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# Teaching World Philosophies: An Essay

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Abstract:

To step up the activity level of academic philosophizing, 'Teaching World Philosophies' will propose that one first engage in a thorough housecleaning before teaching world-philosophical traditions today. In the path that will be sketched as an example in this regard, I will critically engage 'the West,' a concept that looms over an adequate academic engagement with world philosophies today. Bringing into the conversation Humayun Kabir's (1906-1969) analysis of philosophy as a space that can generate and foster critical independent thinking within a society, I will argue that a change in ingrained patterns of conducting a social activity like academic philosophy can be changed. This change might, in fact, be urgent especially in those locales in Europe in which academic philosophy as it is practiced today was crafted.

**Keywords**: World Philosophies, Intellectual Housecleaning, Humayun Kabir, Hypophilosophy

> The challenge for philosophy—for that discourse that incessantly assesses itself in light of "all that which happens in human reality" and goes on, and on, about "how can you still say this?"—is to persuasively think through the avenues for subverting this *hierarchy* on the level of ideas.
>
> Tsenay Serequeberhan (2012, 151)

John Henry Muirhead (1855-1940) initiated the well-known *Muirhead Library of Philosophy* in 1890 to bring together original thought in modern philosophy. As Muirhead's

general editor's introduction notes, the library's scope of inquiry was extended "into something more international" in the hope that it would lead to a mutual understanding between peoples (Muirhead 1952, n.p.). One of the few 'something-more-international' volumes is entitled *Contemporary Indian Philosophy*. Muirhead co-edited it with the eminent Indian philosopher and statesman S. Radhakrishnan (1888-1975). In his editorial introduction to the first edition, Muirhead claims that the time was ripe then (in the 1930s) to engage more thoroughly with the philosophical ideas of the subcontinent, for the imminent Government of India Act of 1935 promised to grant more autonomy to the Indian provinces under colonial rule. Notably, the volume does not conflate philosophy on the Indian subcontinent with Hindu philosophy. Muirhead mentions his unsuccessful search in finding non-Hindu Indian writers who were willing to write about modern Indian philosophy for the first edition in 1936, while S. Radhakrishnan documents in the editorial preface for the revised and enlarged second edition published in 1952 his success in closing this gap (Muirhead 1952, 13, 16; Radhakrishnan 1952, 17). Several decades later, this essay collection that gathered together the "fresh flower and fruit" (Muirhead 1952, 13) developed on the subcontinent under conditions of coloniality is known only to adepts. It is not included in standard philosophical curricula. This paper will attempt to show that ingrained patterns of doing philosophy currently impede an adequate engagement with world-philosophical traditions like those that emanated from this subcontinent. These patterns can be changed. In fact, they might be pressing reasons for facilitating this change.

Building up on Elijah Millgram's description and analysis of a "hypophilosophy" in the profession, the first section in this paper will work out patterns of philosophical activity that prevail in the discipline currently. Section two will outline proposals that seek to rev up the level of academic hypophilosophizing so that the ways of knowing that were consolidated during Europe's imperial and colonial projects are discontinued. Section three will sketch one

possible path to prepare the ground for teaching world philosophies adequately, that is to say, ways of making sense of the self and world. In this section, the need for a prior, and thorough, 'intellectual housecleaning' (Serequeberhan) of naturalized concepts like 'the West' before teaching world-philosophical traditions, will be discussed. Section four will introduce Humayun Kabir's (1906-1969) analysis of philosophy as a space that can generate and foster critical independent thinking within a society. Kabir was trained as a philosopher in Oxford, but went on to become a poet, novelist, trade unionist as well as a minister for education in an independent India. He was also a co-drafter of the UNESCO's first path-breaking but much-discussed declaration on the term 'race' entitled "The Race Question" (1950).[i] Finally, section five will consider how critical individual thinking about professional practices can be reignited on the European continent given the typical parameters of conducting academic philosophy (t)here.

**Resource Consumption-Levels in Hypophilosophizing**

In an article entitled "Hypophilosophy" (2018), Elijah Millgram hypothesizes what practices in the academic business of philosophy would look like, were they to be impacted by resource scarcity. Millgram begins his thought experiment with the contention that this business of opinion trading can technically take seed in any context in which a group of people with opinions enjoys enough of institutional support to deploy material resources to nourish themselves. If resource availability does not change significantly, their business can flourish. That equilibrium can change though when resources become scarce and threaten to affect patterns of institutional support.

One way to pre-empt negative changes in the latter would be to run down activity levels to a minimum. Such a low threshold would keep the activity alive, but barely so. To this end, philosophers might set in place some activities that can resemble philosophizing under conditions of sufficient resource availability so that such philosophizing can pass as

being ‘properly’ philosophical. These activities suggest that high levels of philosophical activity are undertaken even under resource scarcity conditions. Further, philosophers might consider working out mechanisms that can enforce “representational hygiene regimes” (Millgram 2018, 142). These regimes can signal to novices behavioral expectations, should the former’s activities merit the label ‘philosophy,’ while maintaining activity levels that peers can associate with the Kuhnian normal-science mode.

Millgram’s account suggests that even the regimental mechanisms adopted in hypophilosophy will be, remarkably, minimal. A simple consistency test will suffice to determine relatively easily whether products of human thinking warrant further intellectual scrutiny at all. Should they pass this test, they will, in a further step, be subjected to the coherence test to ascertain how they can fit the body of knowledge that one possesses. Once equipped thus, a legion of diligent practitioners will be put to work to clear the space for conducting ‘proper’ philosophy. Their work will promise to render this space free of elements that could in any way interfere with the philosophical enterprise. Their disciplined efforts will bear fruit. A business enterprise will be set up that is dedicated to “inventing, rethinking, revising, and when appropriate, replacing consistency regimes” (Millgram 2018, 145).

It remains to be added though that any replacement activity will have to be well planned given that the changes will be resource intensive. Ideally then, only those who master the tools of the trade and have the potential to put into place minimal changes in current consistency regimes, can be entrusted with this task. Meanwhile, a plethora of professional philosophers will be hired to maintain the normal-science mode. Some of them can be assigned the job of tracking and spotting all those supposed infiltrators who could increase the level of activity and thus make the business of trading opinions at a low activity-level go bust.

Millgram proceeds to claim that current practices in the profession bear an uncanny resemblance to his hypothetical ruminations. A hypophilosophy dominates. Its trajectory can

be traced back to an enlightenment Europe in which the first-generation professoriate took to the university halls to underwrite the authority of the powers that had sent them there: ecclesiastical authorities, monarchs and aristocrats (Millgram 2018, 149). Notably, this generation of professors made an ingenious move: Introducing a conceptual distinction between genealogy (*Genese)* and application (*Geltung)*, they were able to leave behind as their legacy a host of underdetermined philosophical concepts that continue to bear testimony to their own intellectual prowess, while simultaneously denying the authority of those who paid to literally pave the way of the professoriate into the university. This move had large ramifications. On one hand, the pool of available resources narrowed; hypophilosophizing set in. On the other hand though, opinions could be traded relatively freely within the halls of the university. At least those who had sufficient sociopolitical clout did not have to fear societal repercussions. This ingenious move has, Millgram analyses, been able to guarantee the professional survival of generations.

Consequently, philosophers could position themselves as those minds who were hired to think about human existence per se. Their hypophilosophizing occluded though that their studies about the human per se were informed only by their own specific experiences. Their theories become self-referential, looping only experiences that were articulated by similarly-placed others. Furthermore, these philosophers studiously bracketed the presuppositions and presumptions of their philosophical activity from this activity itself. Thus, critical scrutiny of their activities by non-peers began to fall outside the domain of philosophizing itself.

Millgram's observations about hypophilosophizing could be continued in different ways to understand salient aspects of the profession today. Within the scope of this article, one could home in on the change in owners. Once tethered to the whims of ecclesiastical authorities, monarchs and aristocrats, professional philosophy in Europe has become fastened to the purse strings of (governmental) funding and research agencies and to some extent to

(international) philanthropic organizations. This spread of governmental and non-governmental funders has brought into its wake more accountability of philosophers to the hands that feed them. While some took upon themselves the task of monitoring and containing the 'infiltration' of world-philosophical traditions into the European academy not so long ago, the activity of their colleagues in this control unit seems to have weakened more recently, perhaps due to this change in funding. Today, a select number of world-philosophical traditions actually pass the monitoring phase, to be then inspected and sanitized in the hypophilosophizing mode. After this treatment, they eventually enter the lecture halls of universities, where they serve as fungible resources that can be yoked on the 'East-West' or 'West-non-West' axis to work for different purposes, be it furthering one's career prospects through the use of 'exotic' material found in oral and scriptural traditions, alerting students to the spiritual wisdom incorporated by 'Eastern,' African and Indigenous traditions that can offer succor for the ills of their 'Western' rationality, and so on.

To put it differently, while the luminaries of the philosophical canon dismissed 'Eastern' traditions as being 'otherworldly' and lacking 'true' philosophical significance, while categorically denying Indigenous and African traditions this significance, there is a shift in perception. Today, positions associated with world philosophies make their way into academic philosophy where they speak in Analytic or Continental. Sometimes they are conversant in European historiographies too, even if they predate these historiographies. Students encounter them in introductory classes in which global surveys of philosophy are presented such that these positions are assimilated into or placed around the milestones of the discipline's own progressive history. Anchored in European and Euro-American philosophy, "dialogue[s] of hegemonic ventriloquism" about them abound as a result (Tully 2023, 22).

Fortunately though, philosophical activity takes place even beyond the realm of hypophilosophizing. In fact, an increasing number of philosophers declines to take the low-

functioning level to be the hallmark of their profession. Many such philosophers specialize in the study of world philosophies.

**'The East' and 'The West': (Re-)Labeling Register Cards**

Henry Rosemont Jr. drew attention to the barrage of cultural assumptions like beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and so on that influence the translation and interpretation of sources from world philosophies decades ago. Serving as "cultural determinants," these factors influence how a concept is set in relation to other neighboring concepts, even if the relation of the former to the latter is neither rendered explicit nor are all operating concepts elucidated sufficiently (Rosemont Jr. 1988, 66). Related to 'the West,' for example, this concept is used as a placeholder for concepts of modernity, individual freedom, rationality, human rights, progress and so on. Its placeholder role becomes visible in those accounts in which 'the West' is used as a marker of self-identification. There, the long journey of 'the West's' uninterrupted excellence, uniqueness and unilinear progress is said to begin,

> in Ancient Greece, and then, having passed through Ancient Rome and European feudalism, steams on to the Italian commercial-financial revolution, through the Renaissance and the Iberian Voyages of Discovery, and then tracks northwards toward Dutch hegemony to Westphalia and on through the Enlightenment, before finally sweeping westwards, passing through British hegemony/industrialization to arrive at the global terminus of history—the Pax Americana for liberals and communism for Marxists (Hobson 2007, 94).

Depending on the specific concepts that are used from the cluster to channel the experience of 'the West,' 'the East,' for example, will become in this narrative a placeholder for spiritual wisdom, being unmodern, irrational, not progressive, perhaps even incapable of progress, denoting societies that tend toward group-think, not being conducive to the development of individual rights, and so on.

Rosemont's understanding of concept-clusters is not only useful in understanding the construed nature of the 'East-West' binary. It allows one to understand how the impact of 'the West' unfolds when applied to a field of inquiry like 'western philosophy.' As the standard textbook account will have it, 'western philosophy' (aka: generic philosophy) is the unique and unparalleled achievement of one subsection of humanity in one specific time sliver. And in that point in intellectual history, this subsection could perceive themselves as working toward creating a realm of the "architect (or discoverer) and custodian of the specifications of what it means to be human (individually or collectively), and the executive director of the disciplinary practices that employed them" (Outlaw 1996, 33). Today, while its canon consistently continues to narrate the story of unparalleled human achievement, it actually narrates the specific making of German and European identity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as Peter Park has worked out in his now classic *Africa, Asia and the History of Philosophy* (Park 2013). When the concept 'philosophy' is used alongside or in the leeway of 'the West,' it is relatively easy to delineate neat packages of 'Indian philosophy,' 'Chinese philosophy,' 'Japanese philosophy,' 'African philosophy' and what have you, and place them around philosophy's own uncontested narrative of being the center of progressive philosophical thinking.

The concept 'philosophy' can thus be deployed as a cultural form worthy of universal emulation, while simultaneously reserving the potential of its realization only to a select few. In such exercises, philosophical traditions grouped outside 'the West' will be made to carry this baggage with them, even if implicitly. At best, they can per this narrative be considered to highlight past, so-called premodern relics of the human mind that per definition do not contain elements that could be used to inform the modern present. And if exceptions are made to include intellectuals whose thought is indeed deemed relevant to the present, then only if their reflections are anchored by a European or Euro-descended philosopher. This way, theory-

making remains a prerogative of 'the West.' Indeed, the operations of 'the West' through the aforementioned concept-cluster do not lend themselves easily to tracking exercises that can illuminate whether and how the concept changes, if at all.

Rosemont is not alone in challenging hypophilosophizing. Some "concrete flowers" (Dotson)—flowers that have managed to blossom in the cracks of poured concrete that wall up the profession—endorse a critical reconsideration of hitherto ways of identifying and subsequently rectifying philosophical knowing in a profession that is "demographically challenged" (Alcoff 2013, 21). These colleagues draw attention to "the injustice of epistemic injustice [that] is not the exception but the rule" in a "profession terraformed by colonial epistemologies" (Berenstain, Dotson, Paredes, Ruíz and Silva 2021, 284). Epistemic injustice occurs and reoccurs, as per their analysis, in the very site in which academic philosophy is practiced for reasons that Millgram's account alluded to. Professional philosophy as we know it today, has failed to develop in-built mechanisms to reign in its own governance strategy. As a result: "Most, if not all, epistemological orientations in the western academy are epistemically unreflexive" (Berenstain, Dotson, Paredes, Ruíz and Silva 2021, 293). Or, to put it differently, hypophilosophy is, as a program, not geared to assess the impact of philosophizing on any extraneous factor, without breaking its self-imposed representational hygienic regime. Unsurprisingly then, Berenstain, Dotson, Paredes, Ruíz and Silva call upon their readers to consciously break the rules of the profession. They contend that philosophically-trained folk should not continue to be mesmerized by the rigidified and regimented practices of the profession but work toward developing a language that can help one identify phenomena of epistemic oppression playing out in the profession, and building up from there, strive to maintain and revive forms of Indigenous and diasporic knowledge that colonial epistemologies have disrupted and replaced partially or wholly.

In a similar vein, philosophers like Helen Verran and James Tully call for a reparochialization of philosophical theories such that their universalized language is adapted to reflect the locales which shaped it. To this end, Verran aims to develop mindful practices that can abet the cultivation of an "epistemic demeanor" which can help to cognize differences in the source material and then exercise self-restraint in the understanding process so that the difference is retained, not assimilated into what is already known (Verran 2018, 127). Tully strives to offer a toolkit for philosophers (especially those with dominant identities) that can enable them to deliberately divest of their privilege step-by-step so that they can learn to first identify their role in the ventriloquism that is used to channel whole swathes of theory-making outside the frontiers of Europe and Euro-America through the experiences of European and Euro-descended philosophers, and then voluntarily step out of such dialogues (Tully 2023). Meanwhile, philosophers like Sarah Mattice develop practices that can facilitate an understanding of philosophy as "a kind of personal artistry" that can guide one to a wholesome embodied experience of what it means to be in another body (Mattice 2013). Mattice works toward developing techniques that can be brought to bear when engaging with thought from a tradition that is alien to one's own context as well as in encounters with practitioners of those traditions. This experience is expected to help a philosopher (especially those with a socially-dominant identity) shift their perception, be it of a world-philosophical tradition that has been historically rendered inferior in one's own knowledge tradition, or of a practitioner who has been stereotyped by one's own tradition. Such methodologically-informed practical suggestions promise to show a path that can enable philosophers to divest of their privilege in the study of world-philosophical traditions and/or in interactions with colleagues who are underrepresented in the profession. Building up on this work, the following section will sketch one path that can supplement these techniques in preparing the ground before teaching world-philosophies.

**One Preparatory Path to Teach World Philosophies**

Arguably, stepping out of the hypophilosophizing mode will have to involve in some form or the other critically engaging the self-description of 'the West' discussed earlier. To this end, it can be worthwhile to attempt to track the meaning in use of the concept 'the West' as it is instantiated in specific contexts. For the American context, for example, Sylvia Wynter's detailed genealogical account of the coloniality of being can be useful in understanding one core moment of the formation of the template 'the West' (Wynter 2003). The colonization of the American continent tells the simultaneous story about the power European intellectuals wielded through their quills to fashion a hierarchy of human beings in which they could place themselves at the apex, thus freeing themselves from their erstwhile donors (see section 1). Subsequent imperialists and colonizers in the Americas could use a theoretical grounding to justify why the European man was the epitome of human reason. An overrepresentation of one form of being human arose that could colonize all other ways of being human, not to mention the dispossession of lands that these pursuits involved. Wynter's account can be supplemented by Charles W. Mills' incisive analysis of the often-concealed racial dimension of 'the West.' Arguing that 'the West' is closely tied to "the white experience of modernity," Mills reasons that it is wise to be skeptical of those attempts that use 'the West' in compare-and-contrast accounts to supposedly distinguish values that are distinct to it and not shared by "the Other" (Mills 2023, 82). Especially when these attempts discuss the fashioning of the template in the Americas, they tend to systematically exclude the voices of the enslaved, who despite being in immediate geographical proximity of the colonial settlers and having labored so that the latter could experience modernity, have been systematically excluded from the template.

In addition to these accounts, one may consider consulting sources from neighboring disciplines to grasp details of immigration into the Americas. Analyses of Victorian England,

for example, illustrate the way certain members of the English intellectual elite tagged their own bodies with the concepts of modernity, civilization, and progress. Perceiving themselves to be their drivers in the English metropoles, they saw these concepts moving with them to rural England to accompany them in their romantic exercises of locating their own origins in the rugged landscape of this region. Until the end of the nineteenth century, the members of this elite associated the concept 'whiteness' with the industrial workers who spent most of their time in factories, and not in the English countryside (Bonnett 2003, 326). In this phase, the workers' skin pigmentation served as a marker for their lack of intellectual engagement too, given their time-consuming industrial labor. But this association seems to have changed in the 1920s when the concept 'whiteness' merged into 'the West.' From then on, it could be touted as a "coherent cultural form" (Bonnett 2002, 362), worthy of emulation for all, or, depending on the context, maintained as an exclusive category that certain bodies could not claim to be their own. 'The West' remained the (intellectual) achievement of a select few. Interestingly, even a cursory reading of sources within modern philosophy speaks to the uneven making and application of this concept. Consider two examples that are presumably known to professional philosophers.

Recall how John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) linked up modernity, civilization and progress. Mill was open to the possibility that the rural Irish could be principally inducted into the project of modernity and civilization, if they remained in close geographical proximity with the urban intellectual elite. During the colonial expansion into the Americas, he saw them as worthy carries of the ideas of modernity and civilization, but worried that the erstwhile Irish farmers could forget the values that they had imbibed from the elite, if they relocated into remote rural towns in the Americas that did not boast of white settlers of elite English (perhaps even European) intellectual descent. Recall too WEB Du Bois's (1868-1963) attempt to illustrate how the labeling of certain bodies by socially-dominant whites

principally excludes the labelled from belonging to 'the West.' In at least one of his articles published in a European journal in 1906, Du Bois seems to have gestured for his European audience toward the exclusion Mills draws attention to. Du Bois notes how black enslaved bodies in the USA are systematically tagged with the attribute of "crime" (Du Bois 2006, 257). Documenting this tagging in his own case, Du Bois writes in the *Dusk of Dawn* how this labeling continues, despite his academic credentials. Even though he perceives himself as being born into "the folds of this European civilization" and being "[i]ntegrally a part of it," he continues to be persistently "rejected" by it (Du Bois 2007 [1940], 1).

Examples such as these indicate that the concept 'the West' has operated unevenly. While it has been an assimilative force in certain contexts (the Irish emigrants relocating to the Americas), 'the West' has been deployed as an exclusive category in others (not including African Americans into its fold). Such preparatory work might shed more light on those voices (like those of Du Bois) that have long called attention to the manner in which ways of organizing the world through appraisive categories (in the example considered here: 'the West'), are not benign ways of intellectual categorization, but illustrate how groups with sociopolitical clout reserve the proper use of appraisive concepts only to themselves.

Once professional philosophers begin to subject their own presumptions and presuppositions to critical scrutiny along the lines sketched above, their work might enable themselves and their colleagues to use the concept 'the West' accurately. Should they still choose to qualify their project as belonging to 'western philosophy,' they will need to make clear how it relates to the self-congratulatory idiolect of their predecessors who used it to narrate their own role in the making of academic philosophy in certain European locales in the eighteenth and nineteen centuries. This reflection might enable those who have hitherto relied on the label 'western philosophy' to signal their professional allegiances, discard the general intellectual habit of conflating critical thinking about human existence with 'the West.' Once

this habit is discontinued, one might be better positioned to think through avenues to subvert ideas that currently hold in place the invisible hierarchy that scaffolds hypophilosophizing today, as Tsenay Serequeberhan advocates in the epigraph of this essay. If philosophical work were to be consolidated through such small steps taken by professional philosophers themselves, they might gain confidence in learning to slowly present the strengths of European and/or Euro-American philosophy on its own.

Delineating Kabir's views on individuality, the next section will bring into the conversation the view that societies need to develop and foster spaces for critical thinking. Writing in the years after the two world wars and the formal decolonization of some countries, Kabir's focus is on living in a world that can be free of colonial exploitation and mass extermination. His thoughts underscore our discussion about preparing the ground such that world philosophies can be taught adequately. They can also indicate why societies would do well to prepare the ground in this manner, as will be discussed in section five.

**Imagining Individuality**

*Contemporary Indian Philosophy*'s second edition that was published in 1952, features an essay by Kabir entitled "Freedom, Authority and Imagination." Kabir's opening remarks in that article suggest that a new way of conceptualizing individual-society relations is imperative in a world in which the two world wars had exterminated millions of lives worldwide and in which the repercussions of the overrepresentation of European superiority in empiricist science continued to negatively impact daily life in contexts that were marked out as belonging to the 'East' or 'non-West.' In his own contribution to reconceptualizing these relations, Kabir can be seen as offering a fresh analysis that posits society as being constituted by "units [that] are centers of individuality and independence" (Kabir 1952, 358). The inability of contemporary societies to understand and adequately attend to the position of their units, that is to say, the individuals that composed them, had led per Kabir to conflicts

that reverberated nationally and internationally, until these conflicts became a crisis for humanity.

Kabir's account illustrates the shortcomings of certain theory-making pursuits. Furthermore, it warns about the use of these faulty theories by dominant societal majorities whose interests are reflected in state policies. In this reasoning, standard explanations were unable to get a handle on the contemporary crisis. They oversimplified the issues at hand and failed to get to the heart of the matter, for they did not adequately attend to the social dimension of being human. To make his point, Kabir considers contemporary economic and political explanations that worked with abstract notions to understand geopolitical events. Economic explanations that sought to understand the crises inflicted on humanity by colonization and the two world wars could but fail in even grasping the problem, let alone solving it. For conflicts arise "not in the pursuit of abstract relational schema of the *economic*," but because of the value individuals attribute to specific goods (Kabir 1952, 359-60; emphasis in original). These explanations failed to factor in the specific way in which individuals assigned value to these goods into their explanations. Similarly, contemporary political explanations that sought to describe the contemporary crisis failed too, inasmuch as they modelled the individuals populating their theories on an abstract understanding of being human. Kabir's critique does not halt here. He alludes to the utility of such faulty economic and political explanations for state purposes.

In the state's attempt to only "maintain the universal external conditions of social order," explanations developed by its intellectuals that work with abstract notions come in handy for the state, Kabir notes (Kabir 1952, 360). The state's apparatus can use them to ground and reinforce its authority, perhaps even allowing its personnel to stake the claim that the notion of the individual informing its frameworks is based on rationality. Not buying into the state's rhetoric, at least some intellectuals do not manufacture explanations for its use,

Kabir notes. Fleeing from projects in which authoritarian and excessive statist power is nurtured and exercised, some seek succor in any project that promises to offer an alternative instead. Kabir seems to sympathize with the second group's stance. However, he deems the path adopted by this group to be inadequate. It cannot systematically lead humanity into a postcolonial and postwar future.

Should one strive toward this goal though, one should develop a more accurate understanding of human rationality. To understand this point, it will be worth mentioning Kabir's view that concepts are social (Kabir 1968). It follows from their social dimension that concepts need articulation. The latter provides individuals with the means to process their thinking. Importantly though, concepts do not reflect the whole gamut of experience that one has when one thinks. Rather, they can at best only render some aspects of what has been thought visible through language. The rest remains unarticulated.

Accordingly, the concept of 'rationality' is generated by human beings in communication with others to understand individual and group behavior. This communication includes desires, anticipations, experiences, aspirations, interests, and allegiances that the partners in the communication bring to the table and exchange with each other. Seen from the individual perspective, a "social content" arises when individuals make sense of their social exchange for themselves (Kabir 1952, 363). A "social order" arises when societies try to stabilize the interplay of individual interests expressed through individual 'social contents.' A social order, Kabir acknowledges, can potentially conflict with the 'social content' of specific individuals on at least two occasions: for example, when the 'social content' of an individual does not completely match those of other members, or, when social orders that develop through time do not necessarily reflect the interplay of interests of present members. They are, one can say, in a time-lag.

Although a ‘social order’ may technically differ from the ‘state order,’ the latter perceives itself to be entrusted with the maintenance of social order, as discussed earlier. Given this factor, dominant groups who see the opportunity of consolidating their own interests through the use of state power, will seek to conflate the two. If they are successful in their endeavors, ‘state order’ will begin to represent “the tyranny of one predominant interest” (Kabir 1952, 363). This is why Kabir holds that it is relatively naïve to believe that concepts like ‘rationality’ can by themselves lead into a postcolonial and postwar future for humanity. Depending on the situation—or rather the vagaries of the community/society in which a human being lives—rationality can become this being’s “crown” or “cross.” So, how can one move into a postcolonial future in which human extermination is not simply taken to be the price one pays to live the life of a human? Kabir’s simple answer reads: allow individuality to foster.

For individuality to develop, societies will have to in this vision create spaces in which individuals can have their own subjective experiences of phenomena and/or in which they can coalesce with others for this purpose. Centers of self-conscious individuality can arise thus in these spaces. Individuals will be encouraged in them to explore aspects of their experience that dwell on “non-conceptual generality” (Kabir 1952, 370). Kabir gestures toward philosophy, religion, and art as those activities in which this level of generality can, in principle at least, be achieved. In such endeavors, individuals can exercise their freedom in extricating themselves from the conceptual binds of their communities to be better able to process their own thought processes. They will then be better positioned to access those aspects of thinking that they share with other human beings. To facilitate such avenues though, the standard orientation of a social order will have to be rethought. Instead of taking the group interest of the privileged as its indicator and garnering state resources to implement this interest, such an order will orient itself toward facilitating individuality. Having become

elastic, it will immediately "respond to the minutest variation in the distribution of emphasis among the several units" (Kabir 1952, 364). Such a social order will neither channel all available resources in maintaining a historically sedimented understanding nor will it encourage groupthink.

Kabir concedes that elastic social orders are not easy to implement. Groups will, realistically speaking, invest their resources in maintaining set patterns of order. He warns though that "the growing tension between the rigid and static social form and the repressed and submerged elements of the social content" will not bode well for the society (Kabir 1952, 366). It is in the interest of individuals who make up society to work toward creating conditions for relatively elastic social orders. And to do so, they should foster the individuality of other members. Simultaneously, Kabir warns about resorting to violence to change the existing social order. Great suffering and human misery are likely to ensue, he anticipates. To avoid these ills, social orders should allow members to create the conditions in which "revolutionary changes" can take place, without using violence to disrupt social life itself (Kabir 1952, 367). In short, it behooves social orders—whether static or otherwise—in Kabir's account to enable the making of members that are very likely to upset this order itself. For only these individuals will guarantee the freedom and sustenance of society.

Kabir's vision for an individuality that can bear the weight of a postcolonial and postwar future, will have to await a full philosophical exploration. More work will be needed to understand, for example, how 'revolutionary changes' can occur without revolutions according to his thinking. Equally, the relation between academic philosophy and philosophy as an avenue that can potentially help one in achieving a level of 'non-conceptual generality,' merits more exploration. Within the scope of this essay though, only one strand can be sketched briefly in the following, final, section: the individual thinking that philosophy can

afford.[ii] This strand will be discussed through the experience of this author as a philosophy professional in Europe.

**Imagining a Future Beyond Hypophilosophizing**

Despite notable exceptions, academic philosophy in Europe tends to be contained within the boundaries of 'the West,' generally speaking. The curriculum revolves around texts that are demarcated as belonging to it. Philosophy students are not systematically taught to question the presuppositions and presumptions upon which philosophy professionals operate. And it is very likely that they will probably not encounter positions that might initiate an interrogation of the methodologies implemented by their teachers if these are generated outside the confines of Europe and Euro-America. A critical examination of the implication of philosophical positions and practitioners in mass genocide, colonialism and imperialism is, if at all, 'outsourced' to other disciplines that are considered to be better equipped to understand the ramifications of this implication as well as their fallout. One result hereof is that a standard philosophy student is not familiarized with philosophical literature that engages the manner in which epistemic injustice plays out in the profession itself. Within this setup, philosophy students on the European continent will probably not encounter a position like Kabir's. In addition, if philosophizing from the Indian subcontinent is included in the curriculum at all, then it will be very likely represented by thinking from the classical schools (the *darśana*-s). The latter tend to be presented as 'premodern' 'Eastern' wisdom traditions that are said to represent the unchanging patterns of thinking on the subcontinent. Recent philosophical work from the subcontinent does not make the cut.

Notwithstanding, this author has over her decades-long career as a philosophy professional in Europe, regularly encountered undergraduates and graduates who, like Kabir, perceive philosophizing to be a social and changeable activity carried out by embodied bodies located in specific spatiotemporal contexts. These students do not accept the widespread

hypophilosophizing manifested by many academic philosophers. Keen not to repeat the moral failure of their predecessors who fell prey to the easy conflation of societal and state interests during colonial reign and mass extermination during the world wars, some of these students are eager to learn how some of the discipline's own tools can be implemented to understand the practices of its professionals such that they can discontinue them in their own interactions. Also, much like Kabir's individualists, the students this author encounters claim a space for themselves in which they can deliberately ignore the guardrails of hypophilosophizing in their thinking so that they can process aspects of their reflection better. To this end, they are eager to learn from the reflections of those located near and afar whose reflections have not already been systematically structured in European theory-making projects and exploited for this purpose. The students' reasoning seems to be that these reflections will be better positioned to grasp those aspects of human existence that have been neglected in theory. Importantly though, these students seek to discontinue the hegemony of theory production in which that which was marked as being 'non-western' could only serve as an object of study in the discursive systems immanent to philosophy (Dalmiya 2016, 302).

In the classes offered by this author at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Amsterdam University College, students are familiarized with ongoing research on world philosophies that seeks to break this hegemony through some of the mindful practices sketched earlier. This literature has been deployed by them in 2023 in writing BA-theses on topics like Eduard Glissant's 'The Open Boat,' a Lugonesian world-traveling that can enrich the methodological toolbox of world philosophies, the instantiation of the Buddhist self in the architecture of Friedensreich Hundertwasser, the poor engagement with anarchist theory in mainstream philosophy, and so on. The author's involvement in projects on world philosophies has enabled MA students to engage with Indigenous philosophers and accelerate the techniques they currently seek to develop and implement, techniques that can enable them

to divest of their colonially-descended privilege in working with Indigenous philosophers across the world. Alongside them, their peers work on doctoral dissertations that study the impact of epistemic injustice in German academic philosophy and in research ethics in the Netherlands, as well as a decolonial understanding of Ọ̀rúnmìlà in the Yorùbá intellectual tradition. Engagements with interested students have not only enriched and expanded this author's reading list. They have also facilitated new lines of research. For example, she now studies whether and how the concept-cluster 'the West' maps onto material practices in cities like Amsterdam that were once salient nodal points in the making of European philosophy and in the fashioning of what Sylvia Wynter has famously called Man, the generic Euro-descended human being. Despite this mutually enriching work, the challenge of finding resources that can enable these students to pursue a career in academic philosophy in the long run, remains. Projecting as hypophilosophizing does that it is the only site in which 'proper' philosophy is conducted, its lines of inquiry continue to be a safe bet in procuring research funding.

But some of the analysis in these pages might indicate a way forward. Instead of accepting the status quo, it would be worthwhile for students and faculty alike to engage with funders who enable the practice of professional philosophy in Europe today. If these funders could be informed about accounts like those of Kabir, they might become aware that students' dissatisfaction with hypophilosophical practices cannot be brushed away as being solely of 'academic' concern. As discussed, Kabir saw philosophy as a source that could generate a thinking capable of countering sedimented, stratified concepts as well as serving as a fount from which they could emerge. A society that could afford, and deliberately cultivate, such avenues is, in his view, one that will very likely safeguard its individual members and their relations with society as a whole. In fact, such a society could potentially protect individual interests even beyond its immediate borders since it will deliberately encourage ways of

thinking that refract the ideal of human unity. If one expressed their dissatisfaction with practices in professional philosophy to funders, the latter might become aware that practices of academic philosophy fail to generate free and critical thinking, at least in the view of some societal members. As a result, these members do not see themselves as being adequately equipped to deliberate about their future in an interdependent world. Some such engagements might lead local, European, and international funders to reconsider their hitherto patterns of distributing academic funding.

Using Elijah Millgram's description of the low-level of functioning rampant in academic philosophizing, 'Teaching World Philosophies' has leaned upon suggestions to rev up that level. It has proposed that a prior, and thorough, 'intellectual housecleaning' (Serequeberhan) be conducted, before teaching world-philosophical traditions today. The essay has briefly sketched one such path by critically engaging 'the West,' a concept that looms over an adequate academic engagement with world philosophies today. Bringing into the conversation the thoughts of Humayun Kabir, a thinker who like a host of others is not included in standard philosophical curricula due to the current structuring of world philosophies, the discussion in these pages has—hopefully—drawn attention to the possibility that even ingrained patterns of conducting a social activity can be changed. As the analysis in these pages indicates, that change might, in fact, be urgent especially in those locales in Europe in which academic philosophy as is practiced today was crafted.

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[i] The document broke the silence of the world community about the political misuse of race. While it amasses scientific evidence about so-called biological races available at the time of drafting to postulate that race is a “social myth” (UNESCO 1950, 8), it does not consider why the supposed scientific evidence it amasses about biological differences between groups is not a part of social myth-making. But as Sebastián Gil-Riaño reminds us, Edward Lawson, the UN-representative who presided over the 1949 meeting stressed that the committee draw up a document that could make a “clear scientific statement of facts which could not be challenged by anyone in the world” and which “could be translated into hundreds of languages and sent out to people everywhere as guides to teaching about race” (Gil-Riaño 2018, 285).
The document not only proposes “ethnicity” as a term that will more adequately capture the

sociopolitical construction of race, it brings together ‘race’ and ‘caste’ to declare: “Racism is a particularly vicious and mean expression of the caste spirit” (UNESCO 1950, 3). Kabir’s role in that declaration has yet to be studied thoroughly.

[ii] For an extended discussion, see Kirloskar-Steinbach (2019).