

Editorial Introduction to Histories of Philosophy in a Global Perspective

Yoko Arisaka

University of Hildesheim*

Anke Graness

University of Hildesheim**

This special issue of *East Asian Journal of Philosophy* (EAJP) is dedicated to the first research results of the Reinhart Koselleck Project, "Histories of Philosophy in Global Perspective", which has been running at the University of Hildesheim (Germany) since April 2019. The project seeks to further research already conducted in three related domains: first, critical investigations of the historiography of the (European) history of philosophy¹ – on this, see Greco's discussion of Santinello's *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia* in this volume; second, initial attempts at a global historiography of philosophy, of which a useful overview is provided by Herzl's literature review in this volume; third, a tradition of regional historiography of philosophy which, until recently, has emerged mainly in regional studies and philologies in, for instance, India, China and the Islamic world. The Reinhart Koselleck Project was initiated by Rolf Elberfeld in order to draw attention to a number of significant blind spots which still exist in the discipline of the history of philosophy and to subject these to a thorough investigation that focusses on the marginalisation of non-European philosophical traditions in the European historiography of philosophy. In short, it attempts to address and ameliorate problems

¹ This field of research was established by, among others, Lucien Braun's *Histoire de l'histoire de la philosophie* (Paris 1973), the *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia* (1981–2004) initiated by Giovanni Santinello, and Franz M. Wimmer's *Interkulturelle Philosophie* (Vienna 1990). Wimmer introduced an intercultural perspective into research on the historiography of the history of philosophy.

* Yoko Arisaka – Institute of Philosophy, University of Hildesheim, Universitaetplatz 1, 31141 Hildesheim, Germany. Email: arisaka@uni-hildesheim.de

** Anke Graness – Institute of Philosophy, University of Hildesheim, Universitaetplatz 1, 31141 Hildesheim, Germany. Email: graness@uni-hildesheim.de



that result from the almost complete ignorance of traditions of the historiography of philosophy in non-European languages.

A historiography of philosophy that aims to do justice to both the global and intercultural entanglements of philosophical traditions while addressing demands for the decolonisation of research and teaching, now routinely made globally and in reference to *all* sciences, can no longer perpetuate the dominant historical narrative of the last two hundred years by, for instance, merely adding a few examples from other regions of the world. Rather, the mechanisms that first led to the exclusion of both non-European philosophical traditions as well as the work of women philosophers from the prevailing narratives, must be critically examined. In the process, methodological problems that arise from a global perspective on philosophy and its history must be made visible and addressed with the appropriate degree of philosophical rigour. This includes reflection on how historical events with a global dimension, such as European expansionism, colonialism and slavery, impacted philosophy and other forms of knowledge production both within and outside Europe. In particular, questions regarding the status of orally transmitted philosophical traditions in the historiography of philosophy and the reconstruction of the philosophical knowledge of women in different regions of the world have to be reconsidered and critically discussed. On the latter, see Graness' contribution to this special issue. Problems that arise as a result of reconceptualising the history of philosophy in a global perspective are also addressed by guest contributor to this volume, Florian Scheidl, who discusses obstacles that stand in the way of establishing a more global perspective on the historiography of philosophy and, in particular, problems regarding the term "philosophy". The latter should come as no surprise since, in order to reconceptualize the historiography of philosophy, it is essential to reflect on the concept of philosophy itself, and thus on the question of what can and what cannot be included in a revised historiography as philosophy.

Equally urgent is the examination of traditions of the historiography of philosophy outside Europe. For this reason, the team of the Koselleck project has been conducting a comprehensive literature research on the historiography of philosophy in as many languages of the world as possible, in order to create a comprehensive bibliographic collection of histories of philosophies in various European and non-European languages. At this point, the database includes histories of philosophies in more than twenty languages. Diversity of languages was chosen as the primary selection and classification criterion for indexing histories of philosophy worldwide and not, as is commonly the case, regional or national divisions. The justification for such an approach is implicit in the assumption that individual languages – each form their own discursive space of philosophical historiography,

which in turn is intertwined with other languages – does not follow regional or national boundaries.

The most important point is that research produced by the Reinhart Koselleck Project goes beyond the horizon of European languages so that now, for the first time, extensive bibliographic collections of previously published works in the history of philosophy in selected non-European languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Persian, Sanskrit, Tibetan and Turkish, from the beginning of the writing of the history of philosophy in different regions and languages of the world up to the 21st century, are gathered and archived. Such detailed research was the result of the collaboration between eight scholars from six nations, as well as a number of academic associates, from China to Brazil, who conducted some of the relevant research on site. The sheer amount of data compiled to date has, to some extent, surprised even those who initiated the project; as has the early beginning of a tradition of writing the history of philosophy in some languages, for example in Chinese. In this volume, Zhuofei Wang provides insight into some of the early works on the history of philosophy from China. As guest contributor to this issue, Amalia Xochitl López Molina (UNAM Mexico), discusses problems related to conceptualising Mexican philosophy and its origins. Then there is the study conducted within the framework of European philosophy by Fredrik Bjarkö (Södertörn University, Sweden, and Fellow of the Koselleck-Project Hildesheim) which offers a very detailed reconstruction of the historiography of philosophy in Sweden with a specific focus on the meaning of the concept “oriental philosophy” in the 19th century.

An additional focus of the Reinhart Koselleck Project, which is still under construction on the project’s website, is the compilation of international examples of curricula and research foci that demonstrate an intercultural or global perspective on philosophy and its history. That the USA has become a pioneer in this regard becomes evident from Yoko Arisaka’s contribution which highlights diversity initiatives already initiated 20 years ago by the APA and some departments of philosophy in the USA.

This issue of EAJP offers insights into the scope and first results of the Reinhart Koselleck project, “Histories of Philosophy in Global Perspective”. It represents the work of a small section of an ever-growing international network of researchers who address questions and challenges that emerge from writing the history of philosophy in a global perspective. In the process, some insights are provided into some of the most important debates related to these challenges; debates about the concept of philosophy, discursive and political mechanisms of exclusion and the beginning of philosophy in different regions of the world, to name but a few. Contemporary historiography of philosophy is undergoing an upheaval in light of

the wealth of new perspectives that have emerged in the 20th century. How the history of philosophy will be narrated tomorrow, is being decided today.

References

- Braun, Lucien. 1973. *Histoire de l'histoire de la philosophie*. Paris: Ophrys.
- Park, Peter K. J. 2013. *Africa, Asia, and the history of philosophy: racism in the formation of the philosophical canon, 1780–1830*. Albany, NY: State University of Press.
- Santinello, Giovanni, and Gregorio Piaia, eds. 1979–2004. *Storia delle storie generali della filosofia*. 5 vols. Brescia: La scuola/Padova: Antenore.
- Schneider, Ulrich Johannes. 1990. *Die Vergangenheit des Geistes: eine Archäologie der Philosophiegeschichte*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.
- Wimmer, Franz M. 1990. *Interkulturelle Philosophie. Geschichte und Theorie*. Wien: Passagen Verlag.