

The Hijacked “International Society for Universal Dialogue” Must Be Dissolved: Monologic Sophistry versus Dialogic Intercultural Philosophy

Jovino Pizzi¹

Abstract

The failure of the politics of “liberal multiculturalism” and the reactionary shift toward hegemonic ethnocentrism raise questions about the obstacles which hinder intercultural dialogue. This problem is examined through the case study of the degeneration of the so-called “International Society for Universal Dialogue” (ISUD), which has been hijacked by an authoritarian parochial group lusting after power and money. In protest, members of the organization demanded its dissolution, and many broke their ties with it. This article critically analyzes the tendentious publications of Emiliya A. Taysina and Charles S. Brown, which misrepresent and eulogize this notorious organization. The analysis shows the sophistry and the failure of the claims of this group to present the hijacked ISUD as the alleged locus of “universal dialogue”. It also shows the damage caused by their abuse of the concept of “dialogue” in pseudo-philosophical sophistry and political demagogy and the importance of distinguishing genuine dialogue from simulacra. The article highlights, as the positive alternative, the contribution of intercultural philosophy to the grounding and promotion of intercultural dialogue, as well as its transformative humanistic role in a culturally diverse and interconnected world.

Keywords: dialogue, intercultural philosophy, ethics, demagogy, hegemony, ISUD.

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Since the publication of my article “Parochial monologism under the guise of ‘universal dialogue’ (ISUD)” (Pizzi, 2017), I have received a number of comments from colleagues, sharing my concerns about the obstacles hindering intercultural dialogue and expressing solidarity with my efforts to defend genuine dialogue. I would like to thank all of them. Some of the comments were published in the journal *Topologik*, thus opening a discussion. They basically concurred with my exposé and deepened the discussion about the contrast between genuine dialogue, in both theory and practice, and simulacra, between the democratic and ethical norms of dialogical relationships and parochial authoritarian monologism masked as “universal dialogue”. They examined the hijacking of the ISUD within the broader contexts: of the reactionary shift in politics, including the failure of “liberal multiculturalism”; of an attack of ethnocentric supremacism and “exceptionalism” against the recognition of cultural diversity and of the “other” as equal; and of hegemonic policy as reflected in different levels of relationships, from the manner of treating fellow members of an organization to dominance over other nations.

In this article, as a continuation of this discussion, I would like to summarize its main points and share some additional thoughts regarding the subject and some new developments.

But first of all, I would like to express my condolences regarding the passing away of our colleague Professor Leonidas C. Bargeliotes on December 29, 2018. Αἰώνια ἡ μνήμη, memory eternal. He was an expert in Ancient Greek philosophy, the editor of *Skepsis*, and the president of Olympic Center for Philosophy and Culture. Being devoted to intercultural philosophical dialogue, he was the last legitimate president of ISUD, but he was unfairly and viciously attacked by the group that lusted after power and money, staging a coup and hijacking the organization.

One of the reasons I was provoked to write this article was reading Emily A. Taysina’s recently published essay “Notes on the International Society for Universal Dialogue” (Tajsin [Taysina] 2019), which misrepresents the history of ISUD in a twisted way. It is distorted at both extremes in glorifying the hijacked organization while also deliberately denying its crisis. She remains completely silent about the coup. On the contrary, she glorifies Charles S. Brown and his group who seized the organization. This contradiction between the crisis of the ISUD and the triumphant image projected by E. Taysina is particularly glaring as an obvious distortion. Attempts to deny this crisis are futile because the hijacking of the ISUD is well-known, and it has already been publicly exposed and condemned in a number of publications, which also criticized E. Taysina’s distorted presentations of this organization. Nevertheless, despite these well-known facts and the revelations of her falsehoods, she continues to spread this false image of the ISUD, the deliberate misrepresentation of which is tantamount to propaganda.

In the distorted mirror of E. Taysina’s “Notes”, the work of L. Bargeliotes and of like-minded adherents of dialogue, who contributed to the initially promising rise of the ISUD before it was ruined by the coup, is entirely ignored. In it, the history of the organization is arbitrary and

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selectively reduced to the past years, presenting a tendentious, saccharine picture of the ISUD under the control of the hegemonic group (which was nicknamed the “junta”). This authoritarian group presents themselves as self-styled leaders of “universal dialogue”, and in E. Taysina’s “Notes” it now claims its “contribution” to intercultural philosophy, thus feigning more simulacra and continuing their abuse of noble notions for ignoble purposes. The pretension of representing “universal dialogue” by those who actually demonstrated authoritarian monologism is misleading and, by its hypocrisy, disappointing many, thus undermining trust in intercultural philosophical dialogue.

Intercultural dialogue must be defended. Thus, the critical exposure of hegemonic monologism under the guise of “universal dialogue” and other simulacra remains pertinent. This critique and self-reflective learning will help to separate charlatanic sophistry from genuine dialogue, to avoid propaganda traps, and to regain trust in intercultural dialogue in theory and practice.

In this article, I will begin by reconstructing, based on publications, facts, and documented testimonies, the main points of the true history of the ISUD: the process of the rise and fall of this organization, the struggle of the adherents of dialogue against the authoritarian monologism of a hegemonic group, and the efforts to defend the whole idea of dialogue. This will serve to pay tribute to the memory of the late L. Bargeliotes and his contribution to intercultural dialogue. It will not only be a testimony in absolute defense of his reputation and of the cause of the genuine dialogue he was striving for, but also a condemnation of those slanderers who falsely and viciously attacked him and who damaged efforts toward intercultural dialogue. The struggle is for something which has value and is necessary to defend.

In the second part of the article, I will briefly outline the positive alternative, represented by intercultural philosophy and its transformational project, which justifies the struggle for the recognition of cultural diversity and the promotion of dialogical relationships in a multiverse world.

1. The ISUD has been hijacked and must be dissolved

This phrase is borrowed from the subject line of L. Bargeliotes’s December 19, 2014 open letter “ISUD is hijacked and must be dissolved” at the peak of the crisis of the organization. But in order to better understand what led to this dramatic situation, let us reconstruct “the rise and fall” of the ISUD, starting with how L. Bargeliotes described it in his multiple open letters to the membership.

L. Bargeliotes was a long-standing ISUD member, served as its Secretary General, organized two congresses (in 2003 and 2012) and published its proceedings in the journal *Skepsis*, and in 2010 he was elected as its president. However, he became aware of the underside

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of this organization. In reality, the ISUD is neither international nor dialogical, but is essentially controlled by a dominating group lusting after power and money. This is what L. Bargeliotes wrote in his abovementioned open letter to the members:

The promising name of organization attracted some enthusiasts, who took at face value its declared purposes and contributed to conferences and publications. But beneath an attractive surface there was a serious structural problem: it was controlled by a closed group of self-serving individuals interested in power and money, using the members from the other countries mainly for show, and perpetuating its monopoly of power. When the members from the other countries wanted to be independent and treated as equals in decision-making, they were targeted and discarded as the disposables. I know this very well from my personal experiences: after being elected as the President of ISUD in 2010, I became a target of vicious harassment by this group, which then staged the coup in 2012. The self-interested hegemonic attitude of this group was incompatible with the declared democratic principles and purpose of ISUD, and this contradiction led to the deepening crisis of organization and its lethal end.²

As he continued: “in the past the Society was actually taken over and controlled by a certain group from one country, with 4 presidents from the USA. It was far from being a truly international Society (rather in name only). During the 8th congress in Beijing in 2010, there was an attempt to change this pattern. My election by an overwhelming, 2/3 majority of the vote as the first president from Greece opened an opportunity for the transformation of the ISUD into a genuinely international scholarly association”. But the alternative candidate for president, Charles S. Brown (US), a member of the controlling group, who lost the election, organized a “destructive opposition”, attacking L. Bargeliotes and paralyzing the Board, aiming to take over and control the ISUD. They derailed the organization from its declared purpose and plunged it into the whirlpool of a power struggle.

“You will know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:16)

Dialogue has a moral underpinning which is grounded by both traditional dialogical philosophy and discourse ethics. This is stressed in the article by Tatiana Danilchenko and Vasily Gritsenko (2020). They referred to works of Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas, who underline the crucial importance of a sound moral grounding for dialogue and formulated the non-contingent presuppositions and normative principles of discourse ethics, including *truth*, *morally relevant rightness*, *truthfulness* or *sincerity*, *inclusiveness*, and *uncoercedness*. To this,

² Here and in the rest of this text, I quote excerpts from or refer to the open letters of ISUD members posted by email during the almost four-year-long public debate about the crisis of the organization.

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they oppose secretly deceptive “strategic actions” or violence. Dialogue participants must treat one another as equals and as having equal rights and co-responsibility, without any direct or implied force.

Although the “destructive opposition” claimed to favour “universal dialogue”, the gap between their words and actions was glaring and hypocritical. Morally good ends can be achieved only by moral means. Regardless of the claims, one of the indicators to discern between the practice of genuine dialogue and mere lip service to dialogue is the *means* that are used. From the very beginning of the conflict and through all stages of its development, one can clearly trace the contrasting patterns of behavior of the two sides. The contrast between them is shown in their means: the adherents of dialogue played by the rules, honoring democratic transparency and ethical norms, while the “destructive opposition” conspired in dark intrigues and slandered the honest scholars when staging their coup, and then in their smear campaign against the members who disagreed with their usurpation. Here is a contrast between the integrity and nobility of true philosophers, devoted to dialogue, and mediocre hypocritical narcissists, obsessed with power and money, Machiavellian in their intrigues, and abusers and disgracers of philosophy and dialogue.

The actions of L. Bargeliotes and other like-minded members were in conformity with the principles of dialogue, while the actions of C. Brown’s group were “the complete opposite of dialogue: that is anti-dialogue” (Danilchenko and Gritsenko 2020, 21). For instance, during the opening of the 9th Congress on June 22, 2012 in Olympia, L. Bargeliotes told participants about the obstacles that he and the Board had encountered from the attacks by C. Brown and the “destructive opposition”. The participants at the congress were shocked when they learned about this. “Keynoter George Anagnostopoulos said that it was terrible that L. Bargeliotes was the target of such intrigues. L. Bargeliotes replied, in a conciliatory tone, that he hoped that there would be opportunities to discuss, clarify and settle all the disputed issues at the current congress. But this ‘olive branch’ was rejected by C. Brown and his militant oppositionists, who came to the congress with the purpose of overthrowing a sitting president and taking control of the organization” (ibid., 14). In order to facilitate discussions, L. Bargeliotes organized meetings of the Board over two days when all ISUD activities and issues were discussed and approved, and he was unanimously nominated as the candidate for re-election for the presidency.

A fascist putsch in Olympia

Strikingly, whereas L. Bargeliotes and the hosts of the 9th Congress were focused on organizational matters and showing hospitality to the guests, “C. Brown and the oppositionists were busy undertaking a smear campaign against L. Bargeliotes and others, spreading totally

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false and defamatory rumors, and persuading the members to vote against L. Bargeliotes at the forthcoming election” (Danilchenko and Gritsenko 2020, 14).

The sharp contrast between the adherents of dialogue and the “destructive opposition” was evident during the General Assembly and election on June 26, 2012. President Bargeliotes reported that, despite many obstacles, the Society has achieved its goals in organizing the 9th Congress and publishing three volumes of Proceedings prior to the congress. The Society was in a good fiscal shape, having approximately \$50,000.00 USD left over, more than ever before, for the new cycle. Participants gave him a warm hand. The overall success opened an opportunity for the further growth of the organization, and president invited participants to discuss the plans for its future.

Surprisingly, however, in stark contradiction to those achievements, C. Brown and Kevin M. Brien (US) launched into a round of provocative questions and false accusations against L. Bargeliotes, which he categorically denied as totally false and a continuation of their campaign for undermining his presidency. Their supporters – Christopher Vasilopoulos (US), Jane Campbell (US), Martha Beck (US), Werner Krieglstein (US), and Mark Lucht (US) from the “destructive opposition” – also participated in this coordinated barrage of personal attacks against outgoing leadership with insults, below any civility, insinuating pseudo-problems and confusing the voting participants. The hostile atmosphere was not conducive to the fair election either. The voting participants could not make an informed choice, free of psychological pressure and manipulation. The electoral process was full of serious irregularities.

The basic democratic norms and the parliamentary procedures were grossly and deliberately violated by the opposition group. They blatantly disregarded L. Bargeliotes’ presiding authority of the Chair and de-facto usurped the administration of the meeting to rush through their agendas. This group dictated their own motions, the other members of the group seconded them, loudly shouted “yes”, and themselves declared their resolutions passed with claps, completely ignoring the other participants.

This group had shown their hegemonic exceptionalism and supremacist arrogance toward the participants from other countries as “peripheric”. The outrage about their bully and hegemonic attitude was expressed by Y.V. Satyanarayana in his September 25, 2012 open letter to the members:

During the process of elections there were violations of parliamentary procedures... This well-organized group from one country [the US] occupied ahead of time the seats with microphones at the conference table, thus the other participants were seating behind. This group monopolized not only the space of the General Assembly, but also 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 not only in a physical sense, having the seats left only back at the ‘periphery,’ but also in the participatory sense, because they were

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deprived of an equal opportunity for participation in the discussion and in the whole process of the meeting. The hegemony of one group made it impossible for the others to express their opinions, ask questions, or make their proposals. This was anti-democratic and simply disrespectful. It was shocking for many participants, who were very disappointed, and many of them ‘voted with their feet’ by leaving the room. The reputation of ISUD was severely damaged.

There were many irregularities in the electoral process that were caused by the oppositionists, including their violation of the constitution and their illegitimate nomination of “alternative” and ineligible candidates for the presidency and vice-presidency; their manipulation of the different sets of ballots; and the imposition of their agenda upon the bullied and dominated participants. Because the oppositionists intentionally created a chaotic and hostile atmosphere, the participants were so shocked that many of them left the meeting in protest without casting their votes. As an analogy with national elections, if independent observers from the European Union or United Nations had been monitoring that election and were aware of all the irregularities, they would have declared the election unfair and its results illegitimate and invalid.

Conspiracy: not in theory but in practice

Democracy requires openness and transparency, and professional ethics requires honesty, which is a condition for trust. The oppositionists trampled over these principles and plotted their intrigues in secrecy behind the scenes. The staged coup involved the conspiracy of C. Brown’s group in several incidents. One was the illegitimate nomination of C. Vasillopoulos, who was an invited guest speaker who then turned against his host, as an alternative candidate for the presidency. According to the ISUD customary law, only the Board nominates the candidates for president, but C. Vasillopoulos was nominated by the opposition group as their alternative candidate for president from the floor, bypassing the Board. L. Bargeliotis protested against the illegitimate nomination of C. Vasillopoulos and rigged election. Nevertheless, his nomination and election were rushed through and rubber stamped in the chaotic and manipulative atmosphere created by the opposition group which dominated the General Assembly.

In another incident, Andrew Fiala (US), who was previously elected as treasurer, suddenly resigned, which created difficulties for L. Bargeliotis’ presidency. The fact that Keping Wang (WANG, Keping – China), who was the vice president, surprisingly shied away from his expected nomination for the presidency, thus making it possible for the opposition to enthrone their protégé C. Vasillopoulos, also smacks of conspiracy. Most likely, they had made their own deals with the opposition, betraying the trust of the members who had elected them to serve the organization. Shortly after the coup, K. Brien revealed the scope of the conspiracy plot when, in his open e-mail dated July 6, 2012, he reported it as a military victory: “In this connection I am

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happy to be able to say that three former presidents... have already told me in writing that they would attend the next ISUD Congress (John Rensenbrink, Steve Hicks, and Al Anderson).” Indeed, John C. Rensenbrink and Steven V. Hicks openly endorsed the perpetrators of the coup and then were the keynoters at their illegitimate 11th Congress.

Many members characterized this as “a staged coup” and called the conspirators a “junta” and “usurpers”. Christopher Black put it more precisely as “a fascist putsch” (2018, 17).

The hijacking of the ISUD and demands for its dissolution

The sharp contrast between the adherents of dialogue and those who lusted for power and money was shown even more clearly after the coup. The former still tried to find an amicable solution to the crisis and rescue the organization. Several members from different countries, such as Eudora L. Pettigrew (US), Peter Dumbuya (Shri-Lanka/US), Y.V. Satyanarayana (India), Dilipkumar Mohanta (India), Charalampos Magoulas (Greece), and Barrie McCullough (Canada), among others, including myself, made a proposal to establish an impartial Independent Committee to investigate the irregularities of election and all disputed issues.

But the putschists were quick to reject this proposal. This only confirmed suspicions of a cover-up and exposed their fear of a truthful revelation about their coup and stolen election. They launched a smear campaign against those who voiced disagreement with the usurpation of power. C. Brown, in his October 21, 2012 open letter objected the establishment of an Independent Committee and on the same breath repeated his fabricated libel against L. Bargeliotes. Dilipkumar Mohanta from India in his October 5, 2012 open letter responded to K. Brien’s calumny: “Mr. Kevin Brien made personal attacks and character assassination of ISUD members... How can it be a society of universal dialogue if you have all colonial attitude towards the members of the developing countries?”

These further developments clearly showed the nature of this group. They demonstrated how far those seizing power through a fascist putsch can go (and how dangerous they can be). They acted like a parody of a military junta of a “banana republic”, trampling over democratic principles and ethical norms, abusing their power, cheating and misleading through their propaganda, bribing loyalists and slandering those who disagreed with their usurpation, and imposing their own agenda upon the membership.

The last straw for the membership, which escalated the crisis, was the usurpers’ arbitrary decision to hold their own “10th congress”. They knew that the members would never re-elect them and would vote them out. Thus, they took the ISUD’s name, organizational structure, and funds away from the members and abused them to stage their own illegitimate congress, outside of the membership, as a trick to avoid accountability and to perpetuate their usurpation of power. L. Bargeliotes on behalf of many likeminded members wrote in his June 8, 2014 open letter with

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the subject line “ISUD is hijacked”, a month before that congress, revealing its illegitimacy and ulterior purpose and warning about its consequences:

Acting as a junta... they hijacked the Society and are imposing their own agenda upon the members, tantamount to usurpation of power. Instead of first properly resolve the disputed issues regarding the rigged elections through an Independent Committee, and only after that normalization let those who will have legitimate authority to act on behalf of the Society, the usurpers are illegitimately organizing “their” congress and the election of “their guys”... Many members feel betrayed; they protested and were forced to break their relationship with this organization.

L. Bargeliotes further explained that “the abuse of the ISUD by the usurpers and its degeneration into their ‘pocket club’ is discrediting the whole purpose of a learned association and compromising the very idea of international dialogue”. He concluded: “Therefore, on behalf of the members of ISUD who are faithful to the principles of the international dialogue, but who cannot accept the trampling of these principles by those who hijacked the organization and degenerated it into something not worthy of its name, as the last resort, I request the *dissolution* of the ISUD”.

Despite the protests of the membership, the junta held their illegitimate congress, misleading the public with self-glorifying propaganda. It was a fraud. Their congress, with the glaring absence of the core members, was not a legitimate ISUD congress, but rather a political show. Most of the participants were not related to the ISUD, misinformed and used by the junta in the manipulated pseudo-election for them to “re-elect themselves”.

The junta has shown that they possess total control over the ISUD’s organizational structure and funds and are using them for their own interests and to perpetuate their grip on power, completely ignoring the membership. Their affront and arrogance in usurping power was a breaking point with the membership, who were indignant at this hijacking. The junta cynically showed their anti-democratic, dictatorial nature and grave abuse of power, thus discrediting themselves in the eyes of the members and alienating themselves from the society. In protest, most of the relatively long-standing members broke their ties with the notorious organization. That was the end of the ISUD.

L. Bargeliotes on behalf of the most of the memberships responded to this usurpation in his December 19, 2014 open letter “ISUD is hijacked and must be dissolved”. This long letter analytically summarized the history of the ISUD and the struggle between the dialogical and monological-authoritarian tendencies within it. He wrote:

The junta’s 10th pseudo-conference was just a continuation of the coup in Olympia through staging the elections in a similarly undemocratic and manipulative way... making it a fictitious

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rubber-stamping of their usurpation: Charles Brown as “treasurer”, and Emilyya Tajsina as “general secretary”... This was not election in a true sense, but rather a dirty political trick, used by usurpers to cosmetically “legitimize” their power and perpetuate control over the organization. It was a planned fraud. But let me make it clear: the original illegitimacy of the organizers of this politically motivated pseudo-conference and staged election, boycotted by the vast majority of the relatively long standing ISUD members, makes their outcome illegitimate.

The pseudo-ISUD should rather be known as “Intrigues, Slander, Usurpation, and Deception.” L. Bargeliotes explained the reasons for the dissolution of the ISUD, because it became “a body without soul, an empty shell for entrenched usurpers, and it lost justification for existence”. The hijacking creates a dangerous precedent and it “discredits the whole idea of the voluntary scholarly association devoted to the international philosophical dialogue. This is unacceptable in the learned societies and in the eyes of international scholarly community”. He concludes: “The pseudo-ISUD should not obfuscate the idea of dialogue and substitute it by spurious demagogy, misleading and disappointing those who are genuinely interested in scholarly dialogue... This organization actually ceased to be ISUD anymore, it is unable to carry out its purposes and therefore needs to be formally dissolved. The latest development with the illegitimate ‘10th conference’ in which the junta ‘re-elected themselves’, perpetuating its usurpation, confirmed *the urgent need of its dissolution.*”

If this letter were read in a courtroom, the jury would be convinced of its truth, and the verdict would be the condemnation of the hijackers and the dissolution of the broken organization.

“Universal dialogue” through the judicial system

The junta continued to operate outside of moral and even legal boundaries. They unleashed a libelous “war of words” against the membership, which was not only a violation of ethics and the rules governing organizations but also a breach of the law. This shows how dangerous the attitudes of those who usurp power through a coup and then use it for a vendetta can be.

Charles Brown and his proxy Kevin Brien spread defamatory letters, repeating fabricated allegations that had already been refuted. Because they used the ISUD as a megaphone for defamation, like in a totalitarian regime, it was impossible to obtain justice; the last resort for stopping the calumniators’ slandering was the judicial system. K. Brien deceptively used his college’s letterheaded paper for his libelous letters, and in his aspersions, he broke the law. The former president brought the calumniator to justice and filed a lawsuit for defamation in Baltimore, Maryland. K. Brien had no leg to stand on, and after a year-long process, facing a lawsuit for defamation, he was forced to publicly apologize to his college for his illegitimate use of their letterhead in his libelous letters and to officially retract his false statements, and on

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February 6, 2016 to notify all ISUD members about this. On April 19, 2016 the attorney at law from Baltimore sent the official letter to the ISUD members confirming that all allegations were groundless and untrue and that they were “categorically and absolutely rejected, in the strongest possible terms”.

The defamatory lie the putschists had used during and after the coup had been unmasked and legally refuted, reconfirming their illegitimacy. Now, the only means of “universal dialogue” is through the judicial system. That was the legal and moral victory of the former president as well as of all honest members of organization who had struggled for truth and justice.

The pseudo-ISUD based on corporate money and self-glorifying propaganda

The authors of publications about the ISUD have highlighted the “secret” of how the broken organization, which should have been dissolved a long time ago, still exists. The existence of the pseudo-ISUD is artificially maintained, similarly to a life support machine, by sponsors’ money and self-glorifying propaganda.

Money is key to understanding the hijacking of the ISUD, and the alliance of corporate money and hegemonic ideology is well-known. Christopher Black, using the key investigative principle “follow the money”, found out that the ISUD is sponsored by the so-called “Jens Jacobsen Trust” (Colin Borman, Director). This money passes into the hands of those who control the organization, namely Charles Brown as “president” and Kevin Brien as “treasurer”. With this money, the junta can ignore the members and stage their illegitimate congresses and re-elect themselves, and can also use it as corruptive leverage for their manipulative influence and reward loyalists and collaborationism. C. Black publicly accused the Jacobsen Trust of complicity with the junta: “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” (2018, 21). But the managers never responded because, apparently, they were unable to provide a reasonable explanation. As such, *qui tacet consentire videtur*: they thereby admit their complicity and thus share the blame for the damage inflicted by the hijackers in undermining learned associations and the very idea of dialogue.

Self-glorifying propaganda is the main “argument” of the pseudo-ISUD. The junta try hard to put a good face on the ugly nature of the hijacked and degenerated organization. They silenced the reality of the crisis and portrayed a false picture of the ISUD, megalomaniacally mispresenting their parochial group as a locus of “world dialogue”. They also try to attract new members by promising them financial support for participation at their congresses.

The character of this propaganda is evidenced in the role of Emilia A. Taysina (Kazan State Power Engineering University, Russia) who is particularly active in spreading saccharine myths about the pseudo-ISUD and lobbying people to join it in her publications and e-mails. This is

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also an example of how the corruptive junta recruits collaborationists. This is what L. Bargeliotes wrote about this in his December 19, 2014 open letter: “Emilya Taysina was a new member, since 2012, and nobody knew her... Her surprising emergence as ‘secretary general’... the way to power through opportunistic servility to junta as an instrument of their *politikē* of intrigues. It is not a very honourable role to be usurpers’ Trojan horse of pseudo-ISUD. Sharing their self-serving interests also means sharing blame for damage to the organization and to the ideas of dialogue caused by their cynical abuse and profanation by those who hijacked and destroyed ISUD”.

E. Taysina was the first who attacked L. Bargeliotes after his open letter demanding the dissolution of the ISUD. In her incoherent and unsubstantiated letter, she zealously defended the usurpers and their congress, but that backfired as it revealed shameful sophistry. L. Bargeliotes in his December 27, 2014 open letter convincingly responded to her in an intelligent and respectful manner, pointing out her “logical fallacy of *ignorantio elenchi*, known as the ‘red herring’”, a fallacy of “false comparison”, and other distortions, wrongly equating “international dialogue” with the current “ISUD”.

At a time when the adherents of dialogue were protesting against the usurpation and were trying to resolve the crisis of the organization in a fair manner, E. Taysina eulogized the putschists. She published an article about the “10th congress”, ecstatically glorifying the pseudo-ISUD and its leadership while concealing the real crisis of the organization, and this half-truth was a deception (Taysina, 2014b). Also of note is a similar publication by E. Taysina in which she gives a laudatory description of the “mission” of the ISUD, which is rather a Potemkin village (Taysina, 2014a). “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” (.Dzhokhadze, 2019, 26).

The most recent example of ISUD propaganda is E. Taysina’s essay “Notes on the International Society for Universal Dialogue”, in which she presented the junta’s version of the history of the organization (Tajsin [Taysina] 2019). This time she glorifies the junta’s illegitimate “11th congress”, in which they again re-elected themselves: Charles Brown became “president” and Kevin Brien became “treasurer” (a fox guarding the henhouse).

In her version “this double distortion of the history of the ISUD is just a continuation of putschists’ propaganda, glorifying their hijacking of the organization and defaming the honest adherents of dialogue” (Danilchenko and Gritsenko, 2020, 18).

These distortions remind us of the paradoxical world of George Orwell’s novel *1984*, where a clerk in the Records Department of the Ministry of Truth wiped any inconvenient truth from the public record by sending the documents into “the memory hole”. E. Taysina threw into “the memory hole” the putsch in 2012 and the subsequent struggle within the organization between adherents of dialogue and usurpers. Similarly to Orwellian doublespeak, the crisis is

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misrepresented as a “triumph”, authoritarianism is a “democratic culture”, the lust for power and money is “values and ideals”, defamatory lies are “ethics”, and the junta’s parochial monologism is “universal dialogue”. But unlike the Orwellian ironic criticism of dystopia, E. Taysina presents her version of history with a straight face, trying to convince others of the lie she herself knows is not true. For a candid mind, it is hard to understand what the reward is for a person to enmesh herself in fabricating this propaganda to dupe the public at the price of losing her own personal and professional reputation.

Any authoritarian history revolves around an authoritarian character, a “Big Brother” (even if he is small-fry). In E. Taysina’s version of history, the central character is Charles Brown, the “boss” for whose need for glorification all this servile fiction is cooked up. “The content and ideas of her essay are exhausted by the abundant quotations of C. Brown, whose trivial sophisms are presented by E. Taysina with reverence and adulation as she exalts the idle talk of a parochial demagog. He poses as a supporter of ‘democratic culture’, of ‘authentic public moral discourse’, of ‘collectively imagin[ing] a better future’, and even flirts with leftist parlance, but this is all expressed in Orwellian doublespeak and de facto sides with hegemonic supremacism as a kind of ‘new normal’” (Danilchenko and Gritsenko 2020, 18).

The junta’s failed flirtation with “universal dialogue” and “intercultural philosophy”

E. Taysina continued pedaling the junta’s worn-out dogma “universalism” and “universal dialogue” and related this to C. Brown’s mentioning in passing the desiderata of “a *new form* of universalism—one that began and ended in dialogue” (Brown, *D&U* 2019 (1):14 cited Tajsin [Taysina] 2019, 247). But C. Brown failed to provide any explanation of what he meant by this. Instead, this is a continuation of the juggling of “universal dialogue” through a reshuffling of the terms “universalism” and “dialogue”, insinuating only an empty signifier that is void of meaning.

The junta’s failed attempts to present themselves as self-styled leaders of “universal dialogue” and to monopolize the idea of “dialogue” has already been exposed by critics. Junta made this attempt shortly after the coup in 2012, when C. Brown published in the journal *Dialogue and Universalism* (2013, n. 3) under the headline “Universal Dialogue” the papers of his supporters: Kevin M. Brien, John C. Rensenbrink, Emilia A. Taysina, Jean Campbell, and Martha Beck. As I wrote somewhere, their papers are mostly off-topic and fail to explain what they mean by “universal dialogue”, and they mainly glorify the organization under the junta’s rule and its allegedly messianic role as a locus of “universal dialogue”. But this is just a fig leaf, covering the naked non-truth of mystification. “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).

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Having failed to justify junta’s pretensions to “universal dialogue”, E. Taysina claims in her “Notes” that after the putsch in Olympia “the ISUD Congresses speak of the great contribution of members of society to the development of intercultural philosophy” (Tajsin [Taysina] 2019, 250). But her only argument for this is the lectures and speeches given at the congresses. Upon “gleaning” the program materials, as she suggested, one can see a mixed bag of different topics, from the digital revolution and globalization to gender issues and ecology, but no intercultural philosophy at all. None of the congresses were on a theme related to intercultural philosophy, nor were there papers related to it. Just like the ISUD having members from different countries does not mean it is truly international, mentioning some papers in a comparison of authors from different countries does not mean developing intercultural philosophy. Evidently, the junta’s claim is unsubstantiated and invalid. As in the case of juggling the terms “universal” and “dialogue”, the claim of the ISUD’s “great contribution ... to the development of intercultural philosophy” is merely a hollow gesture, attributing non-existent merit to themselves. They pretend to be self-styled pundits of “universal dialogue” and to have an epistemological privilege of knowing what “universal”, “dialogue”, and “intercultural philosophy” are, “but their parochial monologism protrudes like the ass’s ears of Midas” (Danilchenko and Gritsenko, 2020, 18).

For anyone who is familiar with the reality of the ISUD, it is obvious that the hijacked organization and the junta’s ideology and attitude are simply incommensurable with intercultural philosophy and are rather antithetical to it. C. Brown, K. Brien and other members of the junta have already shown their authoritarian nature, hegemonic exceptionalism, and intolerance toward “others”, thus any of their pronouncements about interculturality and dialogue just sound hypocritical. Actions speak louder than words: “Their idle talk... is all worth less than nothing. With this demagoguery, 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). The devil speaks from the pulpit.

Now the junta is making their claim regarding intercultural philosophy. But at best, the junta mimics worn-out “liberal multiculturalism” in its failed version. The politics of liberal multiculturalism hijacked popular ideas of diversity, but it only paid lip service to minority cultures and later on, with a neoconservative political shift, it betrayed them, turning toward homogenizing hegemonic integration. The junta’s views rotate within the framework of the universalistic-hegemonic version of that failed liberal multiculturalism.

The junta is unable to offer anything new and valid: their stance presumes the perpetuation of the existing neoliberal-neoconservative regime and world order, only cosmetically embellished by “universal dialogue” or lip service to liberal multiculturalism while preserving the hegemonic structure and ideology. To this is simply added a mention in passing as a social ideal and a declared goal of the ISUD “to promote in theory and in practice the ideals of universality as the most effective means of gradually realizing a decent, peaceful and fair world order” (Tajsin

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[Taysina] 2019, 246). The junta’s idea of “universality” is hegemonic, meaning a universalized hegemony, and they have already shown what this means in practice. The result of their demagoguery and usurpation has been proven to be disastrous, though fortunately limited in scale, ruining only one organization. But it is sufficiently demonstrative to show that this kind of theory and practice must be rejected to avoid such disasters on a larger scale.

This study of the hijacking of the organization shows the attitude of those “without a sense of justice” (Cortina 1998, 67), for whom ends justify means and might makes right. They place their selfish personal interests and their lust of power and money above the interests of the others and cynically disregard the public interests, substituting them by the interests “of the mafias, of group solidarity, of the *cosa nostra*, which sows almost insurmountable obstacles to any social justice project” (ibid., 14). This malicious pact spreads a hostile atmosphere through the tricks and intrigues of “mafia procedures of sabotage” that do not go beyond the exchange of rewards and favors between the group members. To this is opposed the assertion of the importance of a public ethics, local and global, which is good and useful for the world order.

After the scandal of the hijacking of the ISUD, it should have been dissolved, as was demanded by the membership and for the reasons stated in L. Bargeliotis’s open letters of June 8 and December 19, 2014. The junta’s refusal only aggravated this shocking situation and made it increasingly pathological when they used the organization to attack its members, and honest scholars were forced to seek justice and protection from these defamatory attacks in the judicial system.

The hijackers are parasitizing on the name and funds of the organization, exploiting the people’s interests in dialogue, posing as its promoters, misleading them through their propaganda, and trying to attract those who are interested in this theme, trapping and disappointing them as a result, and thus creating mistrust and damaging international philosophical dialogue.

Although the usurpers have kept their grip on power, the disgraceful stigma of illegitimacy remains indelible on them and on all pseudo-congresses organized by them. They have stolen the organization from the membership and are using it as their “private club” for their own purposes. Just as laundering stolen money does not make it legal, so the cosmetic reshuffling of the Board in farcical “elections” while the junta keeps its totalitarian control with Charles Brown as the “power behind the throne” does not make them or the hijacked ISUD legitimate.

The demand for the dissolution of the pseudo-ISUD remains relevant. As I have written before, “The ISUD, incorporated in the State of Maine, is governed by the Maine Nonprofit Corporation Act, which has provisions for the removal of officers engaged in dishonest conduct or gross abuse of authority, and for dissolution of the organization if it does not carry out its purposes” (Pizzi 2017, 57). This has also been stressed by other authors: “The current pseudo-ISUD is illegitimate and anti-dialogical, and it is incompatible with the principles of the FISP

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and is compromising its reputation... The FISP has provisions for the exclusion of members, and the removal of this notorious simulacrum is well overdue” (Danilchenko and Gritsenko, 2020, 21).

Intercultural dialogue versus hegemonic monologic unilateralism

Historically, the underside of modernity was full of violence and inhumanities, including slavery, the shadows of which accompanied the history of modern and contemporary Western thought. This process has been possible with the consent of associations and groups that have ensured a type of toxic consensus, in order to guarantee domination and exploitation and, in this way, eliminate interculturality and impose a *mono-cultural* world system (Pizzi 2016, 187).

The participants of this discussion in *Topologik* see the hijacking of the ISUD as a phenomenon through which we can see broader problems of the obstacles hindering dialogue. They discern the meaning of the putsch and its consequences correctly. The hijacked pseudo-ISUD has become a megaphone of the authoritarian junta and a gift to the anti-democratic forces that hinder intercultural dialogue: “It is not an independent scholarly association, but rather it is now similar to neoconservative think tanks sponsored by corporate money and promoting their ideologies” (Black 2018, 23).

Efforts to promote intercultural dialogue, in theory and in practice, are taking place within and are influenced by the more general struggle between dialogic and monologic tendencies in the realms of politics and ideologies. Obstacles to dialogue are created by the monologic mindsets of self-seeking individuals, authoritarian power, supremacist exceptionalism, and fundamentalism. There are also policies obstructing dialogue that are interwoven in general policies, thwarting ideas and movements toward genuine democratic relationships within societies and among nations.

Hegemonic domination can show itself at all levels – from inside organizations to among nations. The hegemonic power operates by *divide et impera* and does not want normal dialogical relationships that unite people in solidarity and in a struggle for liberation. Thus, the hegemonic power tries to destroy learned dialogical associations by infiltrating them, eroding them from the inside, and degenerating them into megaphones for hegemonic corporate ideology and politics. As C. Black writes: “It struck me that the individuals who took over the learned society were from the United States and acted in the bullying manner... The consequence of their assault on the Society and its purpose indicates that the reason behind it was to sabotage any attempts to engage in true international dialogue as equals” (2018, 23). The ISUD became one such target in the “culture wars” wedged by the global empire against the unique cultures of minorities and decolonized nations and against emerging philosophies rooted in these cultures with their liberational potential.

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Hegemonic policy is driving toward the privatization of non-governmental organizations and their subjugation to US interests. Learned associations that promote intercultural dialogue are viewed as a challenge by the forces interested in the preservation of hegemonic monologic unilateralism and the status quo of domination. The ideas of intercultural dialogue and organizations promoting it have become the targets of those political-ideological forces: “The result is the effective elimination of this society [ISUD], its suppression by other means. This technique of infiltrating organizations and world bodies whose stated purpose is justice, protection of human rights or dialogue, is seen in the control the United States influences even in various United Nations bodies a prime example being the Human Rights Council. Instead of openly destroying these bodies they take them over as if by a virus and then use their structures and reputations for the benefit of its geo-strategic interests” (Black 2018, 23-24).

2. Intercultural philosophy for intercultural dialogue

In brief, intercultural philosophy emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s as an alternative to the traditionally Eurocentric or Western-centric view of philosophy and as a response to the growing presence of Latin American, African and other culturally-rooted philosophies. Intercultural philosophy substantiates the cultural embeddedness of philosophy, the value of the diversity of cultures and the need for their mutually beneficial dialogue (Mall, 2000; Wimmer 1998).

The baselessness of the pretensions of the pseudo-ISUD to its “contribution to intercultural philosophy” and intercultural dialogue is even more evident when compared to the existing tradition of intercultural philosophy. Accordingly, I would like to take a brief look at genuine intercultural philosophy.

The intercultural transformation of philosophy and society

Two main paradigms of interculturality can be distinguished: one is the “intercultural-liberation paradigm” developed by Raúl Fonet-Betancourt; the other is Raimon Panikkar’s “intercultural-interreligious paradigm” (Vallescar 2000). Fonet-Betancourt’s conception of intercultural philosophy has its roots in Latin American philosophy of liberation and articulates its ethical-political themes. He developed the project of the intercultural transformation of philosophy. It indicates profound changes in the theoretical framework for understanding philosophical questions in light of the fundamental role of culture in the development of philosophy. A philosophy that accepts intercultural dialogue as a context of its reflection enters into a process of transformation that requires a new understanding of philosophy, its methods, its

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history, and its role in society. It leads to a decisive step from a “monocultural” model of philosophy to an “intercultural” model (Fornet 2001, 29-32).

The conception of intercultural philosophy is applied by Fornet-Betancourt more specifically to the further transformation and development of Latin American philosophy. His approach to intercultural philosophy is a combination of theory and practice. It is not just a set of ideas, but a program of transformation of philosophy and society.

In his conception of intercultural philosophy, Fornet-Betancourt provides an explanation of the notions “philosophy” and “interculturality”. Philosophy had become a prisoner of the Western tradition; thus the task is to free it and open it to other traditions. The understanding of philosophy as a contextual task goes beyond the reduction of philosophy to a discipline, to free it from the interests implicit in the dominant institutionalized academic formation, thus making it possible to meet it in many different places and in an irreducible multiplicity of forms of expression – that is “de-philosophize philosophy” (Fornet 2001, 266-269; 2009, 643). “And this does not only mean breaking the monologue that philosophy maintains”, he writes, but “in addition to that necessary de-monologization this implies freeing it from the limits imposed by academic institutionalization according to the canon of the hegemonic tradition” (ibid.,644).

His approach takes the Eurocentric monoculturality of the predominant understanding of philosophy and opposes it to contextual philosophies with diverse cultural matrices. Philosophy should be understood as contextual knowledge, a knowledge of realities, which is fundamentally practical, articulated in alternative and liberating social movements, and is thereby integrated into a project of realization of those desirable alternative realities, and thus intervening in the course of history.

In applying the conception of the intercultural transformation of philosophy to Latin America, Fornet-Betancourt points out the need for opening philosophy to indigenous and Afro-American traditions, to their symbolic universes, their imaginaries, their memories, and their rites, and to approach it not as an object of study but as a living word of subjects with whom it is necessary to learn and study together. This transformation of philosophy comes from the demands of intercultural dialogue. Intercultural dialogue breaks with monolingual parochiality. For that Fornet-Betancourt proposes the intercultural transformation of reason, that is not a monolingual and parochial reason, but rather the consideration of a rationality from a process of inter-contextual and intercultural relationships. Its goal is to achieve “a philosophy that is the house in which all the peoples and cultures of the continent can freely articulate their memory and their word as living subjects” (Fornet 2009, 645).

Regarding the conception of “interculturality”, Fornet-Betancourt views it as a practical and theoretical exercise of life and an interpretation of one’s own culture. Interculturality is not limited to strictly rational or philosophical aspects; it also has a practical dimension. Interculturality is a quality that any person and any culture can obtain from a concrete life

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practice in which their relationship with the other is cultivated by rational communication through concepts and based on an experience, on letting ourselves be "touched" by the other in our daily lives.

Fornet-Betancourt offers a relational conception of interculturality as a relationship between people: it is a quality that we experience in our everyday life in the practical sense in our contacts with the other, when we share our life and our history with the other. There is, therefore, a practical knowledge of interculturality "which we need to cultivate in a reflective way, and with a plan to organize our cultures alternatively from it, so that interculturality becomes an active quality in all our cultures" (2009, 640).

He also stresses that interculturality or intercultural dialogue is not something given, but rather a need, a task, or a program that is yet to be done. Pursuing it would reveal the variety and diversity of America. This is necessary for two interrelated reasons: one is to undo the consequences of colonialism and to stop the colonization of humanity by today's hegemonic civilization, with its oppression and exclusion of the "other". The intercultural dialogue represents an alternative by which to correct injustices and to redirect history along paths of coexistence in solidarity. Work for intercultural dialogue in Latin America must be guided by the principles of liberation and justice: "The need for intercultural dialogue in Latin America is presented with a double dimension of normative obligation: to repair the guilt for the victims of colonialism and to promote a new just order, recognizing the other in his/her dignity and collaborating in the enterprise of his/her liberation" (Fornet 2009, 643).

The imperative of intercultural dialogue has its challenges. It requires the full-fledged development of minority cultures, such as those of indigenous peoples and African descendants in America. All of this, Fornet-Betancourt stresses, should not be imposed from the top by the governing elites but decided by the peoples themselves at the grassroots level. The development of intercultural dialogue is viewed as an indispensable means for the true recognition of the "other" and for a new order of dialogic cultural interrelations. This implies an urgent need to correct the asymmetry in current power structures and to create equal conditions for the full development of all cultures.

In combining theory and praxis, Fornet-Betancourt highlights the practical utility of an interculturally transformed philosophy. Beyond theoretical matters, it points to a new way of exercising the philosophical task for the benefit of the improvement of social and cultural conditions for human beings. An interculturally transformed philosophy helps us to understand the value of cultural diversity. Cultural differences and their corresponding ways of life are enriching our lives. This understanding of cultural differences is important for the concrete praxis of tolerance and pluralism. An interculturally transformed philosophy is the contribution to a policy that seeks to implement the right of peoples not only to have their own worldviews but also to enjoy their own ways of living.

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Intercultural philosophy fulfills its role in the critique of the imperial ideology of homogenizing globalization of neoliberalism with its “model” of democracy and culture. It contributes to the search for alternatives to hegemonic globalization, offering a different conception of the history of all peoples with their differences and with appreciation of their memories – that is, not a linear history, reduced to progress in its Western sense, but a multiverse history, with many possible perspectives and futures. This vision constitutes, according to Fernet-Betancourt, an important ingredient for a social praxis aiming at “a multiverse world built from below as a fabric of solidarity between cultures that communicate without losing their contextual roots” (Fernet 2009, 646).

The intercultural transformation of philosophy states principles of changes in philosophy, which are then further expanded and applied in intercultural dialogue and dialogical relationships with the other at all levels: intersubjective, social, intercultural, interreligious, political, and international. The ideas of plurality, of the recognition of the other, of grassroots political initiatives such as self-government, of the genuine democratization of society – all this resonates with and is elaborated in social and political theories.

The spiritual dimension of intercultural dialogue

Intercultural philosophy is distinguished by its spiritual dimension. This was elaborated by Raimon Panikkar, who bridged both intercultural and interreligious dialogues. He stressed that the urgent task was “to restore or install the dialogical dialogue in human relations among individuals, families, groups, societies, nations, and cultures” (Panikkar 1999, 32).

Fernet-Betancourt articulates the spiritual dimension of intercultural dialogue. He examines the relationship between philosophy and spirituality from the cultural experience of Latin America, which includes, along with secular cultures, Christian, Indigenous and Afro-American cultures and religions. Latin American philosophy asserts cultural and spiritual values as opposed to positivism and “instrumental rationality”, which accompanied capitalist exploitation and hegemonic domination: its aim is “to develop a culture that can ultimately respond to the question of man’s ultimate destiny, that is, to the question of the meaning of life and of history” (Fernet 2016, 49). The question of spirituality or religiosity is taken up as a question of the reconnection of human beings with the Absolute, that is, of the foundational experience that enables man to feel himself as the authentic one, the “new man”. This topic is related to the theme of commitment to the transformation of the world. Fernet-Betancourt writes about the main result and the perspective of the spiritual turn carried out by Latin American philosophy: “Philosophy must recognize in spirituality the dimension of the spirit that not only

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potentiates it ‘theoretically,’ to gain fuller knowledge, but also motivates it ‘practically,’ to act ‘well’ by doing good in the world” (ibid., 62).

The intercultural transformation of philosophy, as carried out in Latin American philosophy and culture, served as an example for emerging philosophies in other regions, such as Latino/a philosophy and African-American philosophies in the United States and African philosophy, helping them, on the one hand, to develop their own culturally embedded thought and, on the other, to be in dialogue with other philosophical currents and elaborate their intercultural dimensions. The ideas of cultural and social-political transformation, as well as of regaining spiritual traditions, are very relevant for people striving for their liberation.

The theoretical development of intercultural philosophy is accompanied and stimulated by practical-organizational efforts in promoting intercultural philosophical dialogue. Since 1989, Fernet-Betancourt has organized nineteen biannual International Seminars of the North-South Dialogue Program. Since 1995, he has coordinated the biannual International Congresses of Intercultural Philosophy; thirteen have taken place so far in different local contexts in Asia, Europe, and Latin America. Their main intention is to transform philosophy into a dialogue with the cultural diversity of humanity and, in this way, lay the foundation for a more just and supportive coexistence in cultural diversity. The variety of locations of the congresses facilitates intercultural dialogue and openness toward new contextual worlds of life, turning them into meeting places for different cultures and centers of debate on the great questions of humanity. An important stage in the development of intercultural philosophical dialogue was the establishment of the International School for Intercultural Philosophy (EIFI). It became a permanent center for seminars, publications, and for the coordination of various activities for promoting intercultural dialogue.

This intercultural dialogue is also actively promoted through various publications. *Concordia: International Journal of Philosophy*, of which Fernet-Betancourt is Editor, has been published since 1982 and contributes to the development of philosophy from an intercultural perspective. *Concordia* has also published a series of monographs. Fernet-Betancourt is also the Editor of the series “Traditions of Thought in Dialogue: Studies for Liberation and Interculturality”, publishing the papers of International Congresses of Intercultural Philosophy and other materials on intercultural dialogue. Of note is the volume titled *Zur Geschichte und Entwicklung der Interkulturellen Philosophie* (Fernet 2015), which provides a panoramic picture of the genesis and development of Intercultural Philosophy in Africa, Arab world, Asia, Europe, Latin America, the United States and Canada. Through these publications, the international philosophical community and those interested in the subject are informed about the development of intercultural philosophy.

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Concluding Remarks

Participants in this ongoing discussion in *Topologik* have highlighted the importance of intercultural dialogue at a time when the world is facing a twofold threat: it is under pressure from homogenizing hegemonic globalization and is being torn apart by ultra-nationalistic fragmentation. Participants have expressed grave concern about the many obstacles to intercultural dialogue: autocratic regimes, ideological fundamentalism, and the monologic sophistry of “authoritarian personalities” posing as zealous leaders of “universal dialogue”. They have suggested some remedies for preventing vicious power struggles and authoritarian hijackings of organizations, including learned associations. Philosophers and the reasoning public should be aware of this threat and counter it, first of all, by separating genuine dialogue from simulacra. Of the many lessons to be learned from the case of the hijacked ISUD, perhaps the most important is the eye-opening liberation from the previous illusions of careless complacency regarding conditions for dialogue and an understanding of the bitter truth that, in a conflicted world, intercultural dialogue is inevitably exposed to and drawn into the struggle of ideas related to certain policies and the vested interests behind them.

An analysis of the crisis of the hijacked ISUD and its broader political-ideological context reveals a cluster of obstacles to dialogue. This may break some illusions, but this is no reason to be discouraged and give up; instead, it gives us a better understanding of what hinders dialogue and what needs to be done to remove these obstacles and create favorable conditions for dialogical relationships at various levels: intersubjective, social, and intercultural.

Since the development of dialogical relationships depends to a large degree on social conditions, intercultural philosophy, which theoretically grounds the struggle for the recognition of cultural diversity and dialogue, plays an important transformative role in enlightening people, forming intercultural and global consciousness and solidarity, and inspiring a creative search for positive alternatives for society and world order.

Intercultural philosophy is underpinned by humanistic ideas of the liberation and transformation of society, an alternative to the existing regimes. In today’s world, there is a growing need to find solutions and positive alternatives to the manifold global and social problems for a more humane world. Intercultural philosophy thus becomes more significant in its transformative potential for philosophy and society. It provides the basis for critical evaluations of the existing order (including in the realms of ideas and cultures) and is an important source of ideas and inspiration for positive alternatives. This gives hope to those who are striving for dialogical relationships in a more peaceful, just, and humane world.

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