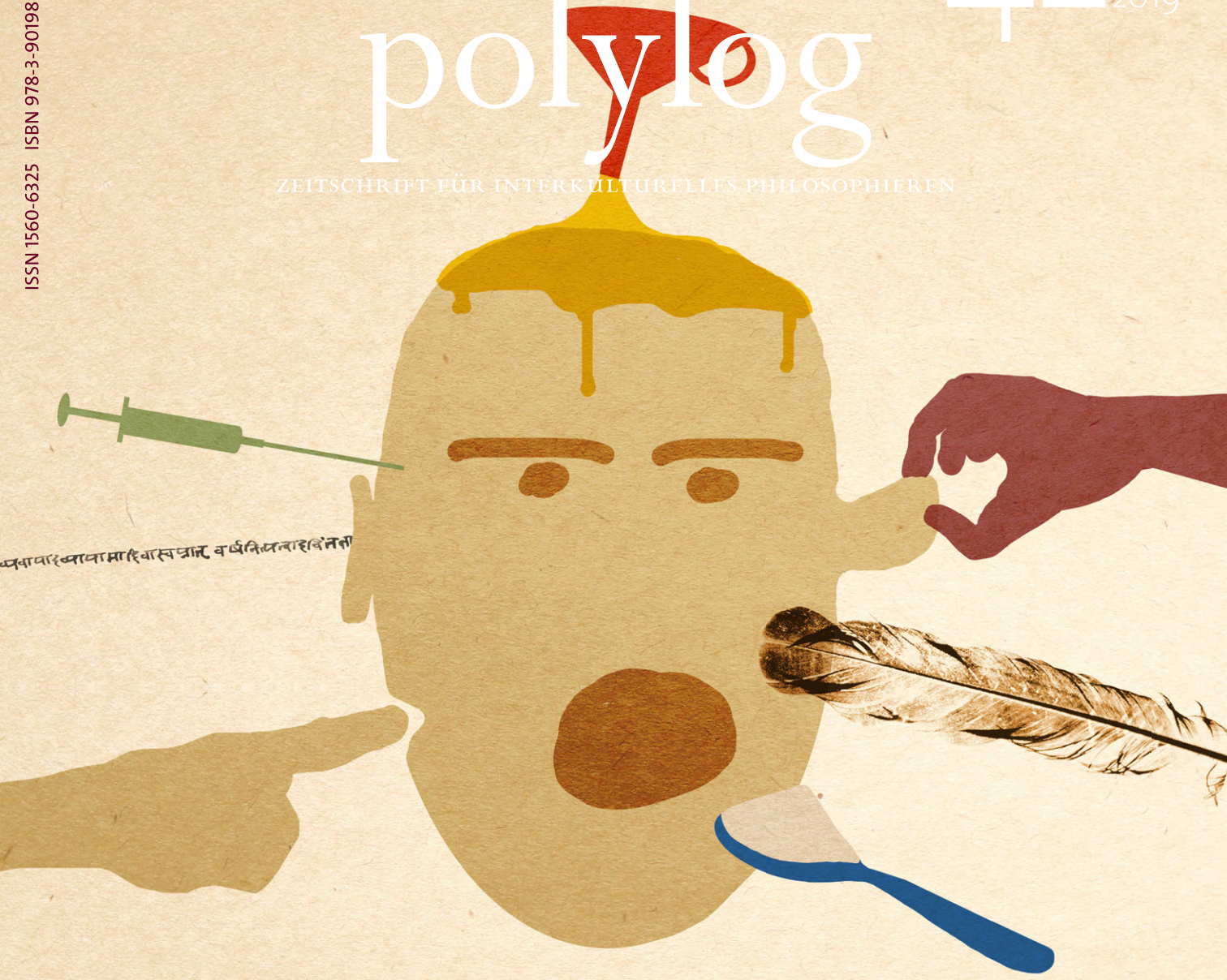


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ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR INTERKULTURELLES PHILOSOPHIEREN



Gesundheit und Heilung

Mit Beiträgen von VITUS ANGERMEIER, MBIH JEROME TOSAM, JOSEF ESTERMANN, BARBARA SCHELLHAMMER, TOBIAS SCHLOSSER, DAMIAN PEIKERT, STEPHAN POPP und anderen

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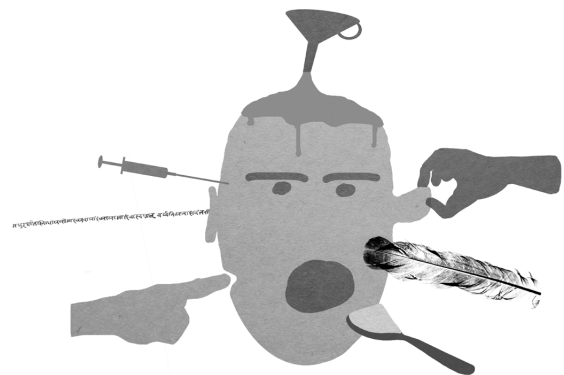
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LOUISE MÜLLER

Negotiating Theories of Nature for a More Complete Environmental Philosophy

zu: Angela Roothaan: *Indigenous, Modern and Postcolonial Relations to Nature: Negotiating the Environment*.

What is the nature of reality? The truth is that no academic anywhere in the world really knows the answer to this question. As long as this remains the case, one can exclude neither the possibility that parallel universes, spirit ontologies, or telepathy exist nor the possibility that reality could be a time-space transcending non-local awareness. Neither scientists nor scholars can, therefore, ever reject epistemologies based on any of these assumptions.

Enlightenment-based rationalists and empiricists, however, did just that. The point of departure of Roothaan's deconstructionist environmental philosophy is, on the contrary, that since reality itself is unknown, the question of what nature is remains undefined at best. Human relationships towards nature in various cultures and eras can then be perceived as the outcome of an ongoing negotiation. In this way Roothaan aims to open up a space for intercultural philosophical and dialogical thinking about the contributions and limitations of various epistemologies that philosophers and others have used to discuss the relations to their environment.

The limits of epistemology created by Enlightenment thinkers (i. e. Kant, Hegel and Hume) were such that, after their respective philosophical contemplations about the concept of nature, the intuitive knowledge

of shamans worldwide was no longer accepted as a valid source of knowledge. Roothaan examines how the eighteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant constructed the boundaries of Pure Reason and excluded spiritual experiences from the realm of trustworthy knowledge, even though he did not deny the existence of these experiences. She also examines the philosophy of Kant's older contemporary Emanuel Swedenborg. This Swedish philosopher, on the contrary, believed that his spiritual awakening was the source of his epistemological understanding of the world and of, for instance, the nature of love and wisdom. The point that Roothaan makes is that during the Age of Enlightenment the exclusion of spirituality from Western ontology and epistemology was the socially constructed outcome of a philosophical discussion and negotiation about the nature of scientific knowledge; it was never based on the realisation that spirit ontologies and spirituality were non-existent.

Roothaan takes this finding as a point of departure to discuss shamanic epistemologies, i. e. those in which spirit ontologies are taken for granted, as intuitive ways of knowing the world and also as alternative instances of humans negotiating a relationship to nature. She discusses, for instance, the work of the unconventional anthropologist Felicia Good-



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ledge, Routledge Environmental
Humanities Series, 2019,
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man, who demonstrated that shamanic trance can be invoked by mimicking body postures of animals, which can awaken one's guiding or power animal. Shamans value animals for their spiritual wisdom and do not position them as less conscious or lower than humans. She also focuses on the work of the Religious Studies scholar Graham Harvey, whose fieldwork experience among so-called »indigenous people«, made it clear to him that they often make a distinction between nonhuman persons and human persons. In their worldview, dogs, horses and crocodiles can be part of a mixed kin-group of humans and non-humans. These so-called indigenous people often approach nature in a way that includes animals in their circle of intimates, which weakens the boundary between what Roothaan – in line with other animist thinkers – calls »human animals« and »non-human animals«.

She then proposes that when spirits communicate with humans through their animal spirits, the Kantian rejection of spirits could have been the cause of many psychological problems in modern people, such as depression and burnout. Kant's way of negotiating nature, with its emphasis on pure and universal reason, would then have weakened instincts of the moderns (a term Roothaan takes over from Bruno Latour) and affected a spiritual closure.

Roothaan contextualises her insights by connecting them to the findings of Carl Gustav Jung and Jacques Derrida. Jung criticized modernity for its harsh antipathy towards what he called »the collective unconscious-

ness«, the reservoir of myths and symbols that interlinks human beings through their inner worlds. Derrida pointed out how a modern, industrial-based political economy casts human animals as above and separated from other-than-human animals. Derrida highlights the dark side of the hierarchy-based negotiations with nature of the Enlightenment philosophers by pointing to the ongoing atrocities against animals in agricultural industries, such as the gasification of pigs. As a Jewish person who himself was a multiple exile himself, he dared to connect this severe animal suffering with the Holocaust inflicted upon Jewish people in Nazi Germany. Derrida's controversial comparison is connected by Roothaan to the insight that the belief in pure reason – a rationality that was preserved for the white race – did not only have a detrimental effect on the relationship of modern (wo)men with animals, but it also negatively affected relationships with other-than-white races. She does so by discussing the work of Africana Philosophers such as Michael Eze and Franz Fanon who enhance(d) understanding of the relationship between racial thinking and the exclusion of Africans from both the category of being fully human and the field of philosophy because of their alleged lack of the ability to think rationally as a consequence of their supposedly more animalistic nature.

She then moves to the negotiations with nature undertaken by the Belgium missionary Placide Tempels, whom she portrays as a trailblazer in the creation of a postcolonial attitude towards Africans in the middle of

»I speak of ani(mal) spirits, because the importance of the body, its empathic potential, its way to orient itself through movement and feeling – all the embodied ways of knowing, reflect that we, humans, are spiritual as animals, as living, moving creatures.«

(69)



the colonial era. In contradiction to Kant and Hegel, Tempels acknowledged that the Bantu people among whom he lived did indeed have a philosophy. To his mind, however, the Bantu were not capable of consciously expressing their insights in the language of and by using the methodology of Western philosophy. This is why Tempels himself undertook this enterprise, which resulted in the bestseller *Bantoe Filosofie* (1945) (transl. *Bantu Philosophy*). One can argue whether Roothaan is critical enough about the attitude of this missionary towards the Bantu people. Since Tempels has also been criticised for being a founding father in the missionary method of inculturation as he incorporated the Bantu core philosophical idea of 'vital force' into a framework that emphasized the superior power of Westerners over and against the Bantu. Tempels claimed that belief in the spiritual superiority of whites was part of the Bantu people's philosophy. The fact that Tempels did not include the voices of the Bantu elders in his presumption that the Bantu could not be understood without his cultural-linguistic intervention makes it at least debatable what role he played in the negotiations of postcolonial relations to nature prior to inventing this discourse, a debate which is absent in Roothaan's reading of Tempels.

In the final chapters Roothaan emerges as an activist for preserving the philosophical worldview of the shamans and those people in the modern world living shamanic lifestyles. She urges that intercultural dialogues between all philosophers worldwide take place on an equal footing, which would include those par-

ties adhering to shamanic epistemologies. She shows that the shamanic worldview brings the philosophical insight that »non-human animals« like elephants and dogs have abilities that »human animals« lack, such as knowing intuitively when a human animal is going to die.² At times non-human animals can, therefore, also be perceived as more-than-human animals, which blurs the boundaries between the two categories. The same counts for the shamans' fuzzy distinction between animals (of all sorts) and trees which can be sacred and therefore, »more than human«, and non-human animals, all depending on the power of their vital force. Since the presumably fixed boundaries between humans and animals and humans and nature are not necessarily part of reality and could be a social construction, Roothaan states that it is high time to take shamanic insights seriously as an epistemology.

To state that spirit ontologies exist and are the source of a shamanic epistemology that might be as valuable as the foundational modern ideas of empirical and rational knowledge is daring for a university-based philosopher in a European country. The claim (following Derrida) that the belief in the Global North in the superiority of Enlightenment-based epistemologies is a form of white mythology may be arguable. Nonetheless, Roothaan's position definitely opens up the space for intercultural philosophical and dialogical thinking to contemplate alternative contemporary and

»It [the modern self-image of ›man‹] has to be ready to concede that its rationality is not unique, but that its boundaries are blurred, and that the image of ›man‹ is unclear. Being human overlaps with the being of many others, spirits, animals, even plants, fungi, bacteria, minerals and whatever elements we may be able to name or specify.«

(142)

2 The concepts »human animals«, »non-human animals« and »more-than-human animals«, have also been used by other environmental philosophers.

prospective negotiations between humans of various cultures with their environment. The current speed of global warming and climate change demand of all of us – on a global level – that we become more aware of our environmental negotiations. Roothaan's book is a useful resource for enhancing one's understand-

ing of the underlying consequences of today's globally dominant philosophy of nature, especially as it perpetuates the separation from and the superiority over one's environment as first constructed by modern (wo)men during the Age of Enlightenment.

MOHAMED TURKI

Moderne Denker des Nahen und Mittleren Ostens sowie Nordafrikas

zu: Anke von Kügelgen (Hg.): *Wissenschaft, Philosophie und Religion, Religionskritische Positionen um 1900* und
Kata Moser: *Akademische Philosophie in der arabischen Welt: Inhalte – Institutionen – Periodika*

Anke VON KÜGELGEN (Hg.):

Wissenschaft, Philosophie und Religion, Religionskritische Positionen um 1900

Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag 2017,
ISBN: 978-3-879974-801, 326 S.

Kata MOSER:

Akademische Philosophie in der arabischen Welt: Inhalte – Institutionen – Periodika

Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag 2018,
ISBN: 978-3-879974-818, 337 S.

Selten befassen sich Fachzeitschriften und Bereiche der Orientalistik sowie der Philosophie in Deutschland mit den modernen Denkern des Nahen und Mittleren Ostens wie auch Nordafrikas. Ihr Interesse gilt meistens den Philosophen des arabisch-islamischen Mittelalters, wie Al-Farabi, Avicenna und Averroes und deren wissenschaftlichen Strömungen. Beinahe eine Ausnahme machen die Herausgeberinnen der neuen Reihe *Philosophie in der Nahöstlichen Moderne*: die Islamwissenschaftlerinnen Anke von Kügelgen und Kata Moser mit ihren beiden Werken *Wissenschaft, Philosophie und Religion, Religionskritische Positionen um 1900* und *Akademische Philosophie in der arabischen Welt, Inhalte – Institutionen – Periodika*, die im Klaus Schwarz Verlag in Berlin 2017 und 2018 erschienen sind.

Es ist zuerst das Verdienst Anke von Kügelgens, die den Schritt gewagt hat, eine Buchreihe zu dem philosophischen Denken, »das seit

der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts in Beirut, Fes, Istanbul, Jerusalem, Kairo, Kalkutta, Lahore, Teheran oder Tunis in Erscheinung tritt [und] sich mit den Herausforderungen, »moderner« Wissenschaften, Techniken, Werte und Ansprüche auseinandersetzt und dabei religiöse, moralische, kulturelle, rechtliche, soziale und ästhetische Traditionen neureflektiert«³, initiiert und konkret in die Wege geleitet zu haben. Ihr Buch und das von Kata Moser sind ein Beweis für ein viel versprechendes Projekt, das sein Augenmerk nicht auf das Erbe der fernen Vergangenheit, sondern vielmehr auf das reichhaltige Wissen lenkt, das in den letzten zwei Jahrhunderten im Nahen und Mittleren Osten sowie in Nordafrika entstanden ist.

Der kulturelle Austausch dieser Region mit Europa begann bereits nach dem Eroberungs-

³ Kügelgen: Vorrede. In *Wissenschaft, Philosophie und Religion*, 10.