

Feature Article 【專題論文】

Historizing Humanity — Some Theoretical
Considerations on Contextualization and
Understanding regarding the Idea of Humanity
將人文學放在歷史視野中：
關於人文學的脈絡化與理解的理論思考

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Keywords: hermeneutics, humankind, intercultural communication

關鍵詞：詮釋學、人類、跨領域溝通

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Abstract

Contextualising and understanding is not a new issue in the humanities. On the contrary: they belong to the basic assumptions of their specific early modern way of dealing with the human world in academic discourses. They originated in the fundamental change in historical sense generation from the exemplary to the genetic mode at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. They became essential for the academic disciplines of the humanities with their rational approach to the human world.

This can easily be made possible by referring to the pre-given dominating way of doing history in pre-modern times. Here it was the exemplary way of making sense of the past which shaped historical thinking in most, if not all cultures for a very long time. It was exactly this logic of historical thinking against which the specifically modern one, the logic of genetic sense generation, was opposed. Exemplary thinking was interested in deriving general rules of human conduct from special cases of historical events. Historical experience was a great shelter of morality and political insight (*historia magistra vitae*).

At the end of the paper an idea is presented how this mode of thinking in the humanities can be furthermore developed in respect to the concept of humankind as a basic category of understanding.

摘要

本文的目的在提供一個最新的歷史觀點。這個歷史觀點旨在涵蓋跨文化溝通的所有領域，同時包含文化認同的基本議題，因此它可做為歷史意識的共同觀點。

本文首先簡短論述何謂「人」，意即具有歷史意義與人之本體面向的人。為了賦與屬於人類，甚至生物範疇的「人」一個歷史面向，必須在時間發展的語境中進行討論。在這個語境脈絡之下，「人」成為人在面對現實生活中多樣、互異、而且變遷不居中的文化定位時的一個自我投射的基本類別。

同時，「人」也成為一個歷史知識的議題。它表達人對過去的自我認識，而且這個自我認識也藉由與現代認同成形的文化過程建立關聯，而成為一個歷史知識的議題。

在草擬這個歷史思維的理論架構時，本文強調文化差異與跨文化溝通既是歷史經驗的議題，也是認同建構的議題。藉此，本文認為我們可以在文化定位的層次上，尤其關注文化差異與認同，以因應全球化的挑戰。

Alle Ihre Fragen über den Fortgang unsres Geschlechts ...
beantwortet, wie mich dünkt, ein einziges Wort: *Humanität*,
Menschheit.

Johann Gottfried Herder¹

Contextualizing and understanding are not issues new to the humanities. On the contrary, they belong to the basic assumptions of their specifically modern way of dealing with the human world in academic discourse. They originated in the fundamental change in the generation of historical sense from the exemplary mode to the genetic² mode around the turn of the 19th century.³ They have become essentials of the academic disciplines of the humanities and their rational approach to the human world. These disciplines were established in Europe during the 19th century, and ever since they have spread all over the world. (In my following argumentation I refer mainly to the discipline of history as a paradigm for the humanities.)

This change can be easily understood by referring to the dominant way of doing history in pre-modern times. Then, it was the *exemplary way of making sense of the past* which shaped historical thinking in most, if not all cultures for a very long time. It was exactly this logic of historical thinking against which the specifically modern one, the logic of *genetic sense generation*, was directed.

1 "All your questions concerning the progress of our race will find an answer — as I think — in one single word: humanity, humankind." Johann Gottlieb Herder, *Briefe zur Beförderung der Humanität*, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Berlin, Weimar, 1971), p. 116.

2 The word "genetic" could be misunderstood. Its meaning here has nothing to do with the genes in the human body, but refers to the Greek word "genesis", which means "production", "generation", "coming into being". I understand by "genetic" a temporal mode of the human world emphasizing change.

3 The classical text describing this change is Reinhart Koselleck, *Historia magistra vitae. Über die Auflösung des Topos im Horizont neuzeitlich bewegter Geschichte*, in *idem: Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), pp. 38-66. English version in: Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985). I have analyzed these two types in the framework of a general typology of historical sense-generation in Jörn Rüsen, *History: Narration, Interpretation, Orientation* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005), pp. 9-39.

Exemplary thinking was interested in deriving general rules of human conduct from specific cases of historical events. Historical experience provided a great stock of personages and events for moral and political insight. Cicero expressed this logic of historical thinking with the famous slogan *historia magistra vitae*.

These rules were looked at as being trans-temporally valid, as beyond the specific context of time and space within which human life occurs. Within the framework of this logic of history, the understanding of the past as meaningful for the present meant that both time-dimensions merged into the givenness of trans-temporally valid rules. Understanding followed the logic of judgement (*Urteilkraft*): general rules were generated from specific cases of the past and applied to similar but different cases in the present. Thus, history enabled the historically educated person to deal with the events of the present according to the rich experience of the past. This historical understanding is guided by the logic of rule-competence.

Understanding of what happened in the past referred to one single context only, the unity of mankind, or better, the nature of humankind. Understanding meant to find the general rules of human conduct in every single historical event.

Modern historical thinking started with a fundamental critique of this exemplary way of making sense of the past. Ranke's famous slogan that he only wanted to demonstrate "how it really was" (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*) was explicitly directed against this logic of generating general rules from specific events.⁴ Instead, he stated that we have to look at the events of the past through a

4 "Man hat der Historie das Amt, die Vergangenheit zu richten, die Mitwelt zum Nutzen zukünftiger Jahre zu belehren, beigemessen: So hoher Ämter unterwindet sich gegenwärtiger Versuch nicht: er will bloß zeigen, wie es eigentlich gewesen." (History has been allotted the task of judging the past, to teach the contemporary world for the benefit of the future. Our present effort does not claim such a prestigious task: It only aims at showing, how matters really were [what matters were really like; how things really happened; how it actually was] —translated by Jörn Rüsen). In Leopold von Ranke, *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494-1514, Sämtliche Werke*, Bd. 33 (Leipzig, 1855), p. VIII. Also in Leopold von Ranke, *The Theory and Practice of History*, ed. with an Introduction by Georg G. Iggers and Konrad von Moltke (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), p. 137.

framework of interpretation into which the self-understanding of the people of the past has systematically been integrated. This is the meaning of Ranke's other famous slogan, "Each epoch is immediate to God."⁵ This means that each epoch has its historical meaning in itself. It does not achieve it by its assumed direct relationship to the present-day patterns of significance at all (the most relevant concept of this direct relationship is the concept of progress); on the contrary, its meaning is defined by its difference from the present. Thus, past and present get a new temporal relationship characterized by difference and no longer by the trans-temporal sameness of human life in respect to some assumed basic principles of practical life, valid despite all different contexts.

This change in the formation of temporal categories of historical thinking can be characterized by the terms of *temporalization* or *historization*. According to this new logic of history, understanding has acquired a new meaning: It realizes this temporality or historicity of human life in the mental processes of representing the past as meaningful for the present (and its future-perspective). Understanding includes an awareness of different patterns of sense and meaning, thus giving the event or the text in concern the "dignity of difference".⁶

The basic category of this hermeneutic treatment of the human world is the category of *individualization*. Contextualized phenomena of the human world can be understood only if their individuality, in fact, their uniqueness in relationship to other phenomena of the same kind, is systematically taken into account.

If contextualization and understanding are already constituent principles of the professional work in the established disciplines of the humanities, we may ask: why is it necessary to raise this issue again? There are two answers to this

5 "Jede Epoche ist unmittelbar zu Gott," see Leopold von Ranke, *Über die Epochen der neueren Geschichte: Historisch-kritische Ausgabe*, in Theodor Schieder and Helmut Berding (eds.), *Aus Werk und Nachlaß*, vol. 2 (München: Oldenbourg, 1971), p. 59 sq. English in: Leopold von Ranke, *The Theory and Practice of History* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973), fn. 2, p. 53.

6 Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London: Continuum, 2003).

question: a simple one and a provocative one. The simple one refers to the tradition of meta-history within the established discipline, to the purely academic reflexion on concepts and methods. The provocative one puts the academic discourse into its context of cultural orientation in social and political life.

The simple answer refers to the fact that the conceptions and methods of the humanities have never been established once and for all. They were conceived at the very beginning of modern thinking about the human world, and they became effective in the development of historical thinking as flexible and dynamic modes — corresponding the temporalization and historization of their subject matter, history itself.

Contextualization and understanding, or historicity and hermeneutics, tend to change in the process of disciplinary discourses. This change can even be explicitly brought about by a reflexion within these discourses. (This reflective input into the basic concepts and methods of historical thinking especially takes place in times of so called "crisis of fundamental principles" (*Grundlagenkrise*) — like the *Lamprecht-Streit* in Germany. But, it could also take place as an undercurrent in well-established institutions of research, interpretation and representation.) Well-known examples of this change occurred in the long discussion about generalization and individualization, about explaining and understanding, and nowadays about rationality and poetics in the humanities (mainly in historical studies). Therefore, it is useful to continue this reflection from time to time in order to prove, to confirm, and to (re-)establish the conceptual and methodical solidity and stability of the humanities (as to its correspondence with topical experiences of temporal change and as to the needs for historical orientation *vis-a-vis* these experiences).

There are two issues in this more or less permanent self-reflection in historical studies which demand attention: The first issue is indicated by the question of how to apply the concept of contextualization to the cognition itself

brought about by the humanities and their research work. Does such an application not destroy any claim for intersubjective validity? The other issue is addressed by the question: how can historicity be understood, or what mode of understanding is adequate to the historicity of the human world? Why is this considered such a fundamental problem of hermeneutics? Modern hermeneutics follows the rule to understand different life forms by using its self-understanding, its own semantic potential. But, how to understand the historical changes of the life forms? They happen to people beyond and even against what they wanted to happen. Only afterwards, by looking back at the change, can its meaning be grasped (not ignoring the understanding of the people who had to live or undergo it, of course). In order to realize it, a reference to subsequent, developed semantic potential is unavoidable. This reference goes on from epoch to epoch till it finally brings the semantic horizon of the life-form of the scholars themselves into the game of understanding. How can this basic "intertemporal" relationship of understanding, which bridges the gap between past and present, be mediated with the constitutive temporal difference, which modern hermeneutics has systematically taken into account?

If one takes these moving problems seriously, i.e., if one relates them to basic issues of cultural orientation today, the question why contextualization and understanding have to be thematized again will assume a more provoking character. Contextualization and understanding have to be reflected upon in a new radical and critical way *vis-à-vis* the challenge of globalization in- and outside the humanities. Globalization *inside* the humanities refers to the challenge to their hermeneutical endeavour and the claim that their results have universal (and that means: transcultural) validity. How is such a claim possible? If every cultural manifestation in the past can only be understood if it is contextualized, — what about the interpretative work of the humanities? Is it possible to understand it beyond its specific cultural context? Doesn't the variety and difference of contexts contradict any universal validity? On the other hand,

can we think about the cognitive work of the humanities brought about by their methodically ruled research without such a claim for an inter-subjective validity?

This epistemological and methodological question acquires its sharpness and radical form if it is taken out of academic life and placed into the cultural context of the humanities and is confronted with the problems of intercultural communication of today. Here it reflects and repeats the challenge of globalization outside the humanities. This challenge emerges from a very specific cultural experience: The Western domination in the worldwide process of modernization. This process includes the expansion of the modern humanities all over the world and their establishment in academic life in all non-Western civilizations.⁷ Can they ignore the changes and differences in their cultural contexts? Is the validity of their cognitive outcome context-free, i.e., really global and universal despite the mental powers of different cultural traditions in the countries where they sustain their academic life?

The idea of objectivity, which underlies this claim for universal validity, has been rather powerful in the self-awareness of historical studies. Nevertheless, from the very beginning of modern humanities onwards, it was epistemologically invalid. The dependence of hermeneutic interpretation upon cultural context or upon the so-called "point of view" or "standpoint" of the professionals in the cultural context of their societies was noticed and reflected upon already in the late 18th century.⁸ It became an important element in the logic of self-understanding and self-reflection of the new academic disciplines of the humanities. This took place exactly at the same time and in systematic interrelationship with the emergence and the development of the new methodical rationality, which defined the humanities as academic disciplines. In full

7 This expansion is described in the case of history by Georg G. Iggers and Q. Edward Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2008).

8 It is significant that the explication of historical studies as "*Wissenschaft*" (Science) went along with the insight of this dependence. This is paradigmatically indicated by Johann Martin Chladenius, *Allgemeine Geschichtswissenschaft* (Leipzig, 1752; rpt. Wien: Böhlau 1985).

awareness of this rationality, they called themselves in the non-English speaking world (Germany, France, Italy, etc.) "Sciences". Their scholarly or academic character was defined by the professionalism of the scholars. And, this professionalism was manifest in the scholars' ability to bring about progress of cognition by research.

It was this professionalism and the efficiency of the new methods of research which made the modern form of thinking in the humanities irresistible and feasible so that they could be transferred into academic life all over the world.

The present-day situation of the humanities in the globalization process is, as I have said before, characterized by a radical challenge of this universalism.⁹ More and more, it has been criticized as a pure ideology of Western cultural domination and as a suppression of different ways of thinking and cognition about the human world and its history.¹⁰ This is obvious in the so-called postcolonial turn in the humanities and social sciences. Similar movements are the subaltern discourse and many manifestations of post-modernism.

The harshness and radical form of this criticism stem from the simple but very powerful fact that all cognitive approaches to the human world also function as elements and factors in the practice of cultural orientation. The work of the humanities is part of the cultural process by which the issue of *cultural identity* is treated; it directly or indirectly functions in providing the people with a liveable

9 This challenge was given a historical form by Peter Novick, in *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity-Question" and the American Historical Profession* (New York, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

10 A good example is Finn Fuglestad, *The Ambiguities of History: The Problem of Ethnocentrism in Historical Writing* (Oslo: Academic Press, 2005); see Jörn Rüsen, "The Horror of Ethnocentrism: Westernization, Cultural Difference, and Strife in Understanding non-Western pasts in Historical Studies," in *History and Theory*, 47 (May, 2008), pp. 261-269. Vinay Lal went so far as to declare the Western approach to historical thinking on India as "cultural genocide", since India never had a tradition of historical thinking like that of the West. See Vinay Lal, "Provincializing the West: World History in the Perspective of Indian History," in Benedikt Stuchtey and Eckhardt Fuchs (eds.), *Writing World History 1800-2000* (Oxford: University Press, 2003), pp. 271-289, quotation p. 288 sq.

identity. By identity, I understand the basic cultural fact that every person and every social unit needs an idea of who they are and what the others are, from whom they distinguish themselves in the many realms of human life. Whether they like it or not, whether they perform it deliberately or unknowingly, the humanities are always a part of identity politics.

The issue of identity belongs to context, which is of concern in the discourses on and in the reflections about contextualization and understanding. It motivates the work of the humanities to emphasize difference, since identity basically is a matter of distinction, of difference, and of discrimination.

There are two possibilities to realize and to pursue this embeddedness of the humanities in the cultural processes of identity formation and its related policy. The humanities can be used as a means for the purposes of identity formation. They can help to bring about a positive self image at the cost of the image of the others. In doing so, they follow the logic of ethnocentrism.¹¹ Or, the humanities can be used as a cognitive strategy of inter-subjectivity. Such a strategy mediates between self and other and transfers difference into a common life form where it doesn't vanish but becomes liveable in a humane way. So, in the cultural game of identity formation, the humanities can be either a weapon or a bridge.

In this paper I would like to show that the only way the humanities can realize their work is *via* a full awareness of their dependence upon context. At the same time, they should remain committed to the principle of intersubjectivity. In the absence of this principle, they can't bridge cultural difference by understanding. Of course, understanding can also be a very powerful weapon in a

11 Just to give one example: "Indian philosophy started sometime around 2000 B.C. and has lasted up to the present day, whereas the writer on Greek philosophy starts usually with Thales of the seventh century B.C. and ends with the Alexandrians of the third century A.D. ... While Indian thought has had a continuity of about 4000 years ... Greek thought had a continuity of only about a thousand years." See P. T. Raju, "The Concept of Man in Indian Thought," in S. Radhakrishnan and P. T. Raju (eds.), *The Concept of Man: A Study in Comparative Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960), pp. 206-305, esp. p. 206.

struggle, or even a clash, between different life forms and civilizations. In this function, understanding is used within a strategy of conflict and games of power. But, I wish to emphasize the other way of understanding: it does not follow the logic of a strategy of self-preservation or even self-enhancement with the consequence of subjugation and domination in the relationship to the others, and it is not inspired by the mental forces of ethnocentrism. Instead, understanding can follow the logic of communication with the aim of giving and receiving recognition. Here the peculiarity if not uniqueness of one's own life form and difference from others is of paramount concern.¹²

This alternative is not a matter of free choice or of arbitrary moral inclination; rather, it is a matter of rational argumentation. In such cases, understanding is not possible without at least some elements of recognizing differences. It can't be brought about without a change of perspective so that one's own life-form is not perceived as unilateral, but in a relational way by the awareness of otherness. Besides, nobody can overlook the simple fact that the degree and the level of understanding rises with the degree and level of empathy and recognition.

In order to meet the challenge of the anti-Western critique and the demand to recognize difference in topical intercultural communications, the work and the procedures of the humanities have to confirm difference in a more extended and more profound way. At the same time, an extended and intense way of treating the idea of transcultural concepts and methods has to be invoked as a necessary means of cognition. These concepts enable the humanities to avoid the danger of ethnocentric thinking and to mediate differences so that universal truth claims remain solid principles of intercultural communication.

12 See Jörn Rüsen, "How to Overcome Ethnocentrism: Approaches to a Culture of Recognition by History in the 21st Century," in *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies*, 1, 1 (June, 2004), pp. 59-74; also in *History and Theory*, 43 (2004), Theme Issue "Historians and Ethics", pp. 118-129

How is a transcultural dimension of cognition possible? Does it not contradict the hermeneutical insight about the context-relatedness of understanding meaning and significance in the cultural orientation of human practical life? Does not every step towards transculturally valid hermeneutical cognition fall back behind the achievements of temporalization and historization in the modern humanities?

Indeed, bringing about transcultural validity in the humanities at the cost of contextualization is not convincing at all. Only through a methodical strengthening of contextualization can the idea of intercultural validity be made *prima facie* plausible. By strengthening, I understand the methodical advantages of a systematically reflective contextualization. My argument is rather simple. By reflecting contexts, human minds can breach their borders. What is the semantic dimension of this breaching? Since the ability to reflect its cultural orientation (or, as Richard Rorty once put it, "to speak about language") constitutes the peculiarity if not the uniqueness of being human, this dimension is humanity.

With this argument, I pick up the pre-modern idea of understanding by referring to the very same cultural nature of man. But, it is a thoroughly historized and individualized cultural nature. The idea of this temporalized cultural nature of humankind has systematically been taken into account as the conceptual, or better, as the categorical precondition for intersubjectivity in the hermeneutical work of the humanities.

This is a philosophical task within and for the sake of the humanities and their academic status. Instead of giving up a young topological turn of modern worldviews and its constitutive logic of universalism, we should continue to elaborate our understanding of what it means to be a human being.

I would like to give you an example of such an elaboration from the project, "Humanism in the Era of Globalization — An Intercultural Dialogue on

Humanity, Culture, and Values."¹³ In this project, we pursued the problem: How is it possible to bring different humanistic traditions together into one comprehensive concept without ignoring the differences and their importance for forming cultural identity?¹⁴ Each humanism refers to an idea of what it means to be a human being, each has an idea of humanity. In order to develop such an idea, we have to pick up a concept of humanity which is already recognized in the given cultural context of one's own work. We have to reflect on such a concept more or less critically and develop it further. In my own work on humanism, I started with such an idea and concept by referring to Immanuel Kant's statement that every human being is always more than only a means to the purposes of others, but a purpose in him- or herself. Kant calls this quality of each human being to be a purpose in him- or herself, his or her dignity.¹⁵

It would be a mistake to take this statement as a fixed basis for intercultural communication, although I don't see convincing arguments for denying it. In the context of an academic intercultural discourse, this fundamental idea of human dignity has to be brought into an argumentative movement. It has to be contextualized and used as a principle of understanding. With such a principle, different traditions and life forms receive the dignity of being understood in the horizon of their own world view as an outcome of their history. Let us call it the *dignity of cultural autonomy*.

There is a danger in ascribing this autonomy to all of the various cultures or civilizations in time and space. I would like to call this danger 'Spenglerization'.

13 See <http://www.kwi-humanismus.de>.

14 First steps to sharpen this question and to prepare answers were presented in Jörn Rüsen and Henner Laass (eds.), *Humanism in Intercultural Perspective — Experiences and Expectations (Being Human: Caught in the Web of Cultures-Humanism in the Age of Globalization, vol. 1)* (Bielfeld: Transcript, 2009).

15 Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysik der Sitten. Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Tugendlehre* [1797] § 11, A 93 [English: <http://praxeology.net/kant7.htm>]. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany started with the confirmation of this dignity in all human beings in its article 1: "Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority." [<http://www.iuscomp.org/gla/statutes/GG.htm#1>]

It means that every culture is looked at as being basically independent from all others and only follows its specific internal potentials of making sense of the world. In this perspective, interpretative intercultural communication appears only as an external interrelationship and ignores cross-cultural elements as well as the dynamics of historical change brought about by the exchange of ideas and material goods. Additionally, the epistemological question couldn't be answered: how is it possible to understand cultures which follow different patterns of world view and not the semantics which determines the approach of understanding?

Understanding is impossible without cross-cultural or even universal elements, which combine both sides, the side of understanding and the side being understood. Furthermore, in each act of understanding, the context of those who pursue it will not be left behind but will merge with it. Here we must be wary of the lurking danger of alienating the others when subjugating them under the framework of one's own way of thinking. This is the danger of fundamentally ignoring the difference which provokes the subtlety of the hermeneutical procedures. Thus, the otherness of the others, which they think of as the essence of their identity, might be missed.

This danger can be avoided by a basic openness in the hermeneutical approach to others, which is driven by a guiding interest in difference. This openness demands an idea of humanity which stresses difference and change under the presupposition of anthropological universals, like the idea of dignity. Such universals do exist, of course.¹⁶ They essentially belong to the interpretative frame of conceptualizing difference in hermeneutical thinking. In order to progress from anthropological universals to cultural peculiarities, one has to construct ideal types. They reveal under what conditions the universals get their peculiar manifestations. Here the process of contextualizing obtains methodical strictness in the cognitive work of the humanities.

16 Christoph Antweiler, *Menschliche Universalien. Kultur, Kulturen und die Einheit der Menschheit* (Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchgesellschaft, 2007).

Every culture has an idea of what it means to be a human being. This idea is manifest in a great variety of ideas of humankind. Today, it is the task of the humanities to understand these variations by bringing them into intercultural perspective. This process, however, is challenged by the topical problems of intercultural communication.¹⁷ What we need is a theory of humanity which fundamentally historicizes the meaning of being human and, by doing so, renders the variety of this meaning understandable.

I have started developing such a theory, but it would take another paper to put it down before you. Maybe I can try to sketch it out in a few words.

I would like to call this theory of humanity a new philosophy of history, which picks up and develops the classical one of the late 18th and early 19th century.¹⁸ This philosophy categorically casts history in general as *temporalized humanity*. Following this idea, the historians have to attend to those experiences in which humanity articulated itself, where it pronounced what it means to be human. The universal frame of reference thus would find its empirical affirmation.

Articulating humanity — this may serve as the fine red thread of making sense of the past. How to bind all the different cultural manifestations of humanity together into one history, which stands for humankind as a totality? In order to bring about this achievement of historical thinking, the fine red thread of history needs an encompassing idea of temporal change. This basic trend or direction of time has to express the totality of humankind which is in concern. Therefore, it can be conceptualized only as a trend or process of universalization. Such universalization — transgressing all limits of human togetherness and

17 See Jörn Rüsen, "Conflict between Civilizations or the Cognitive Culture: Analysis of the International Cultural Communication 文明的衝突或認知文化：國際文化交流解題," in *Shandong Social Sciences*, No. 4, 2007 (Issue 1, No. 140), pp. 39-42.

18 A typical example is Kant's "Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose" from 1784. See *Kant's Political Writing*, H. Reiss (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 41-53.

principally ascribing the quality of being human to all members of the human race — has taken place in different places of the world and in different epochs. Karl Jaspers gave us input into such a concept of history with his idea of axial times.¹⁹

Within this universal historical perspective, humanity appears as a variety of universalisms articulating the cultural nature of humans in different forms. Difference or, to use a traditional concept, individuality has become an essential feature of humanity. For a long time, and even today (in the power of tradition), these universalisms have excluded each other. These exclusions are effective as limits of understanding. But, these limits can be transgressed only to the degree to which the universals of humanity no longer exclude each other, that is, only by changing the logic of exclusion into the logic of inclusion. This change will open up new chances of understanding. Using them, the humanities can successfully answer the challenges of intercultural communication in the age of globalization.♦

19 Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (first Zürich, 1949; rpt. München: Piper, 1963). English: *The Origin and Goal of History* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976).

♦ Responsible editor: Yu-chen Guo (郭于禎).

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