

SPECIAL THEME (1):
COMPARATIVE PHILOSOPHY AS A GENERAL WAY OF
DOING PHILOSOPHY THROUGH CROSS-TRADITION ENGAGEMENT
TOWARD WORLD PHILOSOPHY

PART II: ILLUSTRATING CASES
OF CROSS-TRADITION ENGAGEMENT WORLDWIDE <1>

DOING PHILOSOPHY COMPARATIVELY
IN SOUTHERN EUROPE: WESTERN, MEDITERRANEAN,
ISLAMIC AND OTHER PERSPECTIVES IN ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT: *Aiming to become a part of transcultural discourses and debates, the author argues in this paper for the use of transcultural approaches overcoming the traditional ones in doing philosophy comparatively in the Southern Europe. Within this framework, new forms of cross-cultural philosophizing in the Mediterranean philosophy will arise in the triangle among the Western Balkans, Italy and Greece as a transcultural exchange of knowledge and ideas including more than twenty surrounding countries in the Mediterranean basin. In this regard, the author is trying to find a way for deepening and broadening transcultural approaches concerning the Southern Europe in general and the Balkans and Mediterranean Philosophy in particular, because of transcultural potential that philosophy in the Southern Europe has to gradually develop its possible transcultural connotations in the very near future.*

Keywords: *a triangle with Greek Philosophy cross-cultural exchanges between West and the Islamic world, Mediterranean philosophy, the case of Italy and Sicily and the problem of inculturation, the complex of Mediterraneanism*

1. RETHINKING MEDITERRANEAN PHILOSOPHY

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, I held a lecture for the Sarajevo Canton philosophy professors entitled “Mediterranean Philosophy – a Lecture in Honour of BiH and

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Croatian Writer, Professor Predrag Matvejević (Mostar, 7 October 1932 – Zagreb, 2 February 2017)”, which by all means I wish to present in modification at our conference, since it coincides with it, as well as with the upcoming, 25th World Congress of Philosophy (XXV WCP in Rome, 1-8 August 2024), which will take place at the Sapienza University of Rome where Matvejević himself had taught for many years.

We need to emphasise at the very introduction that Matvejević, an intellectual and culturologist, is one of the most translated BiH and Croatian authors, and his most famous work, the seminal *Mediterranean Breviary* published three decades ago, is, in accordance with the bibliometric criteria, undoubtedly the most famous Croatian book in the world today, a record-holding book (at least 48 editions).¹ It is a literary, erudite study of the identity and spirit of the Mediterranean, from Palestine to Gibraltar, from the Arabic world of north Africa to the farthest north of the Adriatic. It has been translated in to 23 languages. It is worth mentioning that the famous Umberto Eco was among those who started the initiative to present the Nobel Prize for Literature to Matvejević, for this work that connects philosophy, history, and geography. *Differences are ours* is the message of the famous book, for, they belong to each and every one of us and by that they are transformed into the reasons for coexistence, enrichment and exchange.²

Hence, in accordance with the aforementioned, I wrote to the Office of the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Sarajevo, on 22 February 2018 a project proposal in cooperation with colleague Lino Veljak from Zagreb, entitled: *Rethinking Mediterranean Philosophy with other philosophical perspectives in engagement*.

For, philosophical considerations of the Mediterranean multiculturalism and the Mediterranean philosophy is a global paradigm, while studies in this field are inherently interdisciplinary. Owing to the fact that the project has not seen light due to the global pandemic, I now present the initiative to our philosophical association CPWP and to all its members to dedicate one of our conferences to this topic.³

¹ Among others, Zagreb (1987, 1990, 1991, 2002), Milano (1991), Paris (1992); Barcelona (1992), Prague (1992), Zürich (1993), Amsterdam (1994), Lisboa (1995), Sarajevo (1998), Athens (1998), Los Angeles (1999), Istanbul (1999), Casablanca (2000), Tel Aviv (2001), Podgorica (2002), Ljubljana (2002), Cluj-Napoca (2002), Helsinki (2002), Skopje (2002), Warsaw (2003), Tirana (2003), Tokyo (2003), Budapest (2006), Cairo (2007). The English translation of that book carries a different title: *Mediterranean: A Cultural Landscape*.

² In that section, Matvejević’s thoughts carry a special value, and we hereby present some:

- Mediterranean was constructed by harmony and balance, geometry and logic, law and poetics. It has been destroyed by rivalry and intolerance, lawlessness and hatred, violence and fanaticism.
- Mediterranean has erected monuments to faith and superstition, to greatness and vanity.
- In the Mediterranean, the spirit ages slower than the body.
- Those who cleared the vineyards broke more sweat than those who erected the pyramids.
- The sun of the south enlightens spirit, but sometimes takes the mind away.
- Democracy, born in the South, had more difficulty to grow there than in the North.
- People from the North frequently equate the Mediterranean with the South. Something draws them to the South, even when they stay loyal to some other seas. Perhaps it is the “faith in the South” that the unhappy philosopher spoke of.
- The Mediterranean trait is not inherited but acquired.

³ I would like to especially emphasise here the propaedeutic work by Stephen R. L. Clark (2013).

Per definitionem, the Mediterranean is an area encompassing the regions around the Mediterranean Sea, including all of its islands. Countries gravitating towards the area are called Mediterranean countries. Some of them lie on the Mediterranean, some only in part, reaching its shores, while others have no physical contact with the sea, but are part of the Mediterranean historically and culturally. Some of the oldest criteria used to mark the Mediterranean area is the spread of olive trees, of which Matvejević himself writes in his “Mediterranean Breviary”.

What is more, the Mediterranean is the cradle of the civilisation, while Mediterraneanism is the awareness of the versatile characteristics of the Mediterranean cultures and peoples, i.e. ancient Mediterranean civilisations that influenced the cultural development (Egyptians, the Minoan civilisation on Crete, Lydians from western Anatolia, Hebrews, Cyprus, Syria and Lebanon, Arabs, the Persian Empire, Romans, France, Spain, Portugal, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Malta, Dalmatia, and Medieval Bosnia), while the privileged geographical location of the Mediterranean, resting between the continents aided as well. In that sense, *the Mediterranean is the heart and the crossroads of the Ancient World without which there can be no understanding of the history of philosophy on a global scale* (the Greco-Jewish and Latin scholasticism, the role of magic and mysticism, their languages, literatures, histories, philosophies, religions, arts, archaeology, as well as the Arabic scholasticism we take a special interest in, as the third, slightly forgotten link between Europe and the Islamic world, i.e.: “the sunny thought of the Mediterranean vs. the darkness of the European north”).⁴

In “References: Sources and Literature”, some valuable links for further reading and research are provided, such as “Mediterranean Roots of Philosophy”, “Institute of Mediterranean Medieval Philosophy and Classics: I.M., M.P.C. Mediterranean Journal of Humanities”, “The Department of Classics and Mediterranean Studies, part of the School of Literatures, Cultural Studies and Linguistics. (University of Illinois at Chicago)”, and “The Program in Classical and Mediterranean Studies, Vanderbilt University”. Some available literature on the connections with Sicily and Italy as the third link between Europe and, lastly, the Arab-Muslim world and some other available internet sources are also provided.

Indeed, from a philosophical standpoint, it is interesting to examine the way in which a constructive engagement between the Bosnian-Serbian-Croatian and Mediterranean philosophical traditions, and the SE Europe in general, can result in learning and joint contribution to answering a range of philosophically important issues and topics. That is why it is highly important to present this project for the first time at a panel dedicated to the BiH philosophical heritage as has been confirmed by the FISP

⁴ Also, see Matvejević, Predrag (1999). Predrag Matvejević was born in Mostar, Herzegovina, not far from the Mediterranean. Matvejević, who was teaching in France at the New Sorbonne and at La Sapienza in Rome, emerged as a major intellectual figure in Italy, France, Germany and his native countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia. For further information, see the *Review of Middle East Studies* 34.2 (Winter 2000), 241-242 <DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S002631840004075X>>. See also: <https://matvejevic.tumblr.com/about>.

President, our Italian colleague Luca M. Scarantino, who is also President of the XXV World Congress of Philosophers (Rome, 2024).⁵

1. THE CASE OF ITALY AND SICILY

I have observed the case of Italy through an extraordinary opus of our Italian colleague Massimo Campanini.⁶ Although a minor religion in Italy (only about 1.5 million Muslims, i.e. 2.3% of the Italian population), the presence of Islam in this country goes back to the 9th century (in 827 CE, the conquest of Mazara del Vallo, Sicily and Southern Italy [the emirates in Bari (827-871) and Tarentum (840-880)] by Arabs/Saracen, lasting until the 13th century), the period when Sicily was under the Abbasid rule. What is more, opposite the prevailing practice of portraying Islam and Muslims in negative stereotypes, Massimo and a few other researchers see in Islam “the arrival of a truly global (Islamic civilisation)”, taking into account the radically interdisciplinary approach that we are now entering a post-western world. It is important to emphasise here that numerous researchers consider the 21st century to be Chinese and that the arguments among the sister Abrahamic cultures and civilisations additionally add to the fact.

Massimo has been oriented towards creating connections between ideas through cultural and temporal borders, as well as towards reaching final goals according to which those were formulated or applied, simultaneously drawing comparisons, borrowings and affinities via cultural borders through a systematic attack against eurocentrism. In that sense, he sees in Islam a western religion and we need to pose a question on the message he sends with the very title. It is fairly clear that in the essence of the European culture and civilisation he sees Greek philosophy, Roman law and Judeo-Christian culture to which he naturally adds a third, newly-sprouted bud on the Abrahamic tree that also bears witness to a single God: Islam. Alessandro Bausani (1921-1988), a prominent Italian scholar, translator of the Qur’an to the Italian language, also stated that “Islam has never become modern for it had already been too

⁵ This is quite evident from his message dated 30 January 2022, which reads:

“Dear Professor Kahteran, dear Colleague,

Many thanks indeed for your message and very kind words. I have duly noted and recorded your suggestion. Thank you.

I agree that it will be important and philosophically relevant to include a panel on Bosnian philosophy in the programme of the Congress. Please note that formal applications will only open later this year — I will be pleased to send you an official form by, say, June or July. In the meantime, though, I have included your request in the preliminary set of panels.

Your different contributions will be most welcome. The website of the Congress is about to be published; all relevant information will be available by March. Meanwhile, you can access the main structure of the WCP through the homepage of Fisp (fisp.org). We certainly look forward to hearing from you in the upcoming future, and to meeting you and your colleagues in Rome!

With kind regards as ever,

Prof. Dr. Luca M. Scarantino, President of FISP, and General Editor, *Diogenes*
President of 25th World Congress of Philosophy, Rome, August 1-8 2024”

⁶ See: <<https://www.unsa.ba/novosti/nekrolog-u-cast-profesora-massima-campaninija-gostujuceg-profesora-univerziteta-u-sarajevu>>; <https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massimo_Campanini>.

modern in the ancient times”. Of course, we too, like Massimo, understand that the criticism of western-centrism and eurocentrism by comparative philosophers is of no avail in the absence of a more precise measure, i.e., the immediate need of understanding that the influence of the non-European traditions, i.e., the influence of other and previous traditions, to the European thought exists.

Hence, in the Italian context, in this early intercultural exchange, it is exceptionally important to systematically study Sicily, especially considering the issue of the old contacts with the Ecclesia Sclavoniae, which was how the Church of Bosnia was called in the exchange with the Southern Italy and Sicily in the late 8th/early 9th century. Our people were called *saqlab*, *saqālība* (which was how Arabs called the Slavic seafarers, Slaves in the Muslim world, or those from Dalmatia, and, later, in the Ottoman period, those from the Sanjak of Klis). For example, in our country, the work of Michele Amari, Francesco Gabrieli, as well as many other Italian scholars of Islam has not been researched sufficiently. That is why, upon Massimo’s passing, I urged the Embassy of Italy to organise in Sarajevo a series of lectures of his colleague from the University of Palermo, professor Patrizia Spallino, entitled: “Missing third link in the intellectual cross-cultural exchanges between West and the Islamic world: the case of Sicily and the Southern Italy”, which had to have been postponed. A series of these public lectures would be a crucial contribution in this area of research, for both coasts of the Adriatic, keeping in mind the aforementioned professor Predrag Matvejević of the Sapienza University of Rome; he was born in Mostar, lived in Zagreb, and later between Rome and Paris, and who also wrote the record selling Croatian book, *The Mediterranean Breviary*.

The importance of this third link of early intercultural exchange, i.e., Sicily and Italy, (apart from the first two – the Ottoman Empire and Andalusia/Spain in the period from 711-1492) was emphasised to me by John L. Esposito, after the September 11 attacks, when I was his guest at the Georgetown University, as well as later, when he was our guest in Sarajevo, Zagreb and Belgrade. In cooperation with father Ivan Koperk, professor and then-dean of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Society of Jesus of Zagreb University,⁷ we translated an ultimately balanced book about Islam after the September 11 attacks, written by this American professor of the Italian origin: *What Everyone Needs to Know About Islam*,⁸ organised as a series of questions and answers regarding the essential topics in Islam, and I wholeheartedly recommend it for reading.

Furthermore, the encyclical of Pope Frances, *Fratelli tutti* (3 October 2020) alerts: “When this health crisis goes away (the Covid-19 pandemic, our emphasis), the worst answer would be to dive deeper into the feverish consumerism and new forms of egotistical self-preservation”. However, since the pandemic is ongoing, we should keep in mind the migrant crisis of biblical proportions, unfolding before our very own eyes, closely flowed by safety challenges and numerous other obstacles related to migrations

⁷ See: <<https://www.ffrz.unizg.hr/en/homepage/faculty/teaching-staff/>>.

⁸ See: <<https://bosnamuslimmedia.files.wordpress.com/2009/04/sto-bi-svatko-trebao-znati-o-islamu-john-l-esposito.pdf>>.

from the Islamic countries. However, in accordance with the cited encyclical, “every healthy culture is open and hospitable”.

I also need to emphasise that, in determining measures, the politics based on the assumption that Muslims are a disturbing factor is absolutely false, and there is a necessity of a far more engaged approach from both sides, primarily of the Islamic communities in Italy and Bosnia and Herzegovina which creates credible relations with the EU and with the world, with branches in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia. In that sense, our Massimo was not a pseud, but an engaged intellectual who will be greatly missed in the years following the pandemic. We will miss his ambition to renew the interest, both in Italy and beyond, in a deeper understanding of the Arab-Islamic culture, and, finally, his unrealised series of lectures in Sarajevo entitled: “Philosophy and the Qur’an: new hermeneutics for new times”.

It is completely clear that these migrations (additionally, refugees from Afghanistan and now too from Ukraine, which is the most recent case) add oil to the fire of crisis among the EU member states regarding migrations and the Islamic culture, and that includes Italy. According to the Pew Research Centre, Italy is rated second, after Hungary, in the negative perception of Muslims in Europe, all because of completely wrong perceptions regarding the phenomenon of migrations. Such misunderstanding (Islam has not been formally recognised in Italy) spreads the radicalisation index in Muslim communities, not only in Italy. However, the Islamic community in Italy is trying to find its own model of managing the minorities between the English multicultural and the French “universalist” model.

In fact, the core European problems with Islam, and with migrations in general, rests in the fact that the largest communities in Europe, culturally speaking, are not European communities at all, and Islam is the second largest religion in Europe, right after Christianity. This problem exists in all European countries in spite a number of measures taken to solve the issue, for example, multiculturalism in Holland, *laïcité* in France... What is more, the future horizon of Europe will primarily depend on whether or not the European countries, and the EU as a whole, will be able to develop the necessary politics in relation to the ever-spreading and lesser-integrating society of its Muslim communities. I deeply hope that the current EU administration will be able to recognise the importance of such crucial issues of institutionalisation of the Islamic representative organisations for relations with the European countries, and that it will place these issues high up on the list of its priorities instead of pushing them at the margins of social interest. In that sense, I truly expect a more engaged involvement of the local Islamic communities in the EU, primarily the one in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which needs to take a far more engaged approach and provide insights into the current global and historical processes and events both in the EU and in the rest of the world, as an autochthonous Islamic community. I am afraid that is currently not the case.

Sadly, anti-Islamic reactions, fear of Islam and Muslims and hatred and hostility towards Islam and Muslims have been shown in a number of attitudes that entail and copy negative and humiliating stereotypes and convictions of Muslims. It is islamophobia in different social contexts that truly is a threat, not Islam, and that phenomenon is not new in the EU. Hence, that is an ancient phenomenon that did not

appear out of nowhere following the September 11 events. It is deeply historically and socially enrooted. Thus, we should not be surprised at all by the anti-immigrant resonance on the hovering incompatibility of Islam with culture and values of the West, as well as by the rising issues regarding Muslim identity, the Eurocentric concept of racism and the like, in the vortex of linguistic games centred around islamophobia. The essence is disciplining of a possible Muslim autonomy, i.e., affirmation of the Muslim political identity as a legitimate historical subject.

That is one side of the medal, but what about the other?

There are similar prejudices and stereotypes regarding the West by Muslims themselves. For, one cannot come into a country without facing the problem of inculturation, the process of adopting the standards and norms of a society, adding to it all one's own characteristic features. That is why inculturation of Muslim asylum seekers in the European countries is highly necessary, with the single goal of adopting the bare minimum and patterns of behaviour and activity, and, ultimately, the language of the host country. For example, in 2010, the Vatican marked 400th anniversary of death of our almost compatriot Matteo Ricci (Matthew Ricci) (1552-1610). He was an Italian Jesuit and founder of modern missions in China and also of inculturation of Christianity. It is rather unknown that the same and not less important step was made by a group of Chinese Muslims, authors of the *Han Kitāb* corpus, who made progress via the famous Silk Road in improving the Euro-Asian integrations. Thus, I see no reason why we should not work on empowering the dignity and significance of the Euro-Atlantic integrations within the European Islamic communities through the spirit of cooperation with the EU.

I have permanently insisted on the cultivation of a new philosophical spirit that reaches beyond the classical boundaries. Opening the understanding of "universality" for a multitude of cultural and intellectual histories is highly necessary in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the entire region of Southern Europe. Also, scholars who have ventured beyond cultures, pointing their gaze beyond the local political programmes in search of truth, wherever it might be, are an important part of historical reconstruction that is ongoing. That is important not only because of the process of wound healing caused by the fragmentation that has left generations of people in search of the reconstruction of a large section of their heritage that has fallen into oblivion, but also for the human community as a whole, which is looking at this part of the world for inspiration and leadership in reaching a multi-religious and multicultural peace, and, within that peace, writing a new chapter in the history of world philosophy. Islam has never been such a society, but rather, it has been the other, and with its features, actions, institutions, beliefs, thoughts, included into the history of Europe, it has "written in the fate of Europe", i.e. the history of all those historically significant contradictions and evolutions in accordance with Ian Almond's (2010) *History of Islam in German Thought: From Leibniz to Nietzsche*.

Apart from the history of demonising Islam in the main current of the German thought, in the German anthology of prejudices, colleague Almond has published also an analysis of the French context in the book entitled *The New orientalists: Postmodern Representations of Islam from Foucault to Baudrillard* (2007), where he analyses

works of Nietzsche, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, Julia Kristeva and Slavoj Žižek, as well as postmodern writers, Jorge Luis Borges, Salman Rushdie and Orhan Pamuk. His series of Sarajevo lectures has also been published in 2011, entitled *Representations of Islam in Western Thought*, a continuation of a sort of the previous book.

It is my pleasure to have been the ‘guilty party’ in bringing Almond to Sarajevo and in publishing a two-language edition of the lectures, but I also must emphasise that a European view of Islam as a uniform, single-minded standpoint does not exist. Rather, those are heterogenous views that need to be analysed from one country to another in order to understand and rightly perceive this research subject related to Islam, Islamic culture and civilisation, as well as the Islamic model of thinking that is inextricably woven into the European thought, culture and civilisation. What is more, according to Almond, when we speak of representations of the Muslim Other, or, truth be told, also of the Greek, Armenian and Orthodox Other, the following cliché bears truth now more than ever: what is left out is just as important as what is contained in them. Furthermore, the black-and-white spectacles of observing our past are very dangerous, especially since when reading Almond’s *Two Faiths, One Banner: When Muslims Marched with Christians Across Europe’s Battleground* (2009), we learn that the Muslim-Christian alliances are the subject of research in this book, and that the army that had besieged Vienna consisted of half Turks and half Hungarian protestants, and that the main strategist of the siege was, in fact, Hungarian Prince Thököly.

By this I wish to emphasise that our histories are intertwined and polyvalent, by no means one-dimensional. To that I might add another similar example of alliance that occurred in the year of Hegel’s death (1831), and that is the uprising in Bosnia against the Ottoman Empire, led by Captain Husein Gradašćević – the Dragon of Bosnia (this year marks 186th anniversary of the Bosnian movement for autonomy). A half of his army consisted of Muslims, and the other half of Christians, both Catholic and Orthodox. After Gradašćević was defeated, his words were recorded: “There is Bosnia, o, beylerbey, and there have been Bosniaks in it; have been before and will be after you”.

It is clear that there exist zones of Islam, which is the topic S. H. Naser (GWU, Washington, D. C.) wrote about, but the issue is whether the solution will be to prefer the European Islam, a branch of Islam that formed among the European peoples from the Balkans and South-East Europe, promoted by Bassam Tibi, Tariq Ramadan, Maria Luisa Maniscalco, Xavier Bougarel, Jocelyne Cesari, Jørgen S. Nielsen, Robert S. Leiken. That remains to be seen. These authors wholeheartedly discussed integration politics, but time will carry a significant weight in taking a stance in this issue. European Muslims are a highly heterogenous mixture of ethnicities, religious affiliations, philosophical opinions, political convictions, secular tendencies, linguistic and cultural traditions, and they form the second largest religious group of the European multi-religious society. In fact, a continual interaction has existed with Europe, primarily with the southern Europe, since the very dawn of Islam and Islamic culture and civilisation. The European Commission started dealing with the issue of radicalism, promoting the idea of the European Islam as a more tolerant branch of Islamic faith,

i.e., a soft version of Islam. In that sense, it would be interesting to observe the writings of monsignor Mato Zovkić, a retired professor of the Faculty of Catholic Theology (University of Sarajevo), in his book *Dialogue between Catholics and Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (2018), which is now also available online. I wrote a review of the book in Japan, in a leading Christian journal for Asia, that has been published over 70 years, with the aim of emphasising the importance of dialogue about these topics⁹.

The logic of nationalists is utterly clear: I prefer my own even when he places me on the pyre to the other even when he offers me a medal! However, in examining the harmony of religions and philosophy, in Averroes'¹⁰ words, then it is clear that we seek help in achieving our goal in what has already been said by such a predecessor, who spoke of the subject, whether or not he followed our religion. By this, Ibn Rushd refers to all those who had examined the matter prior to the arrival of Islam. It is astounding to observe the ingenious thoughts of this Muslim scholar and the inconsistencies of our fractious rejection of being those who would observe the truth and testify on its behalf! For, Thomas Aquinas had a right to make mistakes regarding Muslims, Orthodox Christians and others, all of which he presented in the *Summa contra gentiles*,¹¹ but we have no such right. Aquinas surely did not have any command of the Arabic language and was unable to use Google which is at our disposal today. In this section, he calls the Muslim classical thinkers *philosophiae peripateticae depravator* – disruptors of peripatetic philosophy, but he also did not mind at all to borrow from them, since he said also that any truth, whoever spoke it, came from the Holy Spirit.

I will now pose a rhetorical question: Is there something for us to learn from this period of philosophy that we call the dark Middle Ages (although I think that being unfamiliar with this period is darker than anything)? How is it possible that the Mediterranean basin produced some of the best works in philosophy, as well as in music, painting, literature, etc., while we are unable to make use of that vast heritage of the Mediterranean philosophy which, truth be told, is very successfully promoted by the Croatian colleagues through the studies of identity and spirit of the Mediterranean, from Palestine to Gibraltar, from the Arab world to the outmost north of the Adriatic? I wholeheartedly recommend them to establish as an addition a department of Oriental studies in Zagreb and/or Split, for they have a lot to present in that field – a vast opus of colleague Daniel Bučan¹², who is the cornerstone of that scientific area of research, not only in Croatia, but beyond.

2. MAKING A TRIANGLE WITH GREEK PHILOSOPHY

In this section, I would like to consider the issue of Mediterranean philosophy or the issue of Mediterraneanism in the European cultural heritage, especially in South-East

⁹ Kahteran 2020.

¹⁰ Averroes (i.e., Ibn Rushd), *Fasl al-maqāl*, my translation from Arabic.

¹¹ A two-volume opus, published by Kršćanska sadašnjost, Zagreb.

¹² See: <https://independent.academia.edu/DanielBu%C4%8Dan>.

Europe, and the role of Greek philosophy.¹³ Philosophical considerations of the Mediterranean multiculturalism and the Mediterranean philosophy is a global paradigm, while studies in this area are inherently interdisciplinary. Creation, conflict and intertwining of the Mediterranean cultures, a specific Mediterranean multiculturalism, has significantly marked further development of western philosophy.

However, mentioning this issue even superficially would not be satisfactory here unless we established the triangle between the Balkans on the one hand, and Italy and Greece on the other. This is especially necessary given the fact that Justinian closed Plato's academy in Athens in 529, which also closed the spirit of the ancient culture and civilisations for centuries¹⁴. Those philosophers went to the East, later becoming the nucleus of the Arab-Islamic philosophy. That is how Greek philosophy was adorned by Arabic jewels, and also, owing to the Arabs, it was restored in Europe, creating preconditions for the arrival of humanism and renaissance. However, the Arab-Islamic philosophy is by no means exhausted by the fact that it was only a vehicle for the Greek philosophy in Europe.¹⁵

To that end, we need to mention here the grandiose opus of academician Hans Daiber¹⁶, a philologist and scholar of Arabic language, also an outstanding expert in history of philosophy, theology, and history of science, as well as a translator – a polyglot.

The study of Islamic theology, philosophy and science reveals us in an overwhelming manner the richness of a culture which became a bridge between East and West, past and present. The contribution of the Islamic culture to the development of humanity is immense. Its achievements became indispensable for the development of science and technology in medieval Europe, even if its efforts were supplemented and replaced in later time. History of Islam is in eminent manner history of science and thought and part of the history of mankind.

In this manner Islam in the Middle Ages became a bridge between antiquity and Europe, through its transmission of Greek thought, which were supplemented and reshaped to new insights in the context of a Qur'anic worldview.

Here, according to Daiber, Islamic culture appears as a vehicle of scientific insights which in the dialogue of culture can contribute to a better understanding of Islam and its rich culture and can help to avoid the involvement of religion into politics and its

¹³ See <<https://muslimphilosophy.org/generalinfo>>, as well as *Greek into Arabic*. R. Walzer. A collection of articles on the flow of Greek philosophy into Arabic and its practitioners (pdf); *Greek into Arabic – a Project to produce the critical edition of the pseudo-Theology of Aristotle* <<http://muslimphilosophy.com/books/walzer-grk.pdf>>; *Studia graeco-arabica*: an online Journal <<http://www.greekintoarabic.eu/>>; *Introduction of Greek Philosophy in the Muslim World* (from JIP 1, by M. Hozien): <<http://muslimphilosophy.org/grk-phil>>. Too many facts are still unknown, too many works have been neglected for centuries and remained unread and are only gradually being rediscovered in Eastern and Western libraries and edited and studied.

¹⁴ <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Justinian-I>>.

¹⁵ Daiber 2004, 6.

¹⁶ Hans Daiber (born 1942), Emeritus hoogleraar J.W. Goethe Universität, since 1995, chair of oriental languages at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität Frankfurt/M; he taught at the Free University of Amsterdam (1977-1995), at the University of Tokyo (1992) and at the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, Kuala Lumpur/Malaysia (2001). See <<https://independent.academia.edu/HansDaiber>>.

abuse for political interests... but also and above all as a culture with a rich literary heritage, from which human mind can continue to profit in a dialogue between cultures as it should be understood.¹⁷

The work of academician Daiber is outstanding, not only because of a respectable scientific biography and authority of this German polyglot, but also because of his impeccable scientific performance and the rank of questions and problems he deals with. In other words, those are the topics of scientific and cultural relevance in the field of historical and philosophical research of the Islamic philosophy. Researching these issues gains relevance and sense through a complex whole of mediation between the Islamic thought and culture and a wider set of relationships in orientalist literature, hence it is *eo ipso* an important contribution to this kind of research.

In that respect, in the afterword to Daiber's book, I stated that the Islamic philosophy is a hidden link in the chain of intellectual history of humanity today.¹⁸ Still, the need for new analyses and discussions based on the study of new available facts and core materials is inevitable and this is our obligation towards this hidden link.

However, a pledge to face the Islamic philosophy from its onset and the Greek philosophy with the western and eastern philosophical traditions is not aimed to either defeat or confront any of the philosophies involved. One could freely say that it is a pledge for a fruitful consolidation of the efforts in solving the issues and improving the understanding of the very standpoints. Hence, such studies are aimed to draw attention to these universal elements of classical Islamic thought and spirituality that are explicitly enrooted in the universal dimensions of human experience. They will, on their own, acquire the necessary foundations for a permanent cultural creativity, individual realisation and collective transformation – in a global civilisation that is emerging. It is a lucky circumstance that in our efforts to introduce those universal elements of Mediterraneanism, classical Islamic thought and spirituality in the process of crosspollinations with the ancient Greek philosophy on the one hand and Judeo-Christian philosophical tradition on the other, as well as with the modern and postmodern western philosophies, our narrower and wider public is ready for this kind of openness, mutuality and coherence that is inevitably entailed in a cooperative conversation.¹⁹

In the meantime, we bear witness to the emergence of the Sarajevo school of comparative philosophy and religions and the Western Balkans or South East Europe, since there already exist a number of affirmed authors and thinkers who have established contacts with prestigious university centres and international colleagues, each of them taken in by the spirit of comparativism. An additional impulse to the true spreading of said circle of scholars or school, as I prefer to say in this text, are guest lectures by professors from abroad, as well as conferences we organise.²⁰

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Op.cit.*, 181.

¹⁹ *Op.cit.*, 187-8.

²⁰ The twenty-ninth international scientific and cultural conference Days of Frane Petrić held from 26 September to 2 October 2021 in Cres (Croatia), organised by the Croatian Philosophical Society, in

Hence, an additional stimulus to those efforts is Daiber's book published in three languages, *Islamic Thought in the Dialogue of Cultures: innovation and meditation between antiquity and middle ages* (2008), published later by Brill (2012).

This book bears witness to the fact about the meeting of the Islamic philosophy and European thought, having previously met the ancient Greek philosophy. The Greek ideas have found their way into the Islamic thought, becoming assimilated within the Qur'anic worldview. With all the understandings and misunderstandings, these philosophers are participants in a dialogue, enabling us to examine inspirations, reception, assimilations and reorientation of the philosophical thought in the period between the antiquity and the Middle Ages.²¹

What is more, academician Daiber presents the fact that the Islamic philosophy is the most beautiful example of a multicultural dialogue, opposite the prevailing portrayals of Islam as a disturbing factor:

The Greek philosophical tradition common to Islam and Medieval European scholasticism requires a discussion of the way in which Greek thoughts passed to the Arabs, before we discuss the impact of Islamic philosophers on European scholastics. Only such a discussion will reveal the new orientation of Greek thoughts in Islam and its specific impact on medieval European thought.

However, before we look at Islamic philosophical thought, we should examine the Islamic background that became a fertile soil for the reception of Greek philosophical and scientific thought.²²

The richness of ideas as an indication of plurality in a multitude of contours of Islam during its history implies for Daiber a plurality of values to a certain extent, and we should understand that as a constructive bridge between the Islamic cultural heritage and the demand of modern plurality, while awareness of the plurality of any culture, including the complexity of Islam can generate new identities and in that accord can suite an intercultural dialogue in multicultural countries, such as the Mediterranean basin is and always has been through its long history. This is ultimately an important lesson for the Western Balkans, especially in light of the events in Ukraine.

In that sense, the Mediterranean philosophy becomes a symbol of multiplicity of ideas that stem from intercultural dialogue and, at the same time, universality of ideas as a common core for a better understanding of different cultural and civilizational complexities. *Eo ipso*, in this way, human society is constructed through a peaceful coexistence of transnational identities, together with a transcultural philosophy that creates a continual process of cultural transfer that stimulates mutuality in the creation of new and extensive insights, *malgré tous*.

cooperation with the institutions of the Town of Cres: "East -West: Comparative Philosophy and World Situation". See the following web-site <<http://www.hrfd.hr/documents/dfp-29-program.pdf>>.

²¹ Daiber 2008, "Introduction", 2-3.

²² *Ibid.*

3. INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

Why is it that I am initiating the project on the complexity of Mediterraneanism in the cultural heritage of Europe and today's paper on the Mediterranean philosophy in comparative philosophy, in an inter-traditional and transcultural engagement in the Balkans, including the examples of Italy and Greece?

I have initiated this pioneer project in order to introduce the recent significant scholastic findings in philosophical studies of the former Yugoslav countries (i.e. the region of Bosnian-Serbian-Croatian language area, which is linguistically almost the same), for the purpose of examining the way in which philosophical ideas and approaches from these areas (for example, the Islamic philosophy) can learn from one another and make joint contributions to this common philosophical and new understanding of the Mediterranean philosophy today.

The current project of studying the Mediterranean philosophy establishes an efficient platform for a wider, beneficial position, and creates an essential starting point for a significant undertaking of inter-traditional, reconstructive engagement between the complexes of philosophical tradition of the Bosnian-Serbian-Croatian region and comparative philosophy. Understanding the strategy of a constructive engagement in the study of comparative philosophy,²³ specifically speaking, as well as inter-traditional philosophical research, is key for understanding the essential content and methodological meaning of the project.

Orientation of the constructive engagement in philosophical studies of Bo Mo, presented simply, contains two main bases:

(1) it emphasises philosophising through a reflexive criticism (including self-criticism) and argumentation, instead of dealing with history of a philosophical tradition for the sake of archaeological interest or a historical description;

(2) it emphasises philosophising in a global context for the sake of a joint contribution with distinctive approaches from other traditions and/or styles of philosophising as a self-closed ideological system.

The two bases are cornerstones of a general strategy of a constructive engagement as understood in a philosophically interesting manner within the Journal of Comparative Philosophy project and, from the last summer, also within our philosophical association (CPWP).²⁴ In short, the constructive engagement strategy in comparative philosophy attempts to gain an insight into the ways in which specific forms of thinking, methodological processes, visions, insights, essential standpoints, or conceptual principles and explicatory resources from different philosophical traditions and/or different styles/orientations of philosophising (within a single or different tradition *in concreto* the Mediterranean) can learn from one another and jointly contribute the understanding and treatment of a number of disputable issues and topics that are philosophically significant, all through reflexive criticism (including self-

²³ See Mou 2009.

²⁴ See <<https://scholarworks.sjsu.edu/comparativephilosophy/>> and <<https://www.cpwponline.org/>>.

criticism) and argumentation. They can be elaborated through an appropriate philosophical interpretation and/or wider, suitable philosophical position.

In this sense, the methodological orientation of the engagement of the new boundaries can essentially be observed as a constructive engagement of the very comparative philosophy. The constructive engagement strategy in comparative philosophy is the one that essentially unifies the different new boundaries of contemporary philosophical studies on the Mediterranean philosophy that are elaborated as the focus of this paper, which essentially concerns the content of this virtual conference for philosophical interest and the interest of the philosophical area which primarily belongs to the Bosnian-Serbian-Croatian circle. It is a strategy of comparative philosophy that signals a bright future of mutual understanding and a joint contribution of different philosophical traditions to the common philosophical undertaking towards the world philosophy, or towards that which is sublimated in the very title of XXV WCP (Rome, 2024)²⁵, in the city which “largely embodies a cosmopolitan ideal, the spirit of a defiant society that chose a refugee drifting on a raft in the Mediterranean, seeking asylum on the coasts of Latium, as its founding myth”.²⁶

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²⁵ FISP has reached an agreement with the Italian Philosophical Society and the Sapienza University to host the 25th World Congress of Philosophy in Rome in 2024. The Congress is entitled: “Philosophy across Boundaries” (“La philosophie à travers les frontières”), and preparations are underway. After Bologna in 1911, Naples in 1924, and Venice in 1958, Rome will host the final phase of the World Congress of Philosophy in July 2024.

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