

Introduction.

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In this book¹, we explore the possibility of creating philosophical perspectives outside of Western countries together with philosophers from Peru, Mexico, and Japan. Why compare these three places? Allow me to elaborate using a metaphor: Peruvian, Mexican, and Japanese philosophies can be good fellow travelers, so to speak, encountering each other on their respective journeys to their own philosophies and traveling together for some time because of their shared orientation at this moment.

Peru, Mexico, and Japan developed as modern nations in the nineteenth century. Since then, they each have imported Western philosophy as one of the disciplines for modern university education. For a long time they have been accustomed to seeking teachers from Europe, focusing on learning from them as students. Thus far, Peruvian, Mexican, and Japanese philosophy have had no need to interact with each other because their relationship was not that of teacher and student.

However, some have always claimed that merely importing Western philosophy was insufficient for developing one's own philosophy. Recently, non-Western regions are trying to discover and create their own philosophy as one of the World Philosophies. In this phase, interaction among Peruvian, Mexican, and Japanese philosophies can benefit each other, not because one teaches the others but rather because they can be good "travel companions." Perhaps their exact destinations are different; however, at the moment, they are struggling to create their individual philosophies based on their historical context.

When we reflect on the meaning of creating one's own philosophy outside the Western world, it is crucial to consider the significance of each region's pre-modern intellectual heritage. Mexico, Peru, and Japan show interesting contrasts in this regard.

Before the Spanish and Portuguese arrived, there were great civilizations in the region now known as Latin America and Far East. They were all unique and different from modern nation-states. Mexico was not just one country, but was governed by strong empires such as the Aztec, Tarasco, Maya, with each ruling over diverse ethnic groups in different time periods. Furthermore, what is now Peru was covered by the territory of the Inca Empire, with its official language being Quechua. There were several diverse ethnic groups dominated by this empire. There were several intellectual traditions and activities followed by people from Mexico and Peru. After the Spanish conquered these regions, Mexico and Peru became Spanish colonies. During this period, universities were constructed where scholastic philosophy was taught primarily. Conversely, the Japanese government blocked European influence until the 19th century. During this period, original intellectual traditions developed.

From the second half of the 19th century, the aforementioned three countries have been integrated

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into the globalized, Westernized, and imperialistic world order, and have been students of European philosophy. Thus, after a century and a half of learning philosophy, they have struggled to create their own philosophies based on their own historical contexts. Hence, it is important for each of them to ask how they can connect philosophy with their pre-modern traditions. Each region will have a unique answer to this question, not only because of the contents of their pre-modern heritages but also because access to their contents differs.

The language and writing system is an important concern when approaching a pre-modern tradition. Starting in the 7th century, Japan developed a system of writing based on Chinese characters. A substantial part of its pre-modern thought is thus accessible through written texts, which are deeply influenced by Chinese concepts. Therefore, the influence of the Chinese worldview is considerable. Additionally, it is difficult, if not impossible to distinguish the prior oral tradition from textual form. In contrast, written texts in Mexico and Peru are very limited. Admittedly, this does not necessarily mean that there was no writing system. The Maya language, for example, had a kind of ideogram that was decoded. However, these cultures did not develop the custom of expressing complex thoughts in literature. Instead, people transferred their thoughts through oral tradition. Therefore, it is difficult to express their pre-modern thought, unlike Japan. Therefore, each region must explore different methods to relate their pre-modern traditions to philosophy.

The author of chapter 1, Mario Mejia Huaman, is a philosopher from Peru whose native language is Quechua. He has published several books in which he provides a worldview of that language in philosophical terms. His work can be interpreted as an attempt to create an Andean philosophy connected to the resources transmitted through Quechua oral tradition. He avoids simply identifying the pre-Hispanic intellectual tradition with “philosophy,” but refuses to forget his own tradition. His attempt is similar to Japanese philosophers who interpret Japanese pre-modern thought from a modern point of view. However, while studies of Japanese thought are usually realized by reading past texts, the ground for Andes philosophy must be living language as well as folklore, architectural ruins, archeological remains, documents written by the Spanish etc.

Chapter 2 is written by Adalberto de Hoyos from Mexico, who is interested in studying interculturalism, specifically through science and technology. Here, he investigates the worldview and thought of indigenous Zapotec communities and their medical practices in southern Mexico. The framework for his research is the recent multicultural trend in Mexican philosophy. Mexico is a country where culturally and linguistically diverse communities coexist. As a result, it is a challenge to maintain the uniqueness of each community while trying to unify the nation. Discussions on multiculturalism in Mexico offer many perspectives on cultural diversity, not just in terms of individual rights but also in terms of the preservation of local communities.

Chapter 3 discusses the possibility of sustaining the concept of “Japanese-ness” without either arbitrary or politically motivated self-identifications. The author, Yosuke Bando, is one of the talented

young researchers of pre-modern Japanese thought, specializing in Confucianism and Kokugaku. He reflects on the dangers of idealizing the national essence or fixed national character, which have been constantly criticized in the modern times. However, he explores ways to find the significance of “Japanese-ness” and suggests a certain continuity of pre-philosophical Japanese ways of being on which philosophers reflect through their different intellectual activities.

Chapter 4 focuses on aspects of one of the greatest pre-modern Kokugaku scholar, Motoori Norinaga’s criticism of Karagokoro. It is useful to consider Norinaga in the comparison between Latin American and Japanese philosophies. Although a pre-modern scholar from our Westernized 21st century worldview, Norinaga’s work can be compared with contemporary Latin American philosophers’ struggles to approach their origins in oral traditions. He reappropriates the basic form of the Japanese worldview, prior to the arrival of Chinese characters, Confucianism, Buddhism, and so on by analyzing classic Japanese texts and the structure of their language to bring the basic form of its way of thinking and being to elucidate and incorporate it into those of his own age. I introduce his position in the context of contemporary multiculturalism under the name of a “situated universalism” as an alternative to both standard universalism and relativism.

Chapter 5 is a contribution from Kasumi Ichinose, a young Japanese researcher of Latin American philosophy. She offers a comparative study on the concept of “the Other” from Emanuel Lévinas’s philosophy and Enrique Dussel’s liberation philosophy. Dussel is one of the most famous Latin American philosophers, especially outside Latin America, and many may associate him with the phrase, “Latin American philosophy as World Philosophy.” Although no pre-modern tradition is explicitly discussed in this chapter, Dussel’s approach is deeply rooted in the circumstance in which it is historically formed.

The search for a connection between philosophy and pre-modern intellectual heritages outside Europe has just begun. Therefore, this book does not offer a complete investigation of it. There are several issues that have not been discussed in any chapters, such as the problem of the modern nation-state. We are accustomed to talking about French, German, or Anglo-Saxon philosophy, but several problems must be taken into consideration when using expressions from Peruvian, Mexican, Latin American, or Japanese philosophies. Andean (Quechua or Aymara) philosophy, Nahuatl philosophy, or Zapotec philosophy may be less problematic because each would at least correspond to a unity of language. However, it is not completely futile to discuss, for example, Mexican philosophy because the development of multiculturalism is clearly a product of Mexico’s modern circumstance. However, this problem, equally to many other problems, remains to be discussed in the future.

This book calls for solidarity among peoples born and educated in cultures different from the modern European one, but who have learned Western philosophy to understand their own realities. Western philosophy is a part of those realities, but not its whole. In countries like Peru, Mexico, and Japan, it is essential to integrate their pre-modern intellectual heritages into the modern knowledge of

Western philosophy. Philosophers in these regions are now learning from each other to find their own ways of settling philosophy on the soil of their own traditions.