



Invitation

Saturday, 24 October 2009, 2 pm

Intercultural Philosophy: Potential and Perspectives

Lecture by Prof. Kwasi Wiredu

Can cultures interact? Yes, of course, they can. They have, and they will. But can they interact on the basis of equality? Yes, they can, but they have not, in many instances. Witness the interaction between Western imperialism and Africa. The Western colonialists believed their cultures to be superior to those of the people they colonized. This attitude was mainly manifested in the activities of the Christian missionaries who came, in cooperation with the colonialists, to try to "save" our forebears from the darkness of paganism. This supercilious attitude was incompatible with dialogue without which you cannot have intercultural philosophizing. Yet, one of the sources of an intercultural discourse of a theoretical kind was Christianity.

After political independence some African Christians started talking of African Christianity, and raising questions like "Can I be an African and also a Christian?" Moreover, Africans trained in philosophy (what philosophy?) also started professionally examining the question of the proper way of cultivating African philosophy. The discussion became famously divisive. But this was a case in which divided, we stood. One fundamental thing then about contemporary African Philosophy is that it is constitutionally intercultural. Why so? Because, apart from the fact that African philosophy is largely done in foreign institutions imported to Africa, the languages in which it is expressed are foreign, in a deeply cultural way. How do other cultures stand in this respect? These considerations should provoke questions like "In what way is intercultural philosophizing beneficial to the disparate cultures of the world?" Another natural question is "What difficulties, if any, stand in the way of intercultural philosophy?" In my discussion I will try to deal with these questions and others that are implicit.

Prof. Kwasi Wiredu is one of the most influential figures in the field of African Philosophy. After studying Philosophy in Ghana and the UK (under Ryle, Strawson and Hampshire at Oxford), he taught at the Department of Philosophy at the University of Ghana from 1961 to 1983. There, he was Professor and Head of Department in the 1970s. From 1987 until his recent retirement, he was Professor of Philosophy at the University of South Florida, Tampa. His major publications are *Philosophy and an African Culture* (Cambridge UP, 1980), *Cultural Universals and Particulars: An African Perspective* (Indiana UP, 1996), and *Person and Community: Ghanaian Philosophical Studies* (co-edited with Kwame Gyekye, New York 1992). He is also the editor of Blackwell's *Companion to African Philosophy* (Oxford, 2004). Prof. Wiredu has held numerous visiting professorships (including at UCLA and Duke). He was among the Committee of Directors of the International Federation of Philosophical Societies from 1983 to 1998. The secondary literature on him is growing.

Introduction and Comments by Kai Kresse and Roger Kuenkel; the lecture is jointly organised by ZMO and the Society for African Philosophy e.V. (gaph)

Venue:

Werkstatt der Kulturen
Wissmannstr. 32

12049 Berlin

GEFÖRDERT VOM



Bundesministerium
für Bildung
und Forschung

