

Migration across Traditions: Introduction and Summary of Session

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The interchange between different philosophical traditions has greatly influenced the development of philosophy. In this summary, I will discuss the idea of the migration of texts and traditions in philosophy. The point I want to stress is that there are many ways of understanding the exchange that involves the migration of texts and traditions. I will briefly discuss three different papers in this text: Sheila Mason's *A Comparison of Recent Writings on Practical Wisdom in Aristotelian tradition and in popularized Buddhism*, Veronique Tomaszewski Ramses's *Dialogue entre la philosophie Bouddhiste et la théorie critique de l'École de Frankfort*, in which she introduces an analysis of Robert Hattam's book *Awakening-Struggle: Towards a Buddhist Critical Theory*, and Pieter Duvenage's *South African philosophy*. From these three different perspectives, I hope to show how the exchange between traditions in philosophy has shaped our current perceptions of philosophy.

In the first paper, Mason gives an interesting comparison between recent writings on practical wisdom in Aristotelian tradition and popularized Buddhism. She believes that Buddhist practice can be interpreted as a form of philosophical enlightenment. Her definition of virtue theory wants to prioritize a perceptual capacity for awareness as well as responsiveness to different circumstances. She explains how obtuseness explains why some people have good reasons to act virtuously, but will not because they do not have the desire to be virtuous. Consequently, knowledge of virtue may be reintroduced as a form of positive reception wherein thoughts and feelings are part of one's priorities in life.

Next, the author asks if there is a relationship between Aristotle's practical syllogism and the practice of virtue. First, one must

look at Aristotle practical syllogism as described by Wittgenstein. The major premise articulates the *desiderative*, which comes from a deductive observation from what is the good and how one may accomplish it by pursuing this ideal. One can learn virtue through constant *training* throughout the course of one's life. Virtue must be valued as good in and of itself.

Even so, there are some notable differences between Aristotle's philosophy and Buddhism, which come through in the practice of mindfulness meditation, which is done by one's self-awareness of what is occurring at the present time. The idea of the noble truth, that is to say the suffering due to desires (*dukkha*). In other words, there is a parallel that can be drawn from Aristotle's philosophy and Buddhism insofar as the idea of noble truth. Mason refers to the good that can be realized moment by moment when one's perception has been transformed by education and practice. Second, she introduces the idea of standing back, that is to say to prefer the resolution to become aware of the effect of chaotic thoughts and desires rather than to avoid experiencing unpleasantness. On the other hand, if one compares the idea of altruism with the idea of awareness or compassion, one need to occupy one's mind in order to protect this ideal state, which interferes with one's state of being. From this, one may be required to suffer in order to clarify what suffering truly means or in order to have compassion. Compassion may come from a person whose undergoing a period of suffering, which allows this person to sense others as a whole – the idea of suffering insofar as the idea of what it truly means to be human.

The second paper, Veronique Tomaszewski Ramses's *Dialogue entre la philosophie Bouddhiste et la théorie critique de l'École de Frankfort*, intro-

duces an analysis of Robert Hattam's book *Awakening-Struggle: Towards a Buddhist Critical Theory*. Tomaszewski Ramses explains how Robert Hattam offers an analysis of the similarities and differences between Critical Theory and Buddhist philosophy (specifically the Mahayana tradition). From this discussion emerges a critical theory inspired by Buddhism. Hattam wants to accentuate the dualism of traditional Western philosophy. These phenomena, as explained by Tomaszewski Ramses, may be interpreted as a migration of philosophical texts that originated from the European tradition before passing to non-Western philosophies.

Hence, Tomaszewski Ramses's paper introduces how Hattam applies Buddhist philosophical precepts to Critical Theory and vice versa. This provides the possibility to create a Buddhist critical theory of society. As *bodhisattva* (humanistic spirituality) as well as *ethico-political life*, these forms of thinking could be reconciled within a dialogic space. In that sense, may we call this objective science? According to Tomaszewski Ramses, dialogue is the key element linking Buddhist philosophical precepts to Critical Theory.

In the final article Pieter Duvenage discusses the impact of the migration of texts on South African philosophy as well as philosophical institutionalisation. According to Pieter Duvenage's article, *South African philosophy*, although there are no independent South African philosophical traditions, it is nonetheless possible to research the foundations of South African philosophical discourse. Beyond any doubt, this foundation came from the colonial history of Western expansion and its effects within the South African movement. Consequently, one can argue that South African philosophy has been strongly influenced by Anglo-American and Continental origins.

First, Duvenage gives a brief chronological sketch based on the history of academic philosophy in South Africa. He argues that Hegel was used by British Idealists insofar as to legitimate colonialism. Duvenage explains

how the philosophical legacy of British Idealism in South Africa evolved throughout the 20th century. According to him, analytic philosophy, which had little use for British Idealism, became dominant at Oxford. (Whether or not the decline of British Idealism was in a way connected to the collapse of British colonialism remains an open question.) Duvenage's philosophical research shows interesting relationships between the development of the Anglo-Saxon tradition of English-speaking white South Africans and the continental tradition of the Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans (Afrikaners). He explains that even though some of the contours of South African philosophy were institutionalised by "white writing" (J.M. Coetzee), it does not mean that there were no black voices. Duvenage suggests that one of the challenges of contemporary historiography is to explore those intellectual traditions that have shaped philosophy in South Africa. One needs to establish a *genealogical* reconstruction of South African philosophy. Again, according to Duvenage's philosophical work on South African philosophy, we must recognize some of the problems of both analytical and continental philosophy in order to explain how they have been practiced in South Africa.