Feature Article 【專題論文】

Intercultural Humanism:
How to Do the Humanities in the Age of Globalization
跨文化的人文主義：
如何在全球化時代從事人文研究

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Abstract

The paper starts with a diagnosis of new needs for cultural orientation in the globalizing process. The challenge of cultural difference in processes of identity formation demands a strategy of understanding and recognizing this difference, which can be accepted by all participants in intercultural communication. The place for developing such a strategy is the humanities. The humanities as academic disciplines emerged at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century in Europe. Their main task was to come to terms with the growing experience of cultural difference in space and time. In order to fulfil their task as institutionalized places for understanding cultural difference they developed cognitive strategies, which claimed for universal validity. These strategies mainly consisted of a concept of universal history and a method of hermeneutics. Both elements are deeply influenced by modern humanism.

The paper describes the basic elements of this humanism, its advantages and limits. It critically picks up the tradition of this humanism attempting to re-new its basic patterns and methods of interpretation. This will be demonstrated by analyzing the basic category of intercultural understanding — the idea of humanity. Present-day cultural orientation is deeply influenced by different ideas of humanity and humankind stemming from different cultural traditions. Within the unbroken validity of these traditions different ideas of humankind and humanities each scooped each other. This mutual exclusion has caused tensions, even clashes. In order to overcome them the logic of understanding brought about by the humanities has to be changed from an exclusive to an inclusive interrelationship of the concepts of the humanities and of its related methods of research and interpretation.

摘要

　　本文指出，在全球化趨勢裡，研究者必須採取新的角度來檢視文化並重建身分認同，此一過程勢必會遭遇「文化差異」的問題，此時就需要發展出新的研究策略，使得參與文明對話的所有角色均能了解並欣賞這些差異。所謂的人文學科，就是發展這種研究策略的領域。人文之為一種學術訓練，起源於十八世紀末、十九世紀初的歐洲。由於歐洲勢力拓展日廣，對於異文化的接觸日趨頻繁，促使學者發展出一套研究與歸類方法，以解釋歐洲與其他世界的文化差異；從這套研究方法衍生出來的思維與認知模式，很快就被賦予「放諸四海皆準」的價值。究其實，這種人文研究預設了一套能夠全面概括的世界史，並仰賴固定的詮釋學步驟以進行分析，這些都只是近代西方學術產物。

　　本文目的在於描述歐洲人文研究的特徵，指陳其長處與侷限，並嘗試更新其慣常的研究模式及詮釋策略，進而分析跨文化理解的基本原則，而所謂的跨文化理解，才符合真正的「人文主義精神」。當代的世界文化由許多不同的傳統構成，他們對於何謂「人類」，何謂「人文」，各自有不同的理解；當這些文化均各持己見，以為自身傳統牢不可破，則彼此間的傾軋、衝突便無可避免。為了平息類似紛爭，我們必須調整人文研究的視角，將文化間的互動關係理解成「包容」而非「排斥」，進而全盤重構研究方法以及詮釋策略。

We live in a time of a growing density of intercultural communication. The globalization process in the economy and on the level of mass media has transgressed all limits of life forms throughout the whole world and it forces people to readjust their lives according to the changes these processes have brought about.

In the realm of academic work, this globalizing tendency has already been established in many fields. This is evident for the natural sciences, but in all other fields of academic thinking, similar processes of internationalization and interculturalization have also taken place. I would like to analyse some fundamental issues of this process in the humanities.

In the modern form, the humanities emerged at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century. During the nineteenth century, many of its disciplines achieved a well-established form, which is still valid today. This form is characterized by a special field of investigation and a specific method of research. Its development started in Europe in the late eighteenth century. At that time, the frames of reference and patterns of significance for studying the human world were universalistic. An accelerating amount of knowledge about different cultures had to be systematized. This was done by establishing a universalistic perspective in which humankind became the basic category of significance and meaning. This can easily be demonstrated by the approaches to "universal history"[1] and the new philosophical discipline called "Philosophy of History." Voltaire invented the term. His "'Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations" (1756) destroyed the traditional sacred historical framework of universal history in the Western world. It transgressed its limitation by the temporal dimension of the bible, and it widened the horizon of historical experience and interpretation into a global perspective. The Scottish Enlightenment is another example of the universalistic approach to the human world at the end of the eighteenth century.

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1 A remarkable beginning was the *Universal History from the Earliest Account of Time*, which was published in London between 1736-1766 in 66 volumes.

The Scottish intellectuals developed a so-called 'theoretical history" which presents a universalistic concept of stages of social evolution all over the world.

A new understanding of history emerged, intending to integrate all peoples and times into one comprehensive temporal totality from the origin of the human race to the present-day-situation with a clear future perspective. These universalistic ideas and concepts made possible a new understanding of the human world. It was an understanding in which temporal change was the most important quality of human life. This evaluation of change strictly runs against the enormous efforts of the human mind in premodern times to overcome change by stressing the duration and continuity of the true human life form or the super-temporal validity of its values and norms. In the logic of historical sense generation, this new approach to the temporal dimension of human life has brought about a shift in the basic concept of historical sense, from an exemplary mode of historical sense generation to a genetic one.[2]

European intellectuals have developed an idea of humankind in the form of a universal temporal development of civilization. Civilization has been understood as the outcome of a fundamental and universal ability of men to improve their life conditions by using the power of reason and by accumulating knowledge across the change of generations by education. The humanities in the West are historically rooted in the fundamental presuppositions of this understanding of civilization as the work of the human mind and spirit (Geist).[3] By these mental and spiritual forces, humans were able to improve their life conditions by gaining knowledge about how to technologically dominate nature and by morally organizing human life according to a solid and growing knowledge about its forces, determinations, possibilities and developments. Since it is the human mind and spirit which bring about this civilization and keep it in

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2 Cf. Jörn Rüsen, *History: Narration, Interpretation, Orientation* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005), pp. 9 ff.

3 Cf. Friedrich Jaeger and Jörn Rüsen, *Geschichte des Historismus: Eine Einführung* (München: Verlag C. H. Beck, 1992), pp. 30 ff.

its permanent temporal change and development, the humanities are a work of the same spirit and therefore are able to disclose the logic of this formation and temporal change of the human world: The knowledge brought about by the humanities is a mirror which reflects the real world with its constitutive mental forces governing the variety and changes of human life forms. It is a mirror of humanism in a universal historical perspective. Looking into this mirror, the present-day situation gets a temporal feature which allows an outlook into the future. This outlook can serve as a cultural orientation of human agency bringing about further progress in realizing the potentials of the human mind and spirit to create a humane world, based on the essence of the human mind: freedom and reason.[4]

This humanistic idea of civilization has been deeply influenced by the paradigmatic experience of the ability of the educated people in the West to create a new world according to their insight into the moving mental forces of history. With their abilities they have furnished their world with progress in its different dimensions: in economy by the forces of market economy and the use of scientific knowledge in technological innovations, in social life by dissolving all limits of the feudal society and by opening up a free labor market, in politics by gaining a growing participation in political domination by the dominated people, and in culture by the forces of methodical rationality and their disenchanting the understanding of nature and of the human world.

It was the same spirit and mind (Geist) of the educated people in the West which has initiated the humanities. It gave the intellectual world a discursive

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4 Immanuel Kant has presented this essence in his "Idea of a Universal History in a Cosmopolitan Intent" (1784). See Jörn Rüsen, "Following Kant: European idea for a universal history with an intercultural intent," *Groniek: Historisch Tijdschrift*, 160 (2003), pp. 359-368; also in *Ex/Change* (The Newsletter of the Centre for Cross-Cultural Studies at the City University of Hong Kong), 10 (2004), pp. 4-8; Chinese version in "Zunxun Kangde: Kuawenhua shiyexia ouzhourende shijieshiguan 遵循康德：跨文化視野下歐洲人的世界史觀," S*hixue Lilun Yanjiu* 史學理論研究 (Historiography Quarterly), 1 (2004)*, pp. 117-122; Bindu Puri and Heiko Sievers (eds.), *Terror, Peace, and Universalism: Essays on the Philosophy of Immanuel Kant* (Oxford: University Press, 2007), pp. 111-121.

form of an international discussion inspired by a permanent improvement of knowledge about the human world due to the methodical procedures of empirical research.

So far, I have referred to the master narrative of the West presenting the cultural origins of modernity. It is a narrative of achievements and of progress which leads into a future perspective of a growing humanism all over the world.[5] Telling this story today makes it necessary to integrate into it the dark shadows Western civilization has thrown over the rest of the world and (not to forget) over itself: a growing potential of destructive forces leading to radical inhumane events and tendencies.

What happened to the concept of universal history and its corresponding idea of world civilization? The answer to this question is short and provocative: It has fallen into pieces.

In the West, the traditional assumptions of the constitutive forces of the human mind and spirit and their potential for improving human life conditions by the use of reason and rationality have remained, but the universalistic approach of the cognitive forces in the humanities has narrowed. The progress of knowledge could only be organized by specialization. The realm of civilization or culture has become compartmentalized into the special realms of different disciplines. This fragmentation in the study of the human world went along with the emergence and growing power of nationality as a moving force for politics. During the nineteenth century, the humanities got a clear national form within which they shared the tensional interrelationship of nations in the struggle for

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5 Leopold von Ranke, who radically criticized the Enlightenment's idea of progress, nevertheless expressed this universalistic and humanistic perspective in the following way: "In der Herbeiziehung der verschiedenen Nationen und der Individuen zur Idee der Menschheit und der Kultur ist der Fortschritt ein unbedingter." (In attracting the different nations and individuals to the idea of humankind and culture, progress is unconditional) Leopold von Ranke, *Über die Epochen der neueren Geschichte*, in Theodor Schieder and Helmut Berding (eds.), *Aus Werk und Nachlaß*, vol. 2 (München: Oldenbourg, 1971), p. 80.

power. Within this struggle, the humanistic approach of the humanities weakened. Finally leading Western intellectuals, starting with Nietzsche, including Heidegger and ending with the French master thinkers Foucault, Derrida and Lacan, dominated Western self-understanding with a radical criticism of the tradition of humanism.[6]

Until now, the work of the humanities breathes the spirit of nationalism. The universalistic idea of humankind as the regulative idea of the discourse in the humanities in the period of Enlightenment has broken into a variety of nationally featured life forms. The unity of humankind has become a constellation of diverse nations and their tensional relationship—at least in the self awareness of Europe and the West as it is reflected in the work of the humanities and their representation of human life in the variety of time and space.

But one should not forget that the national boundaries of the work of the humanities have never been closed. There have always been international discourses, transnational perspectives and generalizing approaches in research and interpretation, but the shaping power of national identity has been very strong. Today we can observe a weakening of this power. It goes along with the weakening of national states in pursuing independent policy and the emergence of supranational forms of life like the globalizing economy or the media of communication. But the spirit of national diversity is still effective. What makes it so strong? The reason for its dominating role in shaping human life on the cultural level is the necessity of collective identity formation under the conditions of modern life forms.

Identity is a matter of difference, of a fundamental distinction between belonging to a certain group of people and being different from other groups of

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6 Hassan Givsan, *Heidegger: das Denken der Inhumanität. Eine ontologische Auseinandersetzung mit Heideggers Denken* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1998); Luc Ferry and Renaut Alain, *Antihumanistisches Denken: Gegen die französischen Meisterphilosophen* (München: Hanser, 1987); orig. *La pensée*, 68 (1985).

peoples. National identity is the most successful concept of political identity in modern times. It is very dynamic, thus meeting the accelerating change of human life conditions in the modernizing processes. It is very flexible and has developed a broad variety of forms, contents and functions, thus responding to the various circumstances of establishing modern states. It is rather difficult to define nation. For me the most convincing definition of a nation is: a historical consciousness with the relationship to a territory shared by a group of people and realized in the form of their political identity.

With the growing globalization process, national identity has not vanished nor lost its cultural importance in shaping the political mentality of most of the peoples in the world. Nevertheless the realm of political experiences has substantially changed and therefore more and more sub- and super-national dimensions of identity have emerged and achieved political power in the minds of the people. The best example is the peoples of Europe. They have not given up their national identity, nevertheless they are developing (to very different degrees) a supranational historical and political identity of a European dimension.[7] Corresponding to these tendencies in widening the horizon of togetherness and being different from others there is a growing complexity of identity in the sub-national realms of human life: Regions are gaining in importance. Here the most interesting examples in Europe are Spain, Belgium and Great Britain where movements of regionalism are increasing in political power.

One of the most remarkable dimensions of supranational identity is that of cultural identity. Here "culture" means a very wide realm of togetherness and difference integrating different regions and nations. In the more elaborated form of a so-called "world civilization" it is the broadest perspective within which identity has emerged. Very often geographical terms like "the West," "the near

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7 Cf. Jörn Rüsen, "Future-directed Elements of an European Historical Culture," *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies*, 4, 2 (Dec., 2007), pp. 209-223.

East," "Africa," "East Asia" etc. were used in order to designate this realm. Yet it is not a geographical dimension which is of concern, but a dimension of identity.[8] It has its cultural place just one level under the most general dimension of human identity, namely the identity of being a human being or belonging to humankind.

These civilizations or cultures are addressed when universal or global history is in concern and when cultural difference and intercultural communication is discussed on the fundamental level of world views, modes of self understanding, and life forms shaped by basic principles of thought, feeling and intentionality.

The idea of "culture" or "civilization" as a variety of unities of human life forms can be understood as a result of the same process of fragmentation which the idea of nationality has brought about. The universality of humankind has fallen into the pieces of different civilizations. They are — so to speak — supranational nations.

It is not yet sufficiently clear what "culture" or "civilization" in this broader scope really means. Nevertheless, the category is very important in the topical political, cultural and academic discussions about human identity and intercultural communication. It is the intention of this paper to contribute to more analytical clarity in using the concepts of "culture" or "civilization" as a supranational dimension of human identity in the discourse of the humanities.

The first step of my argumentation is criticism.

The most problematic way of conceptualizing civilization or culture is to essentialize its features into a semantic totality of a fundamental world view which remains unchanged in the historical changes of time rather as a core and basic element of cultural orientation. With this conceptualization, the theory of

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8 For Africa e.g. see Elísio Macamo, *Was ist Afrika? Zur Soziologie und Kulturgeschichte eines modernen Konstrukts* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1999).

civilizations follows the tradition of an ethnic understanding of nationality. Although nations have been conceptualized ("invented") in an intellectual discourse which has deeply influenced the minds of non-intellectual people to an astonishing degree, this understanding of the distinctive nature of nationality has been a metaphysical one ascribing to this dimension of togetherness and of being different from other essential mental factors. They were understood as originating in a rather early time and continuing through the changes of time in history as remaining the same in different forms of their manifestations. It could have got a political realization in a state, the inhabitants of which to a large degree share this nationality, but it could also be manifest against or besides states as a "culture" in the minds of the citizens of these states. Friedrich Meinecke has made this very important distinction between Staatsnation and Kulturnation well known.[9] But in every case, the core of the nation in this understanding is a longue durée of the cultural specificity in world views and self understanding which gives the people self-esteem and a clear awareness of their peculiarities and differences from others.

These kinds of essentializing dimensions and realms of identity have been applied to the broader scope of cultural identity or civilizations as a totality of a life form shared by a lot of people in a supranational constellation of their relationship to each other and their distinction from others. The most important and influential example of this essentialized understanding of culture is the work of Oswald Spengler.[10]

For Spengler civilizations are semantically composed totalities of life forms which live according to a specific cultural code. They follow their own internal law of development, of rise, flourishing, and fall. Their relationship to each other is only an external one. The metaphorical expression of this understanding of

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9 Friedrich Meinecke, *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat*. Studien zur Genesis des deutschen Nationalstaats, 6th ed. (München: Oldenbourg, 1922, c1907).
10 Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes. Umrisse einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte*, 2 vols. (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1973, 1922, c1918).

cultures (as it is used by many academics in illustrating intercultural comparison or communication) is a line of circles placed besides each other without any intersection. A more complicated way of conceptualizing cultures in this way has been presented by Arnold Toynbee.[11] He argues much more empirically and historically oriented, but the logic of his thinking of world civilizations principally is the same. Until today, this understanding of cultures or civilizations is a very powerful element within and outside of the academic discourse.[12] Very often, it is presented in an implicit way, as an unreflected and undiscussed epistemological presupposition of intercultural comparison. The usual oppositions of "East" and "West," the insistence of "Asian values" against "Western values" (recently Putin claimed for "Russian values" against the Western ones—simply to legitimate the permanent violation of human and civil rights in Russia)—this follows the Spenglerian line of argumentation. Such line can be explicated and presented in a higher sophisticated and intellectually fascinating form. A good example for this theoretical explication is Johann Galtung's typology of World Civilizations.[13] He chararacterizes six different world civilizations by a set of basic assumptions in understanding man and world, and by doing so he gives these civilizations sharp and fundamental distinctions from each other, ignoring the historicity of these world-views, their commonality and intersections. Anthropological universals are not addressed at all, and neither is the possibility of transcending these cultural codes into a comprehensive typology made plausible.

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11 Arnold J. Toynbee, *Der Gang der Weltgeschichte*, vol. 1: Aufstieg und Fall der Kulturen. vol. 2: Kulturen im Übergang (München: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag 3. Aufl., 1979).

12 An example: Amaury de Riencourt thematizes "the soul of India" and deals with the Indian Civilization as "self-contained, self-inclosed and autonomous." Amaury de Riencourt, *The Soul of India* (Great Britain: Honeyglen Publishing, 1986), p. XIV.

13 Johan Galtung, "Die 'Sinne' der Geschichte," in Klaus E. Müller and Jörn Rüsen (eds.), *Historische Sinnbildung: Problemstellungen, Zeitkonzepte, Wahrnehmungshorizonte, Darstellungsstrategien* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1997), pp. 118-141; Johan Galtung, "Six Cosmologies: an Impressionistic Presentation," in *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London: Sage Publications, 1996), pp. 211-222.

This kind of essentialization of cultural differences is based on an anthropological universal: that every social unit is defined by a self-awareness of its members within which they make a clear distinction between themselves and the others outside their group. The widest horizon of this fundamental distinction between self and others refers to these realms of "cultures" or "civilizations." But this anthropological necessity of humans to live a life characterized by setting and keeping up differences does not necessarily have a metaphysical or essentialist form.

In an essentialized form its historicity, its intersections with each other, its changes and potentials of critical self-reflection have marginalized or even vanished. If one takes the essentialist concepts seriously, they even lead into a contradiction: There is no place outside such a semantic totality of a culture; therefore, there is no possibility of presenting the variety and differences of cultures or their typological peculiarity and difference in a plausible way. Everybody lives in the semantic constraints of cultural world views, so the awareness of otherness is determined by the presupposition of one's own culture. Therefore, any idea of cultural diversity and any characterization of world civilizations which follow the Spenglerian line of conceptualizing culture or civilization is rendered impossible although exactly this conceptualization occurs all the time outside and inside the academic discourse, implicitly and explicitly.

Any acceptable distinction between cultures and any idea of cultural variety and differences needs reasons for their plausibility which go across the idea of culture as a semantic totality in a monadic structure. How should understanding between different world views be possible if one could not refer to something common going across this difference?

So, every conceptualization of cultures or civilizations and their relationship should start with a comprehensive and more dynamic concept of civilization or

culture. In order to do so, one meets a special difficulty: it has to emphasize sameness and distinctiveness at the same time. How is this possible?

I see two possibilities:

Starting with the present-day situation one can look at the main features of a world civilization going across all cultural differences. One could call that ecumenical civilization.[14] There are a lot of examples for this kind of world-wide civilizatory elements. I only mention a few in a random sequence: Pop Music, entertainment in the new media (Disney parks all over the world, Hollywood and Bollywood at the same time), trends in fashion, basic elements of market economy, elementary mathematics, the methodical rationality of the sciences, highly developed technology, human and civil rights. Even our academic discourse in the humanities has become a universal phenomenon of scholarly life all over the world.[15] These elements may stem from the West, in the mean time they have become common use all over the world where the life forms of modernity have evolved. They have become universal and they constitute what we could address as ecumenical world civilization.

This argumentation emphasizes sameness. What about difference? This question can easily be answered, since this ecumenical world civilization is lived by the people in a diversity of cultural life forms. Apparently, there is no one and only modernity, but a multiplicity of modernities as Shmuel Eisenstadt and others have clearly demonstrated.[16]

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14 With this term I pick up Hermann Lübbe's idea about "Die Zivilisationsökumene." Cf. Hermann Lübbe, *Die Zivilisationsökumene: Globalisierung kulturell, technisch und politisch* (München: Fink, 2005).
15 This all the more the case, when cultural differences are academically discussed. The scholars worldwide use the same logic of argumentation in stressing the diversity of contexts within which they pursue their work. Cf. e.g. Jörn Rüsen (ed.), *Western Historical Thinking: An Intercultural Debate* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2002). Chinese translation is in preparation.
16 Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, "Multiple Modernities," *Daedalus*, 129, 1 (Winter, 2000), pp. 1-30; *Theorie und Moderne: Soziologische Essays* (Wiesbaden: VS-Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006).

This way of looking at cultural diversity can be fruitful for a lot of research in the social sciences and in the humanities. But I doubt whether it meets the core of the problem of cultural difference: namely the cultural procedures of identity formation. Identity is not a variation of a general world view, but something which is defined by difference and distinction from the very beginning onwards. Civilizational universals belong to the context of human life, within which identity emerges, develops, is kept up and related to other identities, but they do not belong to the core of the phenomenon. Identity on the other hand is rooted in a fundamental basic self-relatedness of every human being in its personal and in its social way of life.

What does this mean for the concept of culture or civilization and the interrelationship between civilizations? They have to be conceptualized not as a diversity of variations of one world civilization, but as an individualization of the cultural potentials of humankind. In order to understand what cultures are about in respect to the powerful forces of human identity one should indeed start from anthropological universals, basic and elementary features of human life. These general features should be applied to the variety of human life forms in space and time. On the level of theoretical reflection and explication of concepts of academic thinking, this step would mean to proceed from anthropological universals to historical ideal types which disclose the realm of difference and variety.[17] In order to meet the core of identity formation, this difference and variety has to be considered as the outcome of cultural processes of identity formation. They have to be disclosed in the depth of human subjectivity.

Human life is impossible without the ability of making distinctions in personal and social life. Humans have to refer to themselves as possessing a coherent subjectivity, either personal or social, and that means that they have to

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17 I have tried such an approach to intercultural comparison of historical thinking in: Jörn Rüsen, *History: Narration, Interpretation, Orientation* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005), pp. 109-128. (Theoretical Approaches to an Intercultural Comparison of Historiography).

distinguish themselves from others. Belonging to others and being different from others is an elementary and universal form of human life. We usually call its manifestation identity.

What identity is about and how it can be conceptualized is a matter of controversial debate.[18] Two main strategies of understanding identity can ideal-typologically be distinguished: An essentialist and a procedural one. The essentialists think that identity is constituted by a fixed set of elements which define the peculiarity of a person or a social unit. The proceduralists think that this peculiarity is a matter of a permanent work the people have to bring about by permanently interpreting themselves and by negotiating their interpretation with others they have to live with. There is no essence in this interpretation and negotiation; everything is a matter of invention and construction. There are good arguments on both sides. Every human being lives from the very beginning in a relationship to itself which has to be developed towards a coherent personality and social belonging. This is the pre-given "essence" of human identity. But the outcome of this development is a matter of circumstances and mental activities. Identity is pre-constructed and constructed at the same time. It is the outcome of compelling destiny and creative freedom. Goethe expressed this in the saying "Geprägte Form, die lebend sich entwickelt." ("Coined form self-evolving in life.")[19]

Stating differences and dealing with them constitutes the life-form of human identity. Therefore, the issue of cultural difference is of highest importance for human life in respect to its internal dimension we call subjectivity. Subjectivity is

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18 Cf. Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, *Theorie und Moderne*; Jürgen Straub, "Identitätstheorie, Empirische Identitätsforschung und die Postmoderne Armchair Psychology," *Zeitschrift für qualitative Bildungs-, Beratungs- und Sozialisationsforschung*, 1 (2000); "Personale und kollektive Identität. Zur Analyse eines theoretischen Begriffs," in Aleid Assmann and Heidrun Friese (eds.), *Identitäten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998), pp. 73-104; Jürgen Straub and Joachim Renn (eds.), *Transitorische Identität*: *Der Prozeßcharakter des modernen Selbst* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2002).

19 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Urworte, orphisch," *Works*, vol. 1 (München: C. Hanser, 1985-1989), p. 443.

a matter of mental work within a pregiven cultural pattern of orientation. The work consists of internalizing these patterns into the constitutive human self-relatedness and at the same time of externalizing the inner world of subjectivity into the social world of intersubjective relationships. In this process of individualization and socialization, the cultural patterns of human life display enormous dynamics. Here lies one of the roots of the historicity of human life forms. For our understanding of intercultural communication, it is necessary to stress one very powerful quality of this dynamics: tension and struggle.

We all know the famous thesis of Samuel Huntington that the basic form of intercultural communication is clash.[20] This has been intensively criticized, but one should not overlook that there is an inbuilt tendency of clash in the procedures of human identity formation. The reason for this is rather simple: In order to bring about a coherent and sound self-relationship in personality and social belonging humans tend to furnish their self-relatedness with a set of positive values and norms. Otherness stands for its opposite. We can call this asymmetrical evaluation in the constitution of self as being different from others ethnocentrism.[21] The logic of this ethnocentrism can be characterized by three main principles: First, the already mentioned asymmetrical evaluation, second, the idea of an unbroken continuity of oneself in all temporal changes, and third, a perspective of world interpretation and self-understanding which places oneself and one's own life-form into the middle of the world. In this monocentric perspective, others are fundamentally marginalized.

This ethnocentric logic of identity formation has a quasi-natural power in the mental activities of human life. Its way of referring to otherness is reproduced by the others, and this constitutes a tension or a "clash." This "clash" is a part of

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20 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).
21 Cf. Jörn Rüsen, "How to Overcome Ethnocentrism: Approaches to a Culture of Recognition by History in the 21st Century," *Taiwan Journal of East Asian Studies*, 1, 1 (June, 2004), pp. 59-74; also in *History and Theory*, 43 (Theme Issue "Historians and Ethics," 2004), pp. 118-129.

the unsocial sociability of the human race which Immanuel Kant has described as the moving force of historical change in universal history.[22] There are not only mental forces constituting this clash, of course. Human nature is characterized by a structural surplus of needs and desires essentially reaching beyond the possibilities of fulfilling them. Every fulfilled need in human life creates a qualitatively new one which is not yet fulfilled. Thus, human life is characterized by a fundamental shortage of the material means to achieve the pursuit of happiness. In additional to this materialistic dimension in the clash of civilizations a mental or spiritual shortage has to be taken into account: Since the self-affirmation of humans in their personality and as well as in their social life-form needs recognition by the others with whom they live, the ethnocentric form within which this self-affirmation is culturally realized cannot structurally bring about a sufficient recognition by the others because of its unbalanced impact of values in the image of oneself and of the others.

Consequently, there is an inbuilt unrest in human culture emerging from the vital procedures of identity formation. This unrest is a matter-of-fact in human life which has to be taken into account by the humanities. But it is more than only a matter-of-fact, it is a matter of interpreting this fact as well: The humanities as a part of human society fulfil the social function of producing a convincing idea of their own culture as well as of that of the others.

Taking into account the "unsocial sociability" (Kant) of human identity formation the humanities may proceed in a twofold way to meet their task of information and orientation.

By assuming the quasi-natural form of human life which leads to a clash by ethnocentrism the humanities can become a part of the clash. They even can offer

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22 Immanuel Kant, *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*, 4. *Satz* (Idea of a Universal History in a Cosmopolitan Intent, Thesis 4).

themselves as a producer of cultural weapons for this clash. The best examples stem from nationalistic concepts of historical interpretation and presentation.

By striving to civilize and mediate this struggle they have to apply—at least—a minimum of recognition in conceptualizing otherness, so that the ethnocentric power of identity formation may be stripped of its aggressive quality. Here in this attempt to civilize the potential tensions in intercultural communication we can rely on a solid quality in human nature since most humans share a fundamental interest in survival by their interrelationship.

We can call this interest the inbuilt humanism in humankind. It enables people to realize their survival by cultural means in such a way that the others from whom they differ in their identity have a chance to survive as well. Hobbes' well-known political theory, that on the level of elementary life forms all men are struggling against each other, thus can be completed by a cultural theory of human life which stresses the sense generating forces of the human mind in all the constitutive unrest of practical life.

What does this mean for the humanities which address the issue of intercultural communication today?

I would firstly propose to ask for what we should not do, what we should avoid in conceptualizing, researching and representing difference. Otherwise, there are two mistakes which very often occur: a traditional one and a rather new one. The traditional one is falling back into the traps of Spenglerianism. This is the case, when civilizations are addressed as autonomous units of human life, self-sufficient and defined by a definite set of basic assumptions about the world and human life. Then we speak of "the West," "East Asia," "Africa," "the Near East," or "the Islamic World" which may transport this kind of assumption, even undeliberately. This may easily end up in a cultural essentialism of civilization. Next, we should not overlook the power of difference in the social and even natural world and in the human mind. It has often been addressed as

"construction" or as an "invention," and this metaphor implies the idea of negating the elements of experience and factuality in the cultural processes of setting and coming to terms with differences. Accordingly, the concept of hybridity has become very fashionable. I do not want to deny its analytical usefulness in disclosing special forms of human identity, but I see the danger that it tends to underestimate the power of deeply-structured exclusive identities as the ethnic, national or religious ones which bear the sharp distinction between self and others.

Instead, the anthropologically universal ethnocentric tendency in human identity formation has to be recognized, but at the same time the internal dynamics of its cultural and intercultural manifestation have systematically be taken into account. In order to do so, a good deal of theoretical reflection has to be done in order to develop a framework of research and representation which may enable the academic work of fulfilling its function in civilizing ethnocentrism.[23] If an intercultural comparison is set up, this reflection may bring about a paradigm of comparison which does not measure other cultures along the lines of one's own.

If intercultural communication on issues of identity is asked those elements of discourse should be strengthened which avoid the principles of ethnocentrism. So the principles we need are the following:

The unbalanced or asymmetrical evaluation should be replaced by the value of equality and by the rule of mutual recognition of differences.

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23 I doubt whether "a sympathetic and self critical attitude" is sufficient, as David Carr proposes in his very subtle, precise and clear analysis of my theoretical approaches to historical thinking suggests. See David Carr, "History as Orientation: Rüsen on Historical Culture and Narration," *History and Theory*, 45, 2 (2006), pp. 229-243; quotation on p. 243. I think that a "self-critical attitude" should include theoretically explicated frameworks of interpretation.

The concept of an unbroken teleological continuity of identity forming concepts should be replaced by a stronger historicity of these concepts stressing their internal dynamics and the importance of contingent circumstances.

The monocentric world view should be replaced by a temporal multiperspectivity and a multi-centred spatial dimension of human life, kept together by the inclusive universality of the regulative idea of mutual recognition of cultural differences.

The plausibility of this rule depends upon the degree to which it can be supported by convincing examples of its practical plausibility. One of the most striking experiences of recognizing differences is the fine arts. In its aesthetic understanding, Fine Art furnishes the human mind with an unlimited openness for variety and change. It has essentially overcome the constraints of aggressive distinctions and exclusions; it loosens the rigidity of coherence in human identity and integrates otherness into the self relatedness of the human mind. This achievement has its limits indicated by the fundamental distinction between fiction and fact, phantasy and experience. But even beyond the realm of an aesthetic disburdening from the load of reality there are achievements of recognition in history. The most prominent example I can offer is the idea of human dignity and its embodiment in political and social life-forms. Another most prominent example is human and civil rights. We all know about the fragility of the basic and universal value of recognition. All the more I think that it is necessary to concretize and develop its validity by our work as humanists.♦

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