seriously.

Hans-Georg Gadamer memorably remarked in his Heidelberg Colloquium that the very soul of hermeneutics — both philosophical and cultural, I might add — is the idea that the other may be right, i.e., it is heterocentric. Two monologues do not make one dialogue because dialogue is not a series of self-righteous monologues. As dialogue is the interfacing of speaking and answering (responding), speaking without the response is nothing more than monological. Thus the primacy of the response dictates the happening of

a dialogue. In Bakhtin's dialogism, therefore, the matter of "addressivity" is the regulative idea of dialogue. The anticipated presence of the response gives dialogue the assured sense of pragmaticity. The primacy of the other or response, however, should not be taken as the negation of the self. Otherwise, dialogue would not be dialogical: dialogue bereft of the embodied self is monologue in reverse. For Bakhtin, the embodied self answers the world by authoring it. In a true dialogue, neither the self nor the other is hegemonic. Speaking of the internal dialogism of the word, Bakhtin (1981: 280-282) asserts:

> Every word is directed toward an *answer* and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that anticipates. Primacy belongs to the response, as the activating principle: it creates the ground for understanding, it prepares the ground for an active and engaged understanding. Understanding comes to fruition only in the response. Understanding and response are dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other (italics original).

No ethics is complete without responsibility. Responsibility as first ethics is the only ethics worth its name. It is the resource that funds the economy of humanity's ethical life. Altarity is the ethical site of responsibility as first ethics if not the site of the ethical itself. The ethics of responsibility, however, differs radically from the Kantian deontological ethics of duty or oglibation and from utilitarian ethics based on the calculus of pleasure and pain. Rather, it is likened to the Confucian concept of "good knowledge" (*liang-chih*) which is "intuitive." It is demonstrated, according to Mencius, in the mother's spontaneous and caring response to rescue her drowning child at the risk of her own life without the forethought of obligation or utilitarian calculation which is euphemitically known as "rational choice theory." Similarly, many Jews were rescued by the Danish from the Holocaust out of the unmediated sense of compassion for humanity but not out of their "rational choice." A concrete response to a concrete situation in the case of rescuing a child or Jew is called by Arendt (moral) "judgment," by Hilary Putnam "ethics without ontology," and by Calvin O. Schrag "the fitting response." Let me conclude by quoting Bakhtin (1984: 252) who sums up eloquently and forcefully the communicative and ethical principium of his dialogism on the basis of reading Dostoevsky:

At the center of Dostoevsky's artistic world must lie dialogue, and dialogue not as a means but as an end in itself. *Dialogue here is not the threshold to action, it is the action itself.* It is not a means for revealing, for bringing to the surface the already ready-made character of a person; no, in dialogue a person not only shows himself outwardly, but he becomes for the first time that which he is and, we repeat, not only for others but for himself as well. *To be means to communicate dialogically. When dialogue ends, everything ends.* Thus dialogue, by its very essence, cannot and must not come to an end. At the level of his religious-utopian world-view Dostoevsky carried dialogue into eternity, conceiving of it as eternal co-rejoicing, co-admiration, con-cord. At the level of the novel, it is presented as the *unfinalizability of dialogue*, although originally as dialogue's vicious circle (italics added).

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Communication is the quintessential element of Interbeing in the world where nothing exists in isolation. It is also the sinew of globalization which embraces and promotes intercultural dialogue in the age of multiculturalism. The noted Latin American philosopher Enrique Dussel calls for "global dialogue" which is both longitudinal (East/West) and latitudinal (North/South). To be sure, dialogue should not be construed as dyadic reciprocity alone. By renouncing violence and terror, intercultural dialogue allows communication between/among diverse cultures. It facilitates cultural border-crossings. "Transversal" is used in place of "intercultural" for a twofold reason. In the first place, global dialogue is conceived of in the backdrop of the long history of Eurocentrism or the hegemonic practice of Europe. In the second place, the European canon of truth in the name of universality must be overcome or transcended in the name of transversality which should be read as "trans(uni)versality." The (Eurocentric) universalist has failed miserably in leaving out the question of diversity or multiplicity, that is, the non-West or "tricontinentalism" which is in itself not one but many.

Transversal communication as dialogue would reject, as Goethe did, Rudyard Kipling's separatist approach of "East is East" and "West is West" with the added baggage of "white man's burden." Nor would it accept the idea of "culture wars" and Samuel Huntington's irreconcilable "clash of civilizations" based on the chauvinistic "essentialization" of each civilization

involving the reification of its own difference from the rest. Nor would it be receptive to Francis Fukuyama's thesis of "the end of history" which is tantamount to both the continuation of Anglo-Eurocentrism and the valorization of the "one world" embedded in Western neoliberalism that denies transversal communication and the underlying assumption of cultural diversity or multiculturalism.

Transversality holds, I submit, the secret key to unlock the gateway to the telos of communicative dialogue on a global scale by deconstructing the unitarian politics of identity in support of the pluralistic politics of difference which is neither erasesd nor reified but *dialogized*. Reified difference results inevitably in what we might call the antagonistic or adversary model of multiculturalism where difference is assumed to be irreconcilable for the sake of the transversal harmonics of relationships. Dialogized difference alone is a Maitreyan Middle Path, as it were, which is the cardinal principle of Buddhism, between consummate consensus and total dissensus. Without it hybridity or the interfusion of diverse cultural horizons — to adopt Gadamer's hermeneutical principle of *Horizontverschmelzung* — is unthinkable. As every culture is a system of values, dialogized difference also involves the negotiation of diverse values. Nothing is value-free, indeed. In the context of writing or the production of texts, Georg Lukács utters the uncommon wisdom that every quote is an interpretation. Some uncommon observers of technology including media technology suggest that technology should be declared guilty until proven innocent — the reversal of Anglo-American jurisprudence. If, according to McLuhan, "the medium is the message," the message is never value-free and consequently the medium cannot be value-neutral, either.

Indeed, transversality is the site of hybridity which is an ideal type or heuristic construction to answer what transpires when it deterritorializes or transterritorializes national and cultural boundaries, that is, when it allows border-crossings and creates the zone of intersections. In the end, transversality in the name of hybridity is capable of *dissolving* the long-embattled argument concerning the facile dichotomy between universal absolutism and cultural relativism, modernity and postmodernity, Orientalism and Occidentalism, commensurability and incommensurability, globalism and nationalism, history and nature, mind and body, man and woman, and above all East and West. It shows this dichotomy or bipolarity the way out of its bottle.[3]

NOTES

1. In his interesting work *How Societies Remember*, the Australian sociologist Paul Connerton (1989) describes societal memory in terms of inscribed practices and incorporated rituals. Richard E. Nisbett's *The Geography of Thought* (2003) is the empirical evidence that unlike Westerners, Asians (Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans) think things *relationally*. To emphasize the idea that Interbeing or relationalism is characteristic of East-Asian thinking does not preclude the fact that there are Western relationalists. For example, the German explorer Alexander von Humboldt thought that in the cosmos "everything is interconnected" (see Helferich, 2004). Mahbubani's challenging question and my persistent concern with the issues of Eurocentrism and comparative philosophy led me to publish an anthology in 2002: *Comparative Political Culture in the Age of Globalization: An Introductory Anthology*. I am now in the process of editing a sequel to it which is a collection of original essays on the topic of comparative political theory with an all-Asian cast. It is predicated upon the proposition that what Being is to the West, Interbeing is to the East.

2. It is worth noting that the British postcolonial theorist Robert C. Young invented the term "tricontinentalism" (Asia, Africa, and Latin America) to replace the Eurocentric appellation of the "Third World." It is also noteworthy that the Asian-American feminist Trinh T. Minh-ha remarked that there is a "Third World" in every "First World," and a "First World" in every "Third World."

3. Nisbett (2003: 219-229) speaks of the world becoming "bicultural" or "blended" with the "evaporation" of differences. However, blending in cooking, for example, does not mean that all ingredients are assimilated into just one flavor or taste. Rather, in it like the hearing of the orchestration of sounds in music one can taste each ingredient: there is a harmonized flavor, as it were. If we wish to taste hybridity in food, try the following list of Asian "delicacies": the squid pizza, the curry doughnut, the bean-paste Danish, the kimchi burger, the green tea milkshake, the BST (bacon, seaweed, and tomato) sandwich, etc. [see Reid, *Confucius Lives Next Door* (1999: 30)]. If you like burger but not kimchi, Danish but not bean-paste, milkshake but not green tea, or bacon and tomato but not seaweed, then you must be an antagonist or essentialist but not a dialogist! On the other hand, the American Whiteheadian Charles Hartshorne remarked that kimchi, which is spicy, heavily red-peppered Korean pickled cabbage, would dominate and thus destroy all the other flavors. That is to say, kimchi is predatory or a predatory empire-builder which destroys the world as multi-flavored or "motley" reality.

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