

# Intercultural Philosophy as Translation and Dialogue between Situated “Sentipensares”

## *La filosofía intercultural como traducción y diálogo entre sentipensares situados*

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### Abstract

A comparison between two major projects of “transformation of philosophy” in the 20th century, allows us to point out that the discursivist project remained in the orbit of Euro-Northamerican thought and occluded positive exchanges with other knowledges, memories, and cultures of the world, while that of intercultural philosophy opened up a universal theoretical-practical horizon. The sapiential subjects that such philosophy privileges can be considered situated “sentipensares.” By means of cultural translation, understood as mutual and open hermeneusis, the transforming project of intercultural philosophy aspires to put such subjects in dialogue, not only to achieve possible theoretical understandings but also better forms of coexistence between human beings and groups among themselves and with all living beings.

**Keywords:** transformation of philosophy, discursivism, intercultural philosophy, situated sentipensares; cultural translation, dialogue, conviviality.

### Resumen

Una comparación entre dos proyectos mayores de transformación de la filosofía del siglo XX permite señalar que el proyecto discursivista permaneció en la órbita del pensamiento euronoramericano y ocluyó intercambios positivos con otros saberes, memorias y culturas del mundo, en tanto el de la filosofía intercultural abrió un horizonte teórico-práctico universal. Los sujetos sapienciales que tal filosofía privilegia pueden considerarse “sentipensares situados”. Mediante la traducción cultural, entendida como hermeneusis mutua y abierta, el proyecto transformador de la filosofía intercultural aspira a poner en diálogo a tales sujetos, no solo para lograr entendimientos teóricos posibles, sino mejores formas de convivialidad entre seres y grupos humanos entre sí y con todos los vivientes.

**Palabras clave:** transformación de la filosofía, discursivismo, filosofía intercultural, sentipensares situados, traducción cultural, diálogo, convivialidad.

## Introduction

According to the typology used by the *Revista Guillermo de Ockham*, this article is a reflection article; therefore, it is necessary to point out—from the beginning—that the *locus enuntiation* is that of a “liberating or liberating intercultural ecosophy of our American liberation”<sup>1</sup> (Bonilla, 2021, 2023a, 2023b; Bonilla *et al.*, 2021). This intellectual location—which is clarified in the conclusions—is recognized as indebted to the friendship, teaching and publications of Raúl Fornet-Betancourt and colors the production of the author’s last decades, including the present article. It is also pertinent to state that the contribution presented here constitutes a tribute to this Cuban-German philosopher, a great scholar of Latin American thought and one of the most prestigious founders of the contemporary intercultural philosophical current. In order to highlight the relevance of his work, we have chosen to start with a comparison between the two philosophical megaprojects of transformation of 20th century philosophy, and then to consider the central theme of intercultural translation and dialogue, somewhat expanded by reference to other sources and not only to the work of Fornet-Betancourt.

Among the European events of the 20th century, with effects on almost all the other countries of the world, the end of World War II, which brought with it the division of Germany and the beginning of the Cold War, and the fall of the Soviet Union with the subsequent hegemonic neoliberal globalization under the aegis of the United States and the most powerful transnational capitals, stand out. In the 1960s, Karl-Otto Apel (1985a, 1985b) elaborated—in its essential aspects—the project of transformation of philosophy in close dialogue with fundamental moments of contemporary philosophy and the thought of Jürgen Habermas, who recognizes him as the living philosopher who has influenced him the most. Some twenty years later, echoing the concern shared with other thinkers for the future of philosophy in a globalized world, Fornet-Betancourt presents a new proposal for the *intercultural transformation of philosophy*.

Significantly, both projects can be considered far-reaching philosophical responses to the above-mentioned events of planetary dimension. The first was born of the need to put the best of philosophical thought at the service of the political and moral reconstruction of Germany and Europe, where, as a consequence of the normative chaos created by Nazism and the war, a new democratic channel and forms of life were sought that would allow the reorganization of coexistence (Apel, 1991a). Therefore, it proved to be a necessary presence in the evolution of Latin American philosophy (Fornet-Betancourt, 2008) and inspired those who found a philosophical motive in the democratic restorations of their countries of origin during the 1980s, as shown in the chapters of the joint work *Communicative Ethics and Democracy* (Apel *et al.*, 1991). Thematically and historically more vast, the project of intercultural transformation in the philosophy of the last decade of the last century was presented as an attempt to think, in consonance with the memories and cultures of the world, possible and differentiated ways that would lead to the reconstruction of global conviviality—not only conviviality—(Berisso & Giuliano, 2015, p. 150). In this sense, it was of major incidence in contemporary developments in philosophy and human and social sciences and had a remarkable international transcendence (Fornet-Betancourt, 2015).

Now, the need to compare both projects is reinforced by the fact that Apel was the representative of discursive ethics who maintained the greatest dialogue with the philosophy of liberation and intercultural philosophy and with Latin American philosophy

1. Considering Alejandro Medici’s observations on the difference between the expression “liberating”, which refers to a real possibility, and the adjective “liberating”, which expresses an intrinsic quality.



in general. This academic and friendship bond, which was confirmed in numerous joint publications and work meetings (Fornet-Betancourt, 2008), was reflected in the obituary that Dussel (2017) wrote on Apel's death:

Our meeting in Freiburg in November 1989, organized by Professor Raul Fornet-Betancourt from Bremen, is one of the most exciting experiences of my life. In a room of professors, standing face to face with Professor Apel and myself before a selected group of about forty philosophers was a borderline experience. Apel read a paper on *Discourse Ethics as an ethics of responsibility*. I exposed certain critical suspicions of the *Introduction to The Transformation of Philosophy* (1973). From then on, year after year, sometimes in Europe and sometimes in Mexico and Latin America, we met until 2004. It was an exciting dialogue. (para. 2)

The central section of the article, devoted to investigating the specific notions of translation and dialogue in intercultural philosophy—according to the model offered by Fornet-Betancourt and the group of intellectuals formed around him in Aachen—begins with a presentation of the sapiential subjects privileged by intercultural philosophy. These, considered the depositaries of eminent languages and knowledge that are not found in philosophical academies, are the ones who make possible the realization of the broad work of hermeneusis and intercultural dialogue that is sought. Such subjects, designated here with the expression “situated sentipensares”, are the manifestation of diverse forms of reason that, in contrast to the monological logos of reason euronoramerican,<sup>2</sup> sink their roots in the humus of bodies, languages and non-hegemonic cultures. Far from assuming the idea of the civilizing superiority of modern bourgeois culture or the postmodern idea of the incommensurability of cultures, the transforming project of intercultural philosophy aspires to put in dialogue such situated reasons or sentipensares, through the recourse to a possible cultural translation between them, understood as mutual and open intercultural hermeneusis.

The conclusions of the article show that the objective of these operations of hermeneutic translation situated in a horizon of universality and intercultural dialogue (Fornet-Betancourt, 2023) does not remain at the level of possible theoretical understandings, but tends to the postulation and achievement of better forms of coexistence of human beings and groups among themselves and with all living beings; In other words, a kind of expanded cosmopolitanism with positive inclusion of differences and based on the full recognition of the episodes of domination, spoliation and extermination that have occurred in the world, particularly since 1492 (Fornet-Betancourt, 2011), as well as on forms of contextual and anamnestic justice. In the expression of the author of these pages: an intercultural, nuestroamericano ecosophy of liberation.

## The Two Major Transformative Projects of Philosophy in the 20th and 21st Centuries

The young German destined for military service on the Leningrad front during the Second World War, Apel, discovered his philosophical vocation through the generational experience of the “destruction of moral self-consciousness”, an experience “that could contain a special knowledge that could or should prevent us from returning to normality...” (Apel, 1991a, p. 72). In the chapter where he confesses this, the various philosophical attempts to return to this normality are analytically recovered; some come from the German traditions themselves and others, from receiving foreign works and authors, who did not foresee the root of the problem. This indispensable knowledge was,

2. The neologism “Euro-North American” is used to refer to the forms and products of thought of European and North American origin (United States and Canada), or dependent on it, whose distinctive characteristics are anthropocentric, androcentric, and racialized monologism.

on the other hand, synthesized in a dramatic phrase written in prison by the Lutheran martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer: “it had to be shown that Germans still lack a decisive basic knowledge: that of responsible and free action also in the face of duty and orders” (as cited in Apel, 1991a, p. 116). According to Apel, Bonhoeffer’s sentences refer to the problem of the passage from a conventional morality—that of abiding by law and order, the fourth stage in the evolution of moral consciousness (Kohlberg, 1998, pp. 119–122)—to a post-conventional one; which is necessary for an adequate understanding of the German catastrophe and its overcoming. This reference to Apel’s autobiographical writing is decisive for understanding the final ethical-political objective of his complex plan for the transformation of philosophy, a feature equally relevant in the intercultural proposal.

The transit between the broad project of transformation of Apelian philosophy and the ethical-political problematic—or referred to history (Apel, 1991b, pp. 159–184)—must be clarified to point out its scope. According to Cortina (1991), Apel’s purpose was the construction of

A philosophical proposal of his own, architecturally organized”, whose sections were configured over time as “an anthropology of knowledge, an anthropology of knowledge, a transcendental hermeneutics and pragmatics, a semiotics as first philosophy, a theory of truth-types, and discursive ethics. (p. 10)

Though Apel’s (1991b, pp. 159–184) publications date back to 1955, for the purposes of this presentation only some of the work that made him famous in 1972–1973 and his work on discourse ethics as responsibility ethics will be considered. To begin with, in its first volume, *The Transformation of Philosophy* takes up Apel’s (1985a) studies on Heidegger and attempts a “confrontation between the hermeneutics of being and the analytic-linguistic critique of meaning” (p. 7). Meanwhile, he focuses on “achieving a normative orientation along the lines of the transcendental justification of valid knowledge” (Apel, 1985b, p. 7), culminating in a neo-transcendentalism of Kantian roots that, in the horizon of pragmatics, is based on the *a priori* of the community of communication (Apel, 1985a, pp. 7–8). At the end of the “Introduction”, the community of communication is enunciated as a community of argumentation. It is worth saying that this is the extension (or the replacement) of the Kantian *Ich denke* by the *Wir argumentieren* of the unlimited community of argumentation, where a post-metaphysical intersubjectively valid ethics also finds its foundation (Apel, 1985a, pp. 71–72). With Fornet-Betancourt (2008), it is considered that Apelianism is not exhausted “in the attempt to demonstrate the internal need of philosophy itself to progress theoretically through the creative and recontextualized dialogue of its past traditions” (para. 4) but must be considered “against the background of the attempt to open a new horizon that allows the elaboration of a successful mediation of ‘theory’ and ‘praxis’ or, if you will, of philosophy and politics” (“Notes”, para. 1).

The 1991 work is articulated in two chapters. In “The Pragmatic-Transcendental Understanding of Discourse Ethics,” Apel (1991b) points out his preference to speak of *discursive ethics* instead of *communicative ethics*, because the former name refers to argumentative discourse as a means of grounding norms; moreover, because it “also contains the *rational a priori of grounding* for the principle of ethics” (p. 147). He then shows the failure of Kantian grounding and justifies the idea that only a pragmatic-transcendental transformation of transcendental philosophy can achieve the ultimate grounding of ethics (p. 154).

The second section introduces some distinctions in ethics, such as those of a part A “of abstract grounding” (Apel, 1991b, p. 160)—in turn divided into “*the plane of ultimate pragmatic-transcendental grounding of the principle of grounding of norms and the plane of*



*grounding of situational norms in practical discourses*” (p. 160)—and a part B “*of grounding referred to history*” (p. 160). In his view, this differentiation puts an end to the Kantian dualist idea, since it postulates the existence of a pragmatic-transcendental interweaving of the *a priori* of the *ideal* community of communication (argumentation) with the *real* community—situated and historically conditioned—and makes possible the postulation of an ethics of responsibility (pp. 170–184).

The Apellian proposal is not without questions and problems; among others, one could object to the scarce criticality, shared with Rawls and Habermas, in the adoption of Kohlberg’s early criticized evolutionary presupposition (Gilligan, 1985; Vitz, 1994). Nor should we forget Dussel (2011, pp. 180–187), Apel’s disseminator in Latin America, who made a rigorous critique of his formalism in the second chapter of his *Ethics* of 1998. The compilation of the debates between the two thinkers in 2004 results in the observation that Apel has not been able to go beyond the limits of his own Euro-American-centric thought, inasmuch as Dussel carried out a process of critical appropriation of his works (Apel and Dussel, 2004).

Referring to the open dialogue between the pragmatic-transcendental transformation of philosophy proposed by Apel and Latin American philosophy, Fernet-Betancourt (2008) indicates some positive perspectives for the latter. First, it helped Latin American philosophy “to discover a discursive perspective that allows approaching the question of universality without mortgaging it with the history of Eurocentrism or with the weight of dogmatism” (“*Perspectives...*”, para. 2). Second, it encouraged thinking about mediations between context and universality. Third, it installed “the idea that philosophy, without forgetting or denying its social and political commitment, must be a discursive instance that cannot and should not be confused with a process of ideologization” (“*Perspectives...*”, para. 4). Finally, he made it clear that philosophy “must cultivate itself as a culture of giving reasons for the good reasons that are adduced to take sides in the world” (“*Perspectives...*”, para. 4).

Without the need to explicitly polemicize with other currents of thought, the proposal of intercultural transformation of philosophy led by Fernet-Betancourt opened the way early on, starting with his rich works on liberation theology, Latin American thought and liberation philosophy, in which not only a solid method of study of the texts is observed, but also the formation of his original thought through the dialogue he establishes between these, history and the present time (Bonilla, 2022). Among other contributions, it is worth mentioning the edition of *Befreiungstheologie: Kritische Rückblick und Perspektiven für die Zukunft* (Fernet-Betancourt, 1977), which includes a precise investigation on “La incidencia de la teología de la liberación en la filosofía latinoamericana” (Fernet-Betancourt, 2000); in it he gives an evaluation of the subject and sketches a possible agenda for dialogue.

Likewise, his constant study of Latin American authors is reflected in numerous articles and books dedicated to José Martí (Fernet-Betancourt, 1998) and to Latin American Marxism (Fernet-Betancourt, 1995, 2001), as well as in the *Kommentierte Bibliographie zur Philosophie in Lateinamerika* (Fernet-Betancourt, 1985a), first annotated bibliography of Latin American philosophy in German, and in *Problemas actuales de la filosofía en Hispanoamérica* (Fernet-Betancourt, 1985b, pp. 117–149), where he approaches a sharp critical reading of founding texts of the philosophy of liberation. The dialogue with the philosophy of liberation and his discussions with representatives of discursive ethics were reflected in several volumes directed by him (Fernet-Betancourt, 1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1994a, 1996). For his part, preceded by his book on the phenomenological ontology of Sartre, interpreted in a liberationist key (Fernet-Betancourt, 1983), his investigations

on the presence of liberationist philosophical styles in European thought are particularly fruitful, where he rejects the historiography based on Hegel and recovers the philosophical attitude of concern in forgotten tendencies and figures, such as those of Aspasia of Miletus, the Cynic philosophers, Peter Abelard, Johann B. Erhard, German popular philosophy and German popular philosophy. Erhard, German popular philosophy and Maria Zambrano (Fornet-Betancourt, 2002).

Together with other thinkers, Fornet-Betancourt initiated the intercultural transformation of philosophy in the last decade of the last century; a turn in philosophy broader and more fruitful than the dialogical outlines of comparative philosophies (Stepanyants, 2023, pp. 79–84) and much more decisive than the transformation proposed by Apel, since it was not only about putting in the place of the abstract modern subject the discursive procedural *we*, but of a concrete, situated, intercultural, communitarian and historical *we* (Di Martino, 2009). Although the expression “intercultural philosophy” comes from the end of the last century, the possibility of an intercultural philosophizing is not recent; moreover, it is plausible to imagine it at different moments when encounters took place between philosophies of diverse origins or with *other* ways of thinking equivalent to philosophy. Initiated around 1990 as a response to the possible dangers for humanity and for philosophy posed by the globalization imposed by the neoliberal globalization of markets, the expansion of communication technologies and the political-military hegemony of the United States (the “adversity of the times”, according to Fornet-Betancourt), intercultural philosophy—in different modalities—expanded rapidly; especially since the founding of the Gesellschaft für Interkulturelle Philosophie (1991), based in Cologne, that of the Wiener Gesellschaft für Interkulturelle Philosophie (1994) and with the beginning of the international congresses of intercultural philosophy (1995), an initiative of the Latin American Department of the Missionswissenschaftliches Institut in Aachen, under the direction of Fornet-Betancourt.

Thus institutionalized, intercultural philosophy expanded to the present, has been shaped by considering the different forms of philosophizing that occur in cultures and seeks their polyphonic manifestation, as set forth in the articles of *History and Development of Intercultural Philosophy* (Fornet-Betancourt, 2015, pp. 7–8). In the conviction “that reality is transformable and transformative” and that “historical realities are practical products” (Fornet-Betancourt, 2017, p. 122), such a new paradigm of philosophy is oriented towards an ethical-political praxis of interculturality against the *post-civilizational barbarism* of neoliberalism and its consequences (Becka, 2007, pp. 103–120; Vallescar, 2000, pp. 321–322). This ethical-practical turn means that intercultural philosophy only makes sense if it translates into a practice of justice, solidarity, coexistence, recognition and peace at the same time.

To understand the Our-American<sup>3</sup> imprint of the line of intercultural philosophy promoted by Fornet-Betancourt and the so-called Aachen School (Bonilla, 2005), it is worth turning to some of the philosopher’s texts, especially to a pioneering article of 1994 and to recent contributions.<sup>4</sup> Fornet-Betancourt (1994b) proposed three decisive features of this intercultural reformulation of philosophy, starting from the hypothesis of the “polyphony of the philosophical” with the need to abandon the monocultural understanding of philosophy—proper of the West—and to adopt the “transrationalization of the logos through the acceptance of the solidary equivalence of the logos spoken

3. The adjective “Our-American” is preferred, with deep roots in Martí’s thought, to refer to the philosophical currents and critical thought of the semi continent that consider its belonging and situationality, among them, the philosophy of liberation.

4. This background has been discussed in extenso in a recently published chapter (Bonilla, 2023c).



by cultures” (p. 75). As a first feature, the critical re-reading of our American thought and the study of oral or symbolic traditions are highlighted. On the other hand, the second refers to “rehearsing a way of thinking that is not imposing, that takes the risk of co-creating, in assumed respectivity with other cultures.” This encourages, as a third feature, the development of “pro-positional philosophies”, rooted in an “experience of inter-trans-culturation” (Fornet-Betancourt, 1994b, pp. 82–84).

The First International Congress of Intercultural Philosophy (Mexico, 1995), the creation of the South American Association of Intercultural Philosophy and Theology (ASAFTI) in 2003 and numerous congresses and meetings that have taken place in Our America to date, confirmed this new perspective, reinforced by the appearance of multiple publications and the institutional insertion of philosophy, theology and intercultural social sciences in Intercultural (EIFI) in Barcelona, in 2017, together with the creation of the EIFI Virtual Library opened a new space for dialogue and collaboration.

The distinctive path of our American intercultural philosophy has also been pointed out by Fornet-Betancourt (2004, pp. 9–120) in his critical study of some philosophical texts published around 1992, which triggers an enlightening philosophical dialogue. The exchanges maintained with philosophy and liberation theology, Latin American feminisms, Marxisms and indigenous and Afro-American thought in these years—since 1995—have made it possible to delineate a profile of critical intercultural philosophy, “with a clear normative orientation and linked to the demands for cultural justice of the poor and marginalized or denied cultures” (Fornet-Betancourt, 2021, p. 29). Fornet-Betancourt (2021) openly lists the nine main tasks of this contextualized philosophizing, which “emanate from the challenges confronted by the historical reality of the Latin American peoples”<sup>5</sup> (p. 37) and are articulated “with the memories of liberation and goodness of the peoples” (p. 42).

These tasks are: (1) to contribute to the realization of cultural justice; (2) to share and accompany the claim of the rights of peoples to the autonomy of the space and time in which they live; (3) to engage in the struggle for the balance of the world; (4) to criticize the globalization of neoliberalism; (5) to criticize the hegemonic model of development and its idea of progress; (6) to elaborate an effective pedagogy for the cultivation of an existence in communion with human beings and the cosmos; (7) to radically revise the concept of philosophy; (8) to foster a new historiography of philosophy; and (9) to transform philosophical reason. The concrete realizations of this intercultural transformation of philosophy—both by Fornet-Betancourt himself and by thinkers from our America or Europe committed to Our America—cover a vast library of names and themes, impossible to enumerate briefly, but all of them rooted in local and epochal contexts, effectively situated and without losing sight of the aspiration to universality.

## Translation and Dialogue between Situated “Sentipensares” as an Intercultural Philosophical Challenge

The central idea of this article owes its inspiration to the critiques of hegemonic science made by Fornet-Betancourt (2017), as well as to the papers presented at the XIII International Congress of Intercultural Philosophy in Medellín (Fornet-Betancourt, 2020). Leaving aside the critical richness of his historical analyses on the change in the ideal of knowledge in modern science and the construction of hegemony that meant its central

5. These challenges include a broader notion of citizenship to accommodate the emergence of indigenous and migrant groups, the human right to migrate, the ecological and environmental issue, the broadening of notions of justice in the adoption of its contextual and anamnestic forms, etc.

course, the intercultural challenge of questioning the very concept of epistemology and its pretended universality is taken up from the first book with the aim of seeing its Eurocentrism and highlighting the violence contained in the disregard of other knowledge. For this, it is necessary, from the feeling and living of the plurality of the world as a demand for freedom: to declare contingent the pretended planetary necessity of Western science and technology, since these represent a historical event linked to the colonialism of a civilizing project; to claim the right to be free from the current civilization; and, finally, in the face of the loss of modes of knowledge and the privilege granted to functional knowledge by hegemonic civilization, to promote the recovery of knowledge through dialogue with the experiential knowledge of numerous human communities (ignored, despised and suppressed by hegemonic science), since they—Fornet-Betancourt (2017) points out, following Fals Borda—“express their ‘con-consciousness’ of participation in the world and show [...] that the world is plural and that it is known, that is, it is also inhabited in a plural way” (p. 42).<sup>6</sup>

In an interview published in the same volume, knowledge is understood as an event that makes the subject more real and teaches it how it should be (Fornet-Betancourt, 2017, p. 126). As part of this understanding of the contingency of the hegemonic world and of the liberating character of knowledge, it likewise poses the challenge of historicizing the present—which is intended to be imposed as the only total reality—and tracing its genealogies, in order to reverse the project of destitution of the other of secularizing modernity, with the ultimate goal of promoting “a counter-movement of restitution of orders that understand the forms of human life and coexistence as expressions of belonging to a higher order, because they are aware (made whole) of the mystery of life and of the world” (p. 65).

In this same line of argument, we find the metaphysical thesis with which Fornet-Betancourt (2020) opened the XIII International Congress of Intercultural Philosophy. In rejection of modern anthropocentrism, he argues: “affectivity and knowledge are determinations of the ‘life principle’, which has neither its place nor its time in the places and times we know in what we call ‘human life’” (p. 13). With birth, human beings receive this inheritance, which is—at the same time—“*ethical* memory of an inner tension between being and ought to be” (p. 13). To trace this river of life back to its sources and to create—based on this knowledge—possible forms of conviviality imposes the abandonment of the hegemony of epistemological monism, which leads to civilizational nihilism and to the need for a new cognitive culture based on experiential knowledge, on *sentipensares* or on plural and contextual reasons of love.

This article defends the idea that this new cognitive culture invoked finds happy expression in *sentipensar*, a category proper to the liberationist sociology of the Colombian Orlando Fals Borda (1925–2008), widely accepted in our American philosophy and social sciences. Although such an idea does not come from a philosophical matrix, similar intuitions can be found in the broad spectrum of *Western philosophy*, from Plato, through Augustine, Bonaventure and Pascal, to Max Scheler, Xavier Zubiri and Maria Zambrano, as well as in Latin American liberation theology. The most interesting thing about the concept of *sentipensar* is that Fals Borda received it in his fieldwork with fishermen from San Martín de la Loba, who preserved the ancestral practices of “thinking with the heart and feeling with the head.”<sup>7</sup>

6. This is why the expression “cultures of knowledge” is preferred to “epistemologies” (Fornet-Betancourt, 2017, p. 137).

7. Mimicking the *hicotea* turtles of the region, these humans exist in an amphibious mode, with practices of resistance involving moments of concealment and reflexive silence, followed by others of energetic action (Moncayo, 2015, pp. 9–10; Vélez Peña, 2023, pp. 51–63).



In the wake of these ideas, the intercultural transformation of philosophy proposed by Fornet-Betancourt is interpreted with respect to a change of the subject of philosophizing. Indeed, the depositaries of eminent languages and knowledge (the truly human memory)—that is, those who make possible the realization of the vast work of hermeneusis and intercultural dialogue that is the subjects of such ambitions are not to be found in philosophical academies. Such subjects, which can be designated by the expression “situated sentipensares,” are recognized<sup>8</sup> as manifestations of different forms of reason. These, unlike the monological logos of Euro-American reason, are rooted in the humus of bodies, languages, and non-hegemonic cultures. Far from assuming the idea of the civilizing superiority of modern bourgeois culture or the postmodern idea of the incommensurability of cultures, the transforming project of intercultural philosophy aspires to bring these situated reasons or sentipensares into dialogue by means of a possible cultural translation between them, understood as mutual and open intercultural hermeneusis. This also means a profound revision of the philosophical canon and of the sources and forms of philosophizing, with the consequent renewal of the philosophical academies as a whole (Bonilla *et al.*, 2021, pp. 76–86).

According to Fornet-Betancourt (2003), the intercultural transformation of philosophy is shown as an effort of translation between philosophies of diverse cultural origins, since it “seeks to transmit the founding experiences and references of their respective universes” (p. 417). Thus, intercultural translation not only becomes an essential practice, but the metaphor of translation is emblematic of the philosophical dialogue with philosophies of the present and the past; moreover, it is adopted by intercultural anthropology, sociology, and political science (Grimson, 2011; Santos, 2005, pp. 174–187; Vior, 2016).

A universal and millenary phenomenon that has generated the greatest exchanges between human groups and cultures, translation—like all human relationships—is not exempt from ambiguities and conflicts. These have been reflected in the ontological and ethical discussions on the possibility of translation; in particular, regarding the question of communication, which implies the commensurability or incommensurability of human languages (and cultures), but also that of their *honesty*, which—in terms of intercultural philosophy—is expressed in the concept of recognition. Eco (2008) admirably expressed this last idea, when he revised the belief in the possibility of faithful translations:

Fidelity is, rather, the tendency to believe that translation is always possible if the source text has been interpreted with passionate complicity, it is the commitment to identify what for us is the deep meaning of the text, and the ability to negotiate at all times the solution that seems to us the fairest. (p. 472).

He also points out a little further on, in full consonance with the idea of translation that represents intercultural philosophy: “if you consult any dictionary, you will see that among the synonyms of *fidelity* there is not the word *exactitude*. There is, rather, *loyalty*, *honesty*, *respect*, *piety*” (Eco, 2008, p. 472).

If intercultural philosophy assumes the metaphor of translation as an expression of its own practice, it understands it in a broad way; not as the transfer from one language to another, but as a hermeneutic interaction between philosophical cultures. Such a conviction is because all linguistic translation translates cultures: “it is decidedly a way of understanding other strange and different cultural worlds, which implies understanding meanings and practices proper to other cultural and historical environments” (Salas Astrain, 2012, p. 130). Dependent on political and social contexts, the practice

8. Intercultural philosophy is also conceived as critical philosophy of recognition (Bonilla *et al.*, 2021, pp. 68–71; Fornet-Betancourt, 2011, 2015, pp. 47–60).

of translation—of whatever kind—is revealed as “an expression and articulator of power relations” (Vior, 2016, p. 4); always is conducted in conditions of asymmetry and its politicization is presented in explicit or more veiled manifestations.

In the field of our American intercultural philosophy, the metaphor of translation has implications derived from a complex historical memory linked to the processes and scenes of linguistic-cultural mediation, whose origin goes back to situations prior to the “Discovery” itself. Thus, on the one hand, it evokes the intense translation activity, partly institutionalized and of great intercultural intensity, which generated situations of exchange, mediation, negotiation and dialogue between scholars, soldiers, politicians and traders of diverse origins and religions (Christians, Jews, Muslims) in the current Spanish territory (Santoyo, 2008). This evocation, romanticized of the “lost paradise of medieval triculturalism” (Baigorri, 2010, p. 148) and which highlights the positive effects of translation, supports the use of the metaphor of translation by intercultural philosophy, as far as it designates a possible horizon of intercultural exchange and philosophical dialogue.

On the other hand, the metaphor in question also alludes to the fact that in different historical circumstances translation played a negative role, since it served to transmit the theoretical and practical heritage of the “civilized” conqueror and, to a lesser extent, the devalued heritage of the conquered (“barbarian”): *a priori* step, then, to the concealment, alienation and death of the languages and cultural practices of the peoples of the New World (Fornet-Betancourt, 2003, pp. 122–127). In short, if translation facilitated exchanges, it was also an instrument of domination (Payàs & Zavala Cepeda, 2012). Linked to translation and as a vehicle for evangelization, there was an intense activity of generating scripts in the Latin alphabet of American languages and their grammars. This activity of written translation has endured over time and, as Salas Astrain (2012) rightly points out, “continues to the present day in the attempts of the States to construct relevant written texts for the education of the Indigenous people” (p. 125).

If we move from this brief historical consideration of languages and cultural practices to that of philosophy, to speak of intercultural translation and dialogue becomes almost impossible, since philosophy (like theology) was literally transported to Hispanic America; it was institutionalized in the universities of early creation and developed in them without any link to the categorical and symbolic world of Amerindian languages and cultures (Fornet-Betancourt, 2003, p. 125). Once again, this favors to raise the foundational discussion of the late sixties of the last century, between Salazar Bondy and Zea, on the existence or non-existence of a Latin American philosophy; reformulating it: if the importation, imposition and concealment of the preceding languages and philosophies of Our America blinded at the root the possibility of any philosophy in Latin America, or if this was deployed in a condition of coloniality, but also with alternative and resistant idiosyncratic creations of Our America.

In this contribution, the idea is sustained that, in spite of these mournful episodes contained in the Latin American philosophical memory, the intercultural philosophy that unfolds in Our America can continue to represent itself in the metaphor of translation as an expression of its own task; as long as it is understood, according to Salas Astrain (2012), as a “hermeneutic exercise of recognition” (p. 131). Thus, from a more ethical-political point of view, it can be affirmed that translation makes possible not only philosophical dialogues with present and historical philosophies, but also becomes a privileged tool for the recovery of the plurality of the memories of humanity, still present in the sentipensares of the peoples as memories of suffering, domination and liberation; but also of the memories of “good living”, which are also the memories of relegated



and muted knowledge, often expressed in native languages and in non-academic forms (Di Martino, 2009).

When it is fully accomplished, the effort of translation—conceived as mutual hermeneutic—culminates in intercultural dialogues that constitute the possibility of intercultural philosophy itself and, on the other hand, make possible the creation of spaces of conviviality. As dialogical philosophy par excellence, intercultural philosophy holds that dialogue is constitutive of the most intimate human reality: “the primordial substance from which human beings [...] develop their humanity and discern their situation in the world” (Fornet-Betancourt, 2023, p. 18). In the face of current discursivism, the idea is defended that dialogue is not a form of discourse since it implies an existential and interpersonal dimension rooted in the world of life and the capacity for it is transmitted “through tradition and community: hence the need for memory” (p. 19). Thus, to grasp the nature of dialogue it is equally important to consider that part of it consists in listening: “we are able to talk to one another because we are able to listen to one another” (p. 19).

To make explicit his efforts to found communities of intercultural critical reflection, Fornet-Betancourt (2022) highlights the notion of intercultural dialogue as one of his central conceptions:

The idea of the slow dialogue of cultural universes that translate their singularities, since it can mean a perspective to overcome the understanding still current today of the exchange between cultures in terms of a dialectic that would be given between “particular” cultures and a “universal” culture. (pp. 75–76)

With the defense and rehabilitation of a *culture of reason* (not of the modern and monological rationalist or instrumental reason, but of a sentient reason, patrimony of all peoples and cultures), intercultural philosophy can contribute to intercultural dialogue in today’s conflictive world. This task, according to Fornet-Betancourt (2023), implies: (1) a critique of the narrow Euro-Americanocentric determination of the culture of reason; (2) the restructuring of the culture of reason in the light of the dialogue with diversity; (3) the transformation of the culture of reason “into an open space of relations where the ‘polylogue’ of multilingual diversity is given” (p. 23); and (4) the culture of reason as “facilitator of balance (or harmony) in diversity” (p. 23), which is also a proposal for the reformulation of relations between human beings and nature.

## Conclusions

The aim of this contribution was to present Raúl Fornet-Betancourt’s proposal for the intercultural transformation of philosophy as the only effectively universal one of our time. Unlike the discursivist project, it takes charge of the monocultural character of Western philosophy and calls for its removal and the opening of the theoretical-practical horizon of philosophy through an intense work of translation and dialogue between situated and plural reasons.

With the description of the distinctive features and limits of the transformation of apellian philosophy—widely studied by the critical, liberationist and interculturalist sectors of our American philosophy—it became evident that, despite the dialogical intention, the intellection of dialogue as an argumentative discourse of formalist character prevents a real change in philosophy, insofar as it fails to detach itself from the premises of Western monologism and lacks the tools to expand the sphere of the subjects of dialogue. In contrast to it, the intercultural transformation of philosophy extends its spatial and temporal horizon, embracing all the sapiential cultures of the world, and proposes a

truly revolutionary task, partly inspired by the philosophy of liberation of our America, which cannot be exhausted in the work of one or two generations.

The intercultural transformation of philosophy—overcoming Western philosophical monologism, and its anthropo-, andro- and ethnocentrism—not only realizes the critique of epistemology and hegemonic knowledges (as has been shown in detail), but—and above all—promotes a recovery of knowledge of universal scope, through inter-philosophical dialogue, and, especially, following Fals Borda, in dialogue with the experiential or sentimental knowledge of numerous human communities, which have been ignored, despised and suppressed due to their colonial condition.

In this article, space has been given to the treatment of the metaphor of translation as expressive of the hermeneutic intention of intercultural philosophy. Reference was made to its historical thickness, of an ambiguous and open character, but equally apt to represent the conflicts involved in any attempt at dialogue between asymmetrical philosophical cultures, due to the fact that such asymmetries do not lie in differences of capacity or nature, but have been produced by colonial domination. Given this critical reflection, cultural translation—exercised as mutual and open hermeneusis—continues to be considered a privileged tool for enabling authentic intercultural philosophical dialogues, which do not remain “indifferent chatter”, since universality and truth are “regulating dimensions that help us to prevent cultural diversity from becoming arbitrary relativism” (Fornet-Betancourt, 2023, p. 25).

The broad treatment of intercultural philosophical dialogue—only possible by accepting different forms of philosophical reason that take place in all lived cultures—is not reduced to mere theory. Its logical continuation, according to Fornet-Betancourt (2013), is “to criticize the asymmetries of power, the hegemonic pretensions, the marginalization of so-called traditional cultures and the social exclusion of a large part of the world’s population” (p. 24). And, consequently, with the critique, as noted, to actively engage in struggles for the recognition and justice of these inferiorized and dominated human groups, as well as to promote policies of balance and global justice.

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