

Intercultural Philosophy versus the Monologic Sophistry of the “International Society for Universal Dialogue”

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Abstract

In the context of the struggle between the movement for the recognition of cultural diversity and discriminatory intolerance towards the “other”, this article examines the conditions for the possibility of intercultural dialogue in a conflicted world. It reviews the emergence of philosophical dialogue in ancient Greek philosophy, starting with Heraclitus’ concept of *polemos*, and then focuses on Socratic dialogues and the difference between philosophy and sophists’ eristic rhetoric. The article pays attention to intercultural philosophy, which addresses the problems of dialogue, its theory and practice, and obstacles to dialogue in our times. Obstacles to dialogical relationships sometimes arise in learned associations due to the “monologic” attitude of those who pursue their own self-interests. The discussion of this problem is based on an analysis of the crisis of the so-called “International Society for Universal Dialogue” (ISUD), which has been hijacked by an authoritarian parochial group. It shows the sophistry and the failure of the claims of this group to present the discredited ISUD as the alleged center of “universal dialogue”. The degeneration of the ISUD is examined in the broad context of ideological and political processes as a symptomatic manifestation of the more general phenomenon of the current regression. Thus, the need to uphold democratic principles and ethical norms, as well as to critically separate genuine dialogue from the pseudo-dialogical sophistry. The article shows the contribution of intercultural philosophy to the development of dialogical relations as equals between people in a culturally diverse and interconnected world.

Keywords: Socratic dialogues, intercultural philosophy, democracy, ethics, sophistry.

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The journal *Topologik* is notable for its publications on intercultural philosophy and intercultural dialogue. In its recent issues, some of the problems of the theory and practice of dialogue are addressed, including the obstacles to dialogue – historical-cultural, existential, and organizational. In a broader sense, these problems are somehow overlapping with those of the theory and practice of philosophy in general.

Normatively, philosophy is considered to be a way of life, as embodied in the persons of genuine philosophers, meaning first of all the integrity and unity of words and deeds. Of note is that this topic was addressed in the general theme of the XXII World Congress of Philosophy in 2013 in Athens, Greece: “Philosophy as Inquiry and Way of Life”. Reminding us about this ideal norm is particularly important because in the contemporary situation there is much to be desired in this respect.

Of course, to be a philosopher today is not easy. In many countries the teaching of philosophy is under attack, philosophy is under the heavy-handed “supervision” of official ideologies, and those dissenting philosophers with different ideological positions are under pressure. In the universities, which are profit-seeking and mostly functioning as business enterprises, the environment is more conducive to conformism, rather than to critical thinking. To be faithful to the vocation of the philosopher, to think independently and to say publicly an “inconvenient truth” takes courage. But this is ultimately a personal choice between remaining faithful to the vocation of the philosopher in finding the truth or preferring the more comfortable opportunistic considerations.

Philosophy, in its responsibility to critical thinking, is open to all questions and it questions everything, including all authority, ideologies, and dogmas that are presented as having no need for further examination. Philosophy tempts those who prefer to abstain from raising any further questions, thus becoming dogmatic. In this regard, for example, the mainstream philosophy in the United States is criticized for having “elements of complicity with American global dominance, some of the more unjust aspects of which... are to be found in such widely read philosophers as Rawls and Rorty”, who uncritically presents US governmental structures as eminently democratic and just (McBride 2004, 91). An understanding of philosophy in its widest meaning should integrate “many philosophical methods and approaches that have originated in other parts of the globe”, including the African American and the Native American thought (McBride 2004,97-98).

To some extent mainstream philosophy is complicit with the failure of liberal “multiculturalism”, which was obfuscating the real transformative goal of the struggle of movements for recognition of cultural diversity and derailing them toward the liberal complacent myth and preservation of the status quo. In the politics of liberal multiculturalism there was mainly an empty gesture regarding diversity: the “right to exist” of the other was recognized in words only, while the dominating culture was considered superior and retained its primacy. The existing social-economic and political situation of minorities does not provide the necessary favorable conditions for the development of their unique cultures.

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When the time came for governments and ruling financial and political elites to pay the bills of advanced liberal promises of well-being, the pretentious ideological garb of “political correctness” was discarded and replaced by open intolerance toward the “other”, which became a scapegoat, portrayed as the cause of all problems. This opened the door to right-wing extremism. The theories of “culture wars” and of “clashes of civilizations” (Huntington 1996) have found their implementation in confrontational politics, thus becoming self-fulfilled prophecies.

This trend is opposed by a positive view of cultural diversity, of original cultures as valuable, and their dialogical interaction as mutually enriching and a condition for the development of each culture. This view is promoted by intercultural philosophy, which holds that the dialogue of cultures is possible and that it promotes better mutual understanding and the peaceful cooperation of nations.

In striving to regain the normative values of philosophy as a way of life and of genuine philosophical dialogue, one source of inspiration can be found in ancient Greek philosophy. In the discussion about philosophical dialogue, its theory and practice, and how to regain its genuine nature, it is helpful to turn our attention to its roots in ancient Greece. Socrates remains an iconic figure who embodied philosophy as a way of life (or a *paradigmatic individual*, using Karl Jaspers’ term), pursuing the search for truth, and proving his integrity even in the face of unfair trial and death (Jaspers 1962). The Socratic dialectic remains relevant not only in its educational application as a pedagogical method, but also as a paradigm for philosophical discussion in search for truth. The Socratic dialogues, as reconstructed by Plato, in many respects show use model of dialogue, its principles, a manner of conducting dialogue. Being the “wisest man in Athens”, he treated the participants of dialogue respectfully as equals, and he saw the purpose of dialogue as being to find the truth. In this he distinguished himself from the sophists, who were less interested in philosophy than in using their arguments and debating skills mainly for confusing their opponents and “winning” the debate, for prestige and money. For this, the sophists were strongly criticized by Plato and Aristotle. This contrast between genuine philosophy versus sophistry continued through the history of philosophy until the present. Today the sophists’ techniques of deception – in courts, public sphere, and political debates – have become much more sophisticated and enforced by the power of the media to manipulate even supposedly educated people’ opinions.

In my research on ancient Greek philosophy, I see some parallels between the debates of philosophers (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) with sophists and the contemporary contrasting tendencies in views of philosophy and dialogue. The contrasting tendencies are represented, for example, in publications in *Topologik* about, on the one hand, intercultural philosophy and, on the other, the pseudo-philosophical sophistry feigned by the so-called “International Society for Universal Dialogue” (ISUD) under the guise of “universal dialogue”.

In this article we will touch on some issues of the theory and practice of dialogue, as they are reflected in discussions in *Topologik*. We will first review the emergence of philosophical dialogue in ancient Greek philosophy, starting with Heraclitus' concept of *polemos* and its philosophical meaning. Then we will analyze Socratic/Platonic dialogues, focusing on the contrasts between dialectic and sophists' eristic rhetoric. Next, attention will be paid to intercultural philosophy, which addresses the problems of dialogue, its theory and practice, and obstacles to dialogue. Finally, we will trace this contrast between philosophy and sophistry in our times, especially as it is reflected in the practice of dialogue and the obstacles created by the pseudo-philosophical sophistry of those demagogues who are interested in power and money. As an example of these obstacles to dialogue, which sometimes arise in learned associations due to the “monologic” attitude of those who pursue their own self-interests, we will analyze the crisis of the ISUD, which has been hijacked by an authoritarian parochial group. This analysis shows the failure of the claims of this group, presenting the discredited ISUD as the alleged center of “universal dialogue”. The article argues for the need to uphold democratic principles and ethical norms, as well as to critically separate genuine dialogue from pseudo-dialogical sophistry. Against this background, the contribution of intercultural philosophy to the development of dialogical relations as equals between people in a culturally diverse and interconnected world is especially important.

1. *Philosophy as respectful polemos in search for truth*

In the history of many traditions of philosophical and religious thought in different regions of the world, the contribution of ancient Greek philosophy is significant as being the birthplace of the philo-sophia, the love of wisdom and knowledge. It was the first to recognize the autonomy of reason, free from religious or any other external authority, as well as of the inherent value of rational knowledge, and thus it laid the ground for European philosophy and modern science.

The dialectical tradition can be traced to the great pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus, who in his flux theory expressed an idea of change and of the unity (identity) of opposites. He also viewed the world as *polemos* (πόλεμος – war, battle, strife), since conflicting powers of opposites make possible the world and all its variety, otherwise there would be only lifeless uniformity. This idea was expressed in his famous Fragment 53 (Diels): “War [πόλεμος] is father of all, and king of all. He renders some gods, others men; he makes some slaves, others free” (Robinson 1987, 37).

Philosophy is also *polemos*, living in the tension of strife among differing currents of thought and worldviews, and in this it mirrors life and the world. This, however, should be understood as inseparable from the following considerations. First, pluralism and different

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perspectives and ideas are necessary as a source of creativity and a condition of the development of philosophical knowledge (otherwise it would degenerate into dogma). Second, the strife that philosophy promotes is nonviolent and respectful, one that requires the recognition of all its practitioners, however different they may be. Third, the different ideas and cultural perspectives need a public sphere and conditions for a communicative exchange of opinions and proper interaction. Finally, this respectful and inclusive communication of philosophers with differing views should be in the form of a *dialogue*, actual or virtual, seeking a common goal: to find the truth.

This dialectic and dialogical understanding of philosophy was first shaped by the preliminary work of pre-Socratic philosophers, and then crystallized in the Socratic/Platonic dialogues and the works of Aristotle. This breakthrough was not an easy one, in a *polemos* of philosophers with themselves and with their opponents, such as the sophists. It was strengthened through historical evolution and in our time has become a broadly accepted and recognized norm. However, it is still challenged by the adherents of authoritarian monologism. Therefore, it is worthwhile to take a look at the genesis of this understanding of philosophy in its birthplace, ancient Greece, to confirm that this dialectic and dialogical understanding of philosophy is an essential, “genetic” characteristic of philosophy and that therefore its normativity should be defended today, despite all the challenges.

First of all, a clarification of the meaning of Heraclitus’ *polemos* is needed. Although *polemos* can refer to real combat as politically organized violence, in Heraclitus’ expression it should not be reduced to this literal meaning and interpreted only as a glorification of perpetual violence. Heraclitus witnessed the horrors of war, such as the rebellion and the destruction of Miletus by the Persians (494 B.C.), when most men were killed and women and children were enslaved. In any case, to address the reality of war is a necessary step toward the search for the ways to prevent it.

Polemos by no means needs to manifest itself as war in the ordinary sense. Heraclitus used a metaphorical language, perhaps with intentional “obscurity” because of the threat of persecution. A number of fragments suggest that his theory of the unity of opposites implies the idea of *change* (every object manifests some pair of contrary properties and in this sense is subject to change) and the principle of the *unity* of opposites is the principle of *harmony*. He wrote that the transformation and replacement of one element by another in “a road up (and) down (is) one and the same (road)” (Robinson1987, 41;DK B 60) and that these two ways go on simultaneously, resulting in invisible harmony: “An unapparent connection is stronger (or: better) than one which is obvious” (Robinson1987, 39;B 54).Heraclitus also expressed an idea of a cosmopolis with no borders, in which no one is a stranger and the same laws apply to all.

Heraclitus’ *polemos* needs to be understood philosophically, such as in the interpretation offered by Martin Heidegger. According to him, the word πόλεμος means “strife” – not strife as discord but as “confrontation in which the essence of those who confront one another

exposes itself in the other and thus shows itself and comes to appearance... into what is unconcealed and true” (Heidegger 1990, 21). He translates *polemos* as *Auseinandersetzung*, which means confrontation, and by hyphenating this word (as *Aus-einander-setzung*) it then comes to mean a “setting apart”, in which those who are thus set apart reveal themselves. He further insists that we must not think of πόλεμος as war and not use the supposedly Heraclitan proposition “War is the father of all things” as philosophically justifying war as the highest principle of all being. He makes this clear in his translation of the rest of this Heraclitan fragment: “Although confrontation sows all things, it is also (and above all) of all things that which is highest that which preserves, and this is because it lets some show themselves as gods, the others, however, as humans, because it lets some step into the open as bondsmen, but the others as free beings” (Heidegger 1990, 21).

As Heidegger explains, “The essence of πόλεμος lies in δεικνύναι, to show, and in ποιεῖν, to produce [*her-stellen*], as the Greeks say, make-it-stand-out [*hervorstellen*] in open view” (Heidegger 1990, 21). This is the philosophical meaning of *polemos*. He adds that the strife of ideas is essential for knowledge: “This confrontational reflection on the essential realm of science must take place in each science or it will remain science [*Wissenschaft*] without knowing [*Wissen*]” (Heidegger 1990, 21). For Heidegger, *polemos* is an ontological concept. It describes the hermeneutic manner of our Being as interpretative being, for whom the meaning of Being and of other beings is the issue: “Heidegger’s *polemos* has a scope as broad and as deep as his whole thinking, for it describes not only our own Being, what he calls *Dasein*, but also Being itself” (Fried, 2000, 16). Our Being is hermeneutic and polemical, but not in the negative sense of disregarding the opponent in a fundamental challenge to our interpretation of the matter at hand. In Gregory Fried’s interpretation, Heidegger also understands the proper relation of peoples to be one of *polemos*. Therefore, true respect among individuals as well as among peoples “demands that each be free to come into its own while having a conversation that puts everything into question, in the face of history’s challenge” (Fried 2000, 18).

Heraclitus’ *polemos* can be better understood within the context of his philosophical thoughts. An interesting recent attempt to reconstruct Heraclitus’ lost book “On Nature” is made by Andrei Lebedev. He disavowed the hyper-critical interpretations of Heraclitus’ *polemos* and highlighted some of Heraclitus’ fundamental principles and ideas (Lebedev 2014, 39-40.) In Heraclitus’ metaphysics, the struggle and the unity of opposites has a “triadic structure”. In the cosmic agon of opposite forces, there is a third element above the two, an Arbiter or a Moderator (βραβεύς, επιστάτης) (or cosmic Divinity), who establishes the rules of the competition and regulates it by the imposition of “limits” on the maximum and minimum, thus rescuing the adversaries from a mutual annihilation based on the *palintroposharmonia* of opposites (Lebedev 2014, 78).

In the ethical realm, Heraclitus speaks about the moral character of a person (ἦθος), virtue (αρετή), practical mindfulness (φρόνησις), and the “soul” (ψυχή), which becomes a

carrier of wisdom (σοφία) and moral virtue (Lebedev 2014, 124-125). For him, both words and deeds should be in agreement with “nature”: “Sound thinking (is) a very great virtue, and (practical) wisdom (consists in our) saying what is true and acting in accordance with (the) real constitution (of things), (by) playing heed (to it)”(Robinson1987, 65; B 112). Heraclitus’ “I investigated myself” (Robinson1987, 61;B 101) sounds like a response to the imperative of the Delphic god “Know thyself”.

Heraclitus’ dialectic idea of unity (identity) of opposites expresses both the strife of opposites and their unity or harmony. In the light of this, *polemos* in philosophy is conceived as the respectful strife of the participants of dialogue, who are in pursuit of a common goal: to find the truth.

2. *Philosophers versus Sophists*

Dialogue was the recognized form of philosophizing in ancient Greek philosophy. Socrates’ dialogues, reconstructed and published by Plato, represent examples of philosophical *polemos* in which two or more participants, with different worldviews, are engaged in hot debates, in a principled and respectful strife.

Platonic dialogue is a reported conversation about philosophy with several speakers, one of whom is usually Socrates. The different characters and views in the dialogue are vividly contrasted, so that the dialogue is almost a drama. Plato uses the technique of a dialogical pair of interlocutors or discussants, that is, the principle of the pairing of scenes and characters, which mostly represent different or even opposite positions or perspectives and characteristics (Dzhokhadze 2012). “The characters of Platonic dialogues struggle together, sometimes co-operating, sometimes competing, to defend, or to refine, or just to find, answers to questions of definition” (Chappell 2005, 112).The dramatic composition of Plato’s dialogues recreates a lot of tense problematic situations of the competition of arguments, intellectual efforts, the ups and downs of the dialogue partners, when they demonstrate the ability to listen to other people’s arguments and the skills to defend their own opinion. The culture of dialogue shows that its participants are tactful towards each other and have equal rights as subjects of a joint search for truth. Platonic dialogues are characterized as “multilayered, multivocal, and mimetic”, and Platonic irony and multiple characters’ voices encourage the development of rationality and self-knowledge (McCoy 2008).

After Socrates, the dialogical genre of philosophizing was further developed in Plato’s dialogues, in which proper dialogic form gets its methodical development. Plato’s early dialogues should be read as representing Socrates’ views (Aristotle attributes to Socrates only those positions found in Plato’s earlier works), but in his “middle” and some of the “late” dialogues Plato also introduces his own concepts, such as postulating a realm of imperceptible intelligible and timeless essences or entities called “forms” or “ideas” (*eidos*). With the theory of forms, Plato wanted to provide a rational explanation of how knowledge is

possible. He refuted the sophists' skeptical assault on knowledge and their relativistic rejection of universal truth. Plato reasoned that if he could establish that knowledge exists, then he could also justify a real, objective distinction between true and false, right and wrong. Plato draws our attention not only to the formal logical correctness of conclusions, but also to the importance of the relationship of these conclusions to reality. Plato's dialogues explore the nature of human thinking. In them the central place is occupied by the problems of logic, the theory of knowledge, and ethics.

Although Socrates (or a character represented under this name) is the key character in these dialogues, he nevertheless does not impose his opinion “monologically”, but rather encourages others to critically question his statements and to express their own views. Instead of “lecturing”, he invited the others to a conversation and exchange of opinions about a certain subject or question, to join his search for truth using the dialectical method of guided questions-and-answers. Socrates' character is shown at the beginning of his dialogue with Gorgias, when he says: “I am one of those who are very willing to be refuted if I say anything which is not true, and very willing to refute any one else who says what is not true, and quite as ready to be refuted as to refute” (Plato 2003, 258, *Gorgias* 458). This shows the humility of a true thinker, who is aware of the uncertain nature and limits of knowledge, including his own. An approximation of the truth is a collective journey. Socrates' dialogues invited participants to join him in this journey.

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle distinguished themselves from the sophists, and this contention and difference is reflected in dialogues. The Greek word *sophistēs*, formed from the noun *sophia*, in the fifth century BCE was initially used to mean simply wise men, and later on it became used to refer to paid professional teachers of virtue or excellence (*aretē*) and rhetoric. The increase in participatory democracy in Athens led to a demand for rhetorical skills for political success, as well as for winning in courts. The sophists were typically concerned about the relation between law and convention (*nomos*), on the one hand, and nature or reality (*phusis*) on the other, which was central to moral and social thought in that time. They adhered to relativism about knowledge and truth and in the area of morality (Protagoras' famous “humans are the measure of all things” statement). In their teaching of rhetoric, sophists intended to develop the skills of how to win an argument, regardless of whether or not it was right or wrong. This, however, deviated from the original purpose of philosophy and cast a negative shadow over the term “sophist”.

Some commentators view the difference between philosophers and sophists in method and manner, separating philosophy from rhetoric, while others see the methodological difference only as one aspect of the problem. But all of them agree that the main difference is in moral intention.

With regard to their technical method, sophists were criticized for using eristic to win an argument, regardless of whether it is true or false. Sophists were using a method of argumentation called the “contradicting art” or the “art of antilogic”. This method of

opposing contradictory arguments is clearly represented by Protagoras of Abdera, the preeminent sophist of Periclean Athens, according to whom two opposed arguments or propositions, when one is the negative of the other, are to be found concerning everything. The aim of this method was to make one proposition stronger than its opposing argument, irrespective of the truth or the falsity of the two. It is the practice of proceeding from a given argument, offered by an opponent, towards the establishment of a contrary or contradictory argument in such a way that the opponent must either abandon his first position or accept both positions. This kind of argumentation was employed by most of the sophists. Plato's objection to this method was that anyone who attempts to establish one such argument in opposition to another is not really seeking truth at all but is simply trying to achieve victory. In *Sophist* (231) this is characterized “the eristic art” (Plato 2003, 559). He also raised his objection to this method on the grounds that the attempt to establish one statement as true about the phenomenal world is mistaken, since truth is not to be found in phenomena but only in the world of the forms.

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle opposed their dialectic to the eristic used by the sophists. Eristic (from the Greek *eristikos*, fond of wrangling, from Eris, the ancient Greek goddess of chaos, strife, and discord) refers to an argument that aims to rebut another's argument, rather than searching for truth. A representation of eristic techniques can be found in Plato's dialogue *Euthydemus*, in which Socrates converses with two sophists, Euthydemus and Dionysodorus, who deliberately used egregiously fallacious arguments for the purpose of contradicting and prevailing over their opponent. Socrates said about them that “such is their skill in the war of words, that they can refute any proposition whether true or false” (Plato 2003, 65, *Euthydemus* 272). Socrates compares the sophists' manipulation with distinction of words with a cruel game, when a sophist overturns his opponent: “He would be like a person who pulls away a stool from some one when he is about to sit down, and then laughs and makes merry at the sight of his friend overturned and laid on his back” (Plato 2003, 68, *Euthydemus* 278). The dialogue shows a contrast between the sophists “refuting” or “overturning” (*anatrophein*) whatever their interlocutor says, with Socrates “exhorting” or “turning” (*protrepein*) his interlocutors to philosophy.

As I mentioned somewhere, one of the main logical tools used by Socrates against the sophists was the *peritropé* (περιτροπή – “rotate”, “turning around”), that is immanent criticism (Dzhokhadze 2012, 30). Socrates used it as one of the series of objections against Protagoras' relativism and the view of relative truth (Plato 2003, 527-528, *Theaetetus* 169–171). The *peritropéas* the “table-turning” argument was effective against the subtler relativism of the relativist himself; the philosopher has retained what he has disavowed in and by the disavowal itself.

Plato characterizes the “art of Sophistry” and describes the nature of the sophist as “a paid hunter after wealth and youth”; “a merchant in the goods of the soul”; “a retailer of the same sort of wares”; and belonging to the fighting class “who professed the eristic art” (Plato 2003,

559, *Sophist* 231). The sophist, who is interested in influence and money, over emphasizes the power of rhetoric. He appears to the young un experienced pupils to be all-wise, but in reality, he has only “a sort of conjectural or apparent knowledge only of all things, which is not the truth” (Plato 2003, *Sophist*, 233).

Plato defends philosophy and criticizes the deceptive relativism and shallowness of eristic rhetoric, including in the public life of Athenian democracy, where statesmen are indifferent to questions of right and wrong, and are only interested in what is publicly decided at any time. In debates, the public is easily manipulated by the rhetoric of demagogues (Plato 2003, 528-530, *Theaetetus* 172-177). Aristotle made the critical comment that “the sophists profess to teach politics” (Aristotle 2014, 370, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1181a1-15).

In addition to criticism of the sophists for practicing and teaching eristic rhetoric, the main criticism by Plato and Aristotle was focused on the mercenary character of the sophists and their practices questionable from the ethical perspective. Whenever money determines intellectual and spiritual activities, they become corrupt. For the sophist, the end goal of getting influence and money apparently justified the means (teaching the “eristic art” of deception to win arguments, whether it was right or wrong). This cynical disregard of truth and justice by “a merchant in the goods of the soul” was not commendable in Greek thought: for one to be truly virtuous it was necessary to have consistency between one’s words and actions, but in this respect the sophists fell short. As Pierre Hadot puts it, “traditionally people who developed an apparently philosophical discourse without trying to live their lives in accordance with their discourse, and without their discourse emanating from their life experience, were called sophists” (2004, 174).

Plato, like Socrates, differentiates the philosopher from the sophist primarily through the virtues of the philosopher’s soul. The main difference is in the moral purpose. According to Aristotle, “for sophistic is what it is in virtue not of the capacity but of the deliberate choice” (*Rhetoric* 1355b 15-18). In several dialogues (such as *Meno* 88c-d and *Euthydemus* 281d-e) discussing the antinomy of wisdom and ignorance, it is suggested that power without knowledge of the good is not genuinely good, and this also explains the so-called Socratic paradox that virtue is knowledge. This is also expressed in terms of Plato’s metaphysics: the Truth is inseparable from the Good.

The critical view of sophists was expressed not only by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, but also by some of their contemporaries, such as Xenophon. Socrates was faithful to the “love of wisdom” and in his education he shared his wisdom with others for free. In the *Symposium* he expresses his passionate commitment to philosophy (*erōs* is presented as analogous to philosophy in its etymological sense in talking about love of knowledge or desire for wisdom) and to striving after wisdom that can only be temporarily fulfilled in this life by the contemplation of the forms of the beautiful and the good, “for wisdom is a most beautiful thing, and Love is of the beautiful” (Plato 2003, 164, *Symposium* 204). The philosopher is a

friend or lover of wisdom. This is in sharp contrast to the mercantilism of the sophists, who taught merely for the pragmatic reason of taking money for the eristic art for manipulative purposes, and who claimed to possess wisdom as a finished product to be sold as merchandise. For Xenophon, the difference between Socrates and the sophists is analogous to the difference between a lover and a prostitute: “Similarly, those also who sell wisdom for money to whoever wishes it they call sophists just as if they were prostitutes” (Xenophon 1994, *Memorabilia*, I.6.13).

Both Socrates and Plato “practiced what they preached”, as they themselves did not charge for teaching, and they viewed their work in philosophy as a search for truth, which was inseparable from ethical virtue. In other words, they served disinterestedly for the search for truth and for the common good, and both their ends and means were morally justifiable. They both exemplify a genuine philosophy and “philosophy as way of life”. Their integrity as philosophers is admirable for many generations, including ours.

Contemporary researchers argue that the main contrast between philosophers and sophists is not between two different methods of argument, but between the two purposes which argument can serve: one serious and the other not. One and the same method of argument can be used or misused according to what one proposes to make of it. Alexander Nehamas, for example, has argued that “Socrates did not differ from the sophists in method but in overall purpose” (1990, 13). Researchers emphasize a difference in moral character. According to Marina McCoy, “Plato distinguishes Socrates from the sophists by differences in character and moral intention” (2008, 1). She argues that the philosopher and the sophist are distinguished by the philosopher's love of the forms as the ultimate objects of desire, that informs the philosopher's rhetoric to lead the interlocutor in dialogue for better understanding.

In the dispute between sophists and philosophers, history has made its verdict. Researchers have recognized the contribution of sophists to the development of philosophical thought (Kerferd 1981). On the other hand, they also showed the limitations of their conceptions and relativism. The “sophistic movement” was criticized for a narrow view of philosophy, basically reduced to rhetoric and the “eristic art” of winning an argument, regardless of whether it was true or false, which was ethically flawed. Rhetoric remains an important part of discussions, including in courts, political debates, and deliberations in the democratic public sphere. However, when not truth, but rather the interests of power and money are at stake in the debate, the participants may revert to the sophists' eristic tactics and rhetoric, using fallacious arguments for the purpose of deception. This has been pejoratively called “sophistry”, which has the negative connotation of fraudulent “fake wisdom” with dishonest intent to deceive – the opposite of real knowledge and ethics, of genuine wisdom. The term “sophistry” is now generally used to refer to manipulative forms of rhetoric. It has come to signify the deliberate use of fallacious reasoning, intellectual charlatanism and moral unscrupulousness. In dictionaries, sophistry is defined, for example, as “subtly deceptive

reasoning or argumentation” (Merriam Webster Dictionary). In today’s high-tech world, the sophistry of deception is much more sophisticated than in ancient Greece, with “spin doctors” and the mass media becoming powerful tools for the brainwashing and manipulation of public opinion on the economy, politics, and culture.

The philosophy of ancient Greece has passed the test of time. Socrates remains an iconic figure who embodied philosophy as a way of life. Pierre Hadot wrote about the harmony between Socrates’ life and teaching, thus becoming a paradigm of the philosopher: “the figure of Socrates—as sketched by Plato...is the portrait of a mediator between the transcendental ideal of wisdom and concrete human reality. It is a paradox of highly Socratic irony that Socrates was not a sage, but a ‘philo-sopher’: that is, a lover of wisdom” (Hadot 1995, 147).

The Socratic dialogues, as reconstructed by Plato, in many respects show us a model of conducting dialogue and its principles. In these dialogues, the participants, with different worldviews, are discussing philosophical questions, expressing different views, and each voice has an opportunity to be heard. Despite the variety of themes and arguments, the dialogues never lose sight of ethical principles and are always oriented toward the search for truth. Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, among other great thinkers, developed philosophy as respectful *polemos*, in which the different views interact, sometimes clashing in a dramatic tension, but remain united by the common goal of the search for truth. This theory and practice remain a classic example, a relevant model, and an everlasting source of inspiration.

3. *Intercultural Philosophy of Dialogue*

In the sphere of ideas, we are the witnesses of and participants in the struggle between multidirectional processes, which generally are polarized around two trends. One, which can be conventionally called “dialogic”, advocates the ideas of dialogue and the practice of dialogical relations between people from different cultures, as well as international diplomacy. This trend finds its foothold in the tradition of “dialogical philosophy” (Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and Ferdinand Ebner, among others) and its development in contemporary works, including discourse ethics and intercultural philosophy. In Russia, Mikhail Bakhtin’s (1990) dialogism with its strong ethical articulation was creatively developed in works of Alexey Losev (2000, 2014) and continues in recent works on intercultural philosophy (Averintsev 2001, Bibler 1997, Gogotishvili 2006, Epstein 2012, Mezhujev 2011, Smirnov 2009, Stepanyants 2015). The other, the “monologic” trend, actively manifests itself in power politics, authoritarian demagoguery, dogmatic ways of thinking, fundamentalism and intolerance towards the “other”.

The journal *Topologik* publishes interesting articles on problems of intercultural philosophy and dialogue on a regular basis. One issue (2016, issue 19) was a special issue

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devoted to intercultural philosophy in connection with the 70th anniversary of the prominent philosopher Raúl Fornet-Betancourt. The issue highlighted various aspects of the development since the late 1980s of the movement for intercultural philosophy and international philosophical dialogue. The project of an “intercultural transformation of philosophy” (Fornet-Betancourt 2001; 2012;2015), rethinking philosophical problems in light of the fundamental role of culture in the development of philosophy, opens up a new perspective in our understanding of what philosophy is, in understanding the history of philosophy and its role in society. Intercultural philosophy acts as an alternative to the rationalism and subjectivism of modernity, to the limitations of analytical philosophy and to postmodern nihilism. This philosophy seeks to develop ideas and approaches that help confront the challenges of our time. It promotes a planetary ethics of co-responsibility for the results of our collective activities, “which defends from the reigning devastation not only the cultures, but the planet earth and the democratic nature of inter-human relations among peoples of the earth” (Borrelli 2016, 183). The recent monographic issue of *Topologik* (2018, issue 24) is dedicated to the memory of Karl-Otto Apel – one of the most prominent representatives of twenty-first century philosophical thought, a theorist of transcendental-pragmatic transformation of Western philosophy and the ethics of discourse (Apel 2001).

The publications in *Topologik* combine the normative and empirical levels of analysis and provide a multifaceted picture of the ideological processes in the world. Intercultural philosophy represents genuine philosophy and dialogue, in contrast to pseudo-philosophical sophistry. They cover not only events and achievements in the field of intercultural dialogue, but also problems and obstacles faced by the efforts of philosophers in the practical promotion of dialogical relationships. These obstacles deserve serious attention, because without an understanding of their nature and the means to overcome them the possibilities of dialogue will not be practically realized.

4. *The Monologic Sophistry of the “International Society for Universal Dialogue”*

Dialogue, as a practiced norm of relationships, is carried out in the difficult conditions of being opposed by authoritarian monologism in its various forms: dictatorial politicians, hegemonic ambitions, nationalist exceptionism, and Manichaeism fundamentalism, etc. The ideological abuse of the concept of “dialogue” and other high humanistic notions also causes great harm. Especially deceptive and harmful is the hypocritical abuse of these notions to achieve the self-interested goals of power and money.

Such pseudo-philosophical sophistry of a parochial group pretending to represent a “universal dialogue” is discussed in two publications in *Topologik* about so-called “International Society for Universal Dialogue” (ISUD). The first is an article by the Brazilian philosopher Jovino Pizzi titled “Parochial monologism under the guise of ‘universal

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dialogue’ (ISUD)” (Pizzi 2017). The second article is a response to the first by Christopher Black, a Canadian political scientist and an expert in international law, titled “Separating Genuine Dialogue from Simulacra: The ‘International Society for Universal Dialogue’ as a Parody of Itself” (Black 2018). These articles are thought-provoking in analytically describing the “anatomy” of the crisis of ISUD and a “mechanics” of seizing control of organization. I would like to join this discussion by adding some comments based on my experiences.

J. Pizzi’s article is interesting as the testimony of a philosopher, engaged in international dialogue, who was initially attracted by the name of the ISUD, became a member, but to his great disappointment then witnessed its crisis. In trying to find out the root cause of this, he revealed a conflict within the ISUD between its progressive members, who were striving for the implementation of the dialogical relationships as equals in the practice of organization, and a monological group imposing its authoritarian control. He writes: “Within ISUD there was a sharp contrast between two tendencies: One was represented by those members from different countries who served ISUD by contributing to the conferences and publications, and who wanted to transform it into a truly international organization built around collegial dialogic relationships of equals. The other tendency was toward preserving the status quo, represented by a closed dominating group of self-serving individuals from one country, who view this non-profit organization as if it were their property to be used as a source of power and money” (Pizzi 2017, 50). This organization was controlled by a group from the United States, from where almost all its presidents came. But in 2010, during the VIII Congress, Leonidas Bargeliotis from Greece was legitimately elected as president, which opened up the possibility of the democratic transformation of the organization. However, Charles Brown (US), who was an alternative candidate and lost the election, organized, with the dominant group, a “destructive opposition” and attacked the new president with false accusations. The contrast between these dialogical and monological tendencies was clearly shown after the election: whereas L. Bargeliotis and some other members were organizing the next congress and publishing proceedings, C. Brown’s “destructive opposition” was undermining the president and the Board as they aimed to take over and control the organization.

As a participant of the IXth ISUD Congress in 2012 in Greek Olympia, J. Pizzi witnessed a coup, staged by C. Brown during the general assembly and the election of a new Board on June 26, 2012: “At the beginning of the general assembly, president Leonidas Bargeliotis reported that, despite many obstacles, the Society has achieved its goals in organizing the IXth congress and publishing three volumes of Proceedings prior to the congress... Surprisingly, however, in sharp contrast to those achievements, Charles Brown and Kevin Brien (US) with their supporters—Christopher Vasilopoulos (US), Jane Campbell (US), Martha Beck (US), and Mark Lucht (US) from the destructive opposition — launched into a round of provocative questions and false accusations against outgoing president,... which Leonidas Bargeliotis categorically denied as totally false and a continuation of their

campaign for undermining his presidency”(Pizzi 2017, 46). The oppositionists were unable to say anything of substance related to the scholarly purpose of the organization, and thus, instead, they fabricated insinuations, which were later proven to be false, in order to confuse the voting participants.

J. Pizzi’s article describes a number of violations of the electoral process, of the rules and the parliamentary procedures, including manipulations with two sets of ballots with different names. The oppositionists blatantly disregarded L.Bargeliotis’ presiding authority of the Chair and de-facto usurped the administration of the meeting to rush through their agendas. According to the testimony of the Indian philosopher Y.V. Satyanarayana: “This well-organized group from one country [the USA]... monopolized the whole time and discourse of the meeting, dominating it and imposing their own agenda. The participants from China, India, Russia, Philippines, and other regions were marginalized” (Pizzi 2017, 48). As a result, many outraged participants of the general assembly in protest left the assembly City Hall, right in front of the Olympic flame, which was disgraced by the coup. The participants called it a “scandal”, a “plot”, and a “staged coup”. Christopher Black characterized it as a “fascist putsch, not a meeting of a learned society” (Black 2018, 17).

C. Black detected circumstantial evidence of the conspiracy by the C. Brown group in several strange incidents. One was the surprising and illegitimate nomination by the opposition group of their alternative candidate Christopher Vasilopoulos (US) for president from the floor, bypassing the Board, which had nominated Leonidas Bargeliotis for president. Further suspicions of a conspiracy were raised by the fact that after VIII Congress “in the poisonous atmosphere of intrigues, the newly elected treasurer Andrew Fiala (US) had suddenly resigned” (Pizzi 2017, 32). It is hard to explain why a person, honored to be elected as the treasurer, suddenly resigned. Even harder to explain is that “Keping Wang (WANG, Keping – China), who was the vice president and acting treasurer, and supposed to be nominated for presidency at the next congress, surprisingly shied away from the expected nomination and quitted, which opened the door to the opposition” (Pizzi 2017, 32). Why did the vice president, who was highly likely to become president, decline the opportunity? The likely explanation for this “cause” is its “effect”: it opened the door to the opposition. Most likely, Andrew Fiala and Keping Wang had made a deal with C. Brown’s “destructive opposition”, thus making the hijacking of the organization possible.

More evidence of a broad conspiracy of the dominating group became obvious right after the coup: “Shortly after that, Kevin Brien let the cat out of the bag and blurted out the scope of the plot, in his open e-mail dated July 6, 2012 when he reported about it as “*military victory*” and wrote: “In this connection I am happy to be able to say that three former presidents who *had* drifted away have already told me in writing that they would attend the next ISUD Congress (John Rensenbrink, Steve Hicks, and Al Anderson)”(Pizzi 2017, 49).

But the conspirators’ plot was a Pyrrhic victory; they ruined the organization and disgraced themselves. The honest members of organization protested. They demanded the

establishment of an Independent Committee to investigate irregularities during the election and all disputed issues. But the junta was quick to reject this proposal, which “only confirmed suspicion of a cover up and exposed their fear of a truthful revelation about their illegitimate path to power” (Pizzi 2017, 51).

The usurpers knew that the members who were aware of the coup would never re-elect them and would vote them out, or even expel them from the organization. Thus, despite the protests, the junta staged their own illegitimate X Congress and election in 2014, bypassing the membership. As J. Pizzi writes, “More than 80 percent of the participants were new, not related to ISUD... The misled freshmen participants were used by this group in manipulated pseudo-election to ‘re-elect themselves’, and Charles Brown became ‘treasurer’ and EmiliyaTaysina ‘secretary’. The illegitimacy of its organizers and of staged election made its outcome and decisions illegitimate” (Pizzi 2017, 54-55). The pseudo-elections staged by the putschists cannot legitimate their usurpation of power, just like stolen money remains illegal even after being laundered. The ISUD remains under the control of the same junta, who use it as a source of power and money, and thus any cosmetic “elections” or changes to the Board while the “power behind the throne” remains will not change the illegitimate nature of the hijacked organization. This is unacceptable in the eyes of the scholarly community.

The outraged members demanded the dissolution of the hijacked organization, which “actually ceased to be ISUD anymore, it is unable to carry out its purposes and therefore needs to be formally dissolved” (Pizzi 2017, 55). In a protest, most of the members broke their ties with the notorious organization.

In response, Kevin Brien and Charles Brown unleashed a new wave of libelous personal attacks on those who disagree. In this situation, “now the only means of ‘universal dialogue’ is through attorneys at law and the judicial system” (Pizzi 2017, 55). Those who honestly served the organization, but became the target of junta’s defamation, sought justice through the court. In response to Kevin Brien’s libelous statements, “The former president sought legal protection from that defamatory attack through the State of Maryland judicial system... Kevin Brien was forced to retract his statements. On April 19, 2016 the attorney at law from Baltimore sent the official letter to the ISUD members confirming that all allegations made by Kevin Brian were groundless and untrue and that they were ‘categorically and absolutely rejected, in the strongest possible terms’”(Pizzi 2017, 55). This legally established and proved the falsity of the slanderous insinuations and lies which the putschists used during the coup. The former president won this legal battle. This was an example of legal and moral victory of the honest scholars, for having a courage to counter the libelous attacks of hegemonic usurpers and to uphold truth, justice, and genuine dialogue.

One may wonder how this discredited organization, rejected by its core members, still exists. The short answer is due to it being based on lies and sponsors’ money. The junta is exploiting the catchy name of ISUD and is propagating a self-glorifying false image. Those who take this at face value may be misled.

In his investigation, Christopher Black uses the key investigative principle “follow the money”, which reveals the deep motive of the putsch: money. As he writes, “The ISUD’s funds, including from outside grants, are in the hands of those who control the organization, namely Charles Brown as ‘president’ and Kevin Brien as ‘treasurer’”(Black 2018, 19). He finds that the ISUD is sponsored by the so-called “Jens Jacobsen Trust”. He writes about the motive of hijacking that “the plunder from this act of piracy was the access to the Jacobsen Trust’s coffers” (Black 2018, 19). In the junta’s hands, money is used to further corrupt the organization, and “the dominating group’s control over the use and distribution of money (in the form of awarding travel stipends, Jacobsen Awards, and other ways) is used as leverage for its manipulative influence” (Pizzi 56).

But why does the Jacobsen Trust finance the hijackers of the organization? The detrimental effects of this are obvious. At a time when honest ISUD members are struggling against its hijacking and are defending truth and democratic and dialogical principles, the usurpers have been saved by financial sponsorship from the Jacobsen Trust, acting as artificial life support to prolong the agony of a soulless body. It is also a bitter irony that the late Jens Jacobsen entrusted his money for the promotion of noble humanistic ideas, but the trustees of the Jacobsen Trust are using this money to finance the hijacked pseudo-ISUD, which is doing just the opposite. Jens Jacobsen is probably turning in his grave. This also compromises the whole idea of sponsorship, and may discourage potential future donors from entrusting money to Trusts, as their managers may mishandle them. This would hurt good organizations by decreasing opportunities for grants.

Normally, eligibility for grants includes criteria that require the organization to be in good standing and able to carry out its purpose, and nonprofit organizations even compete for grants to be the best. But in this case, everything seems to be just the opposite, where the usurpers are being rewarded. Scholars have right to know what is going on, and thus C. Black rightly called for an explanation: “As my open letter to the managers of the Jacobsen Trust, I would like to ask them to publicly explain its policy and criteria for sponsorship and why it is sponsoring such a notorious organization” (Black 2018, 21). That was more than a year ago. Has there been any public response from the managers of the Jacobsen Trust? Is there any supervisory control over the Jacobsen Trust? They cannot continue to plead ignorance.

In light of this connection between the degenerated organization and the Jacobsen Trust, the article states: “The hijacking of the ISUD killed the constructive potential promoted by the progressive members and betrayed its declared purpose. The pseudo-ISUD... became a gift to the antidemocratic forces which hinder intercultural dialogue. It is not an independent scholarly association, but rather it is now similar to neoconservative think tanks sponsored by corporate money” (Black 2018, 23).

Having seized the organization, the junta made a claim to leadership in “universal dialogue” or “global dialogue”. But it turned out to be a fiasco. Initially, this organization

was called the International Society for Universalism (ISU) borrowing "universalism" from the name of the Polish journal *Dialogue and Universalism*. However, the vague notion "universalism" was confusing, so in 2001 the organization changed its name by adding the word "dialogue", thus it became the International Society for Universal Dialogue (ISUD). Although "dialogue" made the name more attractive, this did not eliminate the problem with "universalism"; rather it created an additional problem with the combination of two words: "universal dialogue". What "universal dialogue" means in the name of the organization remains unclear. Is this a subject of study by members of the organization? Far from it. Does ISUD pretend to organize a kind of "universal" conversation of all with everyone? Such an ambitious claim would be impossible and absurd. Moreover, this organization itself is small and unstable, mostly with sporadic members (from students and university instructors where a particular congress is held, most of whom after the congress discontinue their ties with the organization).

According to J. Pizzi, shortly after the coup and in the midst of the organization's crisis, when its members protested against the usurpation of power and demanded an investigation of the rigged election, Charles Brown managed to publish in the *Dialogue and Universalism* journal an issue under the headline "Universal Dialogue" with papers of his supporters: Kevin Brien, Martha Beck, Emilia Taysina, John Rensenbrink and Jean Campbell. Here is what J. Pizzi writes about their papers: "They were quite weak. Most of them were off-topic, did not say anything new, and failed to explain what they meant by 'universal dialogue'. In lieu of a theoretical analysis of the announced topic, it was instead reduced to ISUD, in a misleading way... They presented a false rosy picture of the organization, trying to convey messianic ideas that ISUD, under the current leadership, was a locus of 'universal dialogue' or 'world dialogue' nurturing a world consciousness as a kind of a vanguard of the solution to global problems. These authors tried to present themselves as self-styled leaders of 'universal dialogue'" (Pizzi 2017, 52).

C. Brown was moralizing about "the pluralist ethos of today's world" (Brown 2013). K. Brien, instead of a scholarly analysis of a subject, proudly presented a narcissistic self-aggrandizing advertising of his accomplishments in the form of an autobiographical meditation "about some milestones along my philosophical journey that concern universals, universal definitions, claims to universal moral principles, and universal dialogue" (Brien 2013). M. Beck's piece was claiming that "the ISUD can nurture the process of the development of reflective self-consciousness in the formation of an international culture, an emerging suprasystem" (Beck 2013). The gap between the reality of the organization in crisis and its glorified image was so abyssal that it ought to belong to a product of fiction. J. Rensenbrink's paper mostly reviewed the history of ontologies and argued that "dialogue emerges from being itself" (Rensenbrink 2013). It referred to dialogue in terms of substances and essences, ignoring an interpersonal character of dialogue and its ethical dimension. E. Taysina's paper "Semiotics of Globalization" was off-topic and didn't say anything in

substance about dialogue (Taysina 2013). J. Campbell in her paper about “global stewardship” of caring for the entire globe, she strangely attributed this unbelievably gigantic role to “ISUD as antidote to global despair”(Campbell 2013).

Based on the analysis of these papers, J. Pizzi concludes: “If that was all the authors were able to say about ‘universal dialogue’ it is not much at all... Behind an idle talk about ‘universalism’ and ‘dialogue’ there is nothing but sophistry... They are exploiting noble notions to act ignobly, thus disgracing the notions themselves. This grandiose ambitiousness juxtaposed with poor performance looked farcical. The abysmal gap between the pretensions of ‘universal dialogue’ and the paltry self-serving attitude of this parochial group is glaring, like a clown car in a circus”(Pizzi 2017, 53). J. Pizzi compared this self-revealing hoax with Hans Christian Andersen’s tale about the naked king.

After the coup in Greek Olympia in 2012, the desperate junta has tried to spread the corruptive influence of the pseudo-ISUD in other countries, such as Russia. The article of J. Pizzi contains a critical commentary on the publication of E. A. Taysina (Kazan State Power Engineering University, Russia) in *Vestnik of RPhS*, the journal of Russian Philosophical Society. He writes: “Emiliya Taysina published an article about the ‘Xth Congress’, ecstatically glorifying the current ISUD and its leadership while concealing the real crisis of the organization, and this half-truth was a deception. She further promoted the next ISUD congress and called others to participate and ‘to become the members of this international philosophical society in order to help to form universal world consciousness for the gradual construction of a decent world order’”(Pizzi 2017, 54). It is worth adding that, in this publication, E. Taysina also writes with pride about her election to the ISUD executive committee: “Emilia Taysina (Russia), ISUD Secretary General; Charles Brown (USA), Treasurer of the Society” (Taysina 2014b, 43).

Of note is another similar publication by E. Taysina “On the International Society for Universal Dialogue and its Constitution”, in *Vestnik of RPhS*, in which she gives a laudatory description of the “mission” of the ISUD: “It seeks to help generate universal world-consciousness towards the gradual emergence of a decent world order” (Taysina 2014a, 104). The “mission”? This ungrounded pathos has crossed a line. The paradox is that this idealistically grandiloquent piece about the ISUD was published in 2014, but it was silent about the reality of the coup in 2012, when all constitutional declarations were impudently trampled over. Instead of the imaginary Potemkin villages, it would have been much better to inform the reader about the real crisis of the ISUD after the coup during the IXth Congress in 2012, which E. Taysina had attended.

Then Charles Brown appeared on the pages of the *Vestnik of RPhS* with an advertisement for the next (illegitimate) ISUD congress headed by him. He called to “send proposals to Emilia Taysina” and to become members of ISUD and to participate in the congress, and attracted participants by offering money as “discounts and stipends to pay for travel” (Brown 2015, 94).

What is the impact of this lobbyism and advertisements on the misinformed reader? Readers have the right to rely on the veracity of publications. Let us imagine that if publications about the ISUD, in this case initiated by E. Taysina, objectively informed us about the state of the organization, then readers could make an informed and conscious choice whether or not to join its ranks. I would not like to have been among those who took the advertising at face value, believed the promise of handouts from the Jacobsen Trust, and were tempted to participate in the congress, but in fact were being used by the junta in its political farce and disappointed. I would not want my participation, my vote in the manipulated election, and my name to be used as alleged support for the hegemonic group in its attempts to impart legitimacy to its usurpation. A conscientious mind would never accept a role of a pawn in the junta’s political game for the perpetuation of its grip on power. Deception is the junta’s *modus operandi*, including through advertising its illegitimate congresses and entrapping misinformed participants. The experience of dealing with the ISUD has disappointed many and discouraged them from joining this type of organization and, moreover, created a distrust in “dialogue”. Members of the ISUD who witnessed the coup boycotted the illegitimate junta’s “Xth congress” in 2014, and broke up with the discredited organization in protest. Any self-respecting person conscious of his/her reputation would not deal with such a notorious organization.

The article by J. Pizzi criticizes E. Taysina’s deceptive publication about the ISUD and her collaborationism. At a time when members of the organization were protesting against the usurpation, E. Taysina was glorifying it and spreading the myths about the ISUD, lobbying and recruiting members in Russia. She was a newcomer to the ISUD, but apparently pleased the junta so much that she was rewarded with a *quid pro quo* promotion to become an executive committee member and the secretary general of the hijacked organization.

Comparing the actions of the junta members with their rhetoric, C. Black unmasks their hypocrisy: “Charles Brown, Kevin Brien and other junta members have already shown their nature... With this demagogy, they disgrace the noble notions of ‘democracy’ and ‘dialogue’, undermine the trust in intercultural scholarly dialogue, and instead *de facto* impose their hegemonic supremacism as a kind of ‘new normal’” (Black 2018, 23).

J. Pizzi and C. Black characterize as demagogical the messianic pretensions of the hijackers of ISUD for leadership in the “universal dialogue” and unmask the falsity of their entire pseudo-philosophizing as a deceptive sophistry. They analyses the degeneration of ISUD in the broad context of ideological and political processes and the hegemonic strategies “to sabotage any attempts to engage in true international dialogue as equals” (Black 2018, 23).

They conclude with the need to uphold the democratic and ethical principles of organizations: “In the theory and practice of dialogue, its adherents need to be able to critically separate genuine dialogue from deceptive sophistry. Honest scholars should boycott fake organizations, such as ISUD, and be united in solidarity in defending their ethical and

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democratic principles and mutually respectful relationships as equals within learned organizations” (Black 2018, 24).

The ideas of dialogue and other humanistic ideals should be defended and they must be regained for the humanistic transformation of society. Intercultural philosophy significantly contributes to theory and practice of this transformative dialogue.

Adherents of genuine dialogue are united by a sense of solidarity, co-responsibility, and altruistic service to the common good. This encourages us to be actively engaged in hoping for a better future, for the success of the joint efforts of philosophers and all people of goodwill in asserting the norms and practices of dialogical relationships in society and between nations toward peace and collaboration in solving social and global problems.

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