

## **Teaching Philosophy in Asian Contexts (TEPAC):**

### **A Conference to Evaluate the Curricula**

Dec. 1 - 4 , 2003, Piliyandala , Sri Lanka

### **CALL FOR PAPERS**

#### **Background**

In 1999 the Institute of Missiology decided to use its contacts with philosophers throughout the world to conduct a world-wide inquiry about the situation of philosophy at the end of the 20th century. The results were published in "*Quo Vadis, Philosophie? Antworten der Philosophen. Dokumentation einer Weltumfrage*" which documents the responses of 103 philosophers. This book represents an intercultural dialogue and provoked a critical evaluation of the present state of philosophy, especially in terms of a perceived lack of intercultural, contextual or, indeed, gender<sup>1</sup> perspectives.

One of the conclusions of this critical reflection by philosophers from each continent was the need to evaluate present academic curricula of philosophy. The basic questions were: What do we teach and why? For - or to - whom do we teach? The ultimate purpose of the evaluation is to transform philosophy into an inter-cultural and inter-contextual process.

At an international consultation on "Academic Curricula of Philosophy and Theology" in June 2001, organized by the Institute of Missiology Aachen (MWI), Germany, about 20 philosophers from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America reflected on the present situation of philosophy in relation to academic curricula of philosophy. Significant at the consultation was that the Asian, African and Latin American groups decided to have continental consultations to analyse their individual contexts more profoundly.

#### **A Conference to Evaluate Curricula of Philosophy in Asia (South Asia and Middle East)**

##### **Date and Venue**

TEPAC will be held from Dec. 1 - 4, 2003 (arrival on Nov. 30, departure on Dec. 5) in Subodhi, Institute of Integral Education, Wewala, Piliyandala, Sri Lanka, e-mail: [subodhi@dialogsl.net](mailto:subodhi@dialogsl.net), phone: 90-01-614317.

##### **Theme**

The theme of the conference "Teaching Philosophy/Darshana/Kalam etc. in Asian Contexts" evokes several questions and issues: What is philosophy in Asia? Is there something like an "Asian" philosophy or has one to speak from different Asian philosophies only like Chinese, Indian, Japanese etc. or Buddhist, Hinduistic, Islamic and the like? What should be taught under philosophy in Asia? Do we need to canonise another type of philosophy called "Asian" like the one already existing Western philosophy, or should we concentrate on intercultural and contextual philosophies like? What are the Asian contexts? Does philosophy originate from these contexts and does it respond to them? Who are the students? Why do we want to teach them?

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<sup>1</sup> Gender has to be distinguished from biological sex. Gender means both men and women. Genders are socially, culturally etc. constructed, not biologically determined. "Women and men are made, not born."

According to the results of the MWI world-wide inquiry philosophy taught in the universities or other higher education institutions can be characterised as a mere decorum with no real impact on the society. The curriculum appears like a study of historiography of philosophical writings repeating all the time what the other philosophers have said without providing space to commence a process of 'philosophising'. This is because the contents taught, often have no concrete relevance in regard to the Asian reality. Eurocentrism is another problem. European philosophy was often – perhaps unconsciously - exported to non-western cultures as the only existing philosophy and as culturally 'neutral'. The Asian philosophers today are facing the challenge of making philosophy not only contextual and intercultural but also of creating a critical spirit among students helping them to face socio-cultural exigencies and concrete realities of life.

### **Call for Papers**

Every philosopher or academician of philosophical studies who can contribute to our theme is invited to send us an abstract including brief answers (1-2 pages) to the following questions.

- + **What are the characteristics of Asian philosophy with special reference to the philosophical tradition of your country?**
- + **How is this philosophy/kalam/darshana etc. reflected in your curricula?**
- + **How teaching philosophy should reflect the contemporary cultural, political, social and religious situation in your country?**
- + **What changes are needed according to you in the curricula of philosophy/darshana/kalam etc.?**

In order to identify potential participants to this proposed conference, we kindly ask you to submit your abstract by June 30th, 2002 if possible via e-mail.

### **Identification of Paper-Presenters**

As soon as we receive the responses, we shall identify paper-presenters taking into account budget limitations as well as proportional representation (e.g. women and men, age, profession, region and country, topic and so forth). Those who have not been identified as paper-presenters but who would still like to attend as non-paper-presenting participants will also be welcome, contingent, of course, on the space and funding limitations. There will be a limit of around 20 participants.

### **Funding**

While efforts are being made to raise some funds, we do not know how much we shall be able to obtain. We therefore ask that each intending participant also helps to seek funds for travel to and from Sri Lanka. Specifically, those who work in some sort of institution are encouraged to seek help from your university or institute etc. We shall try our best to help those who have difficulties, especially those coming from poorer countries.

The conference fee, which includes room and board and other local expenses, will come to about US\$ 150 per person. We shall raise funds to take care of this for all participants.

### **Application**

Along with the above mentioned abstracts, please send us as soon as possible an application (no official form) with the following information, no later than June 30th, 2002:

1. Name:
2. Address:
3. Tel, Fax:
4. E-mail (essential, because future communications will be via email):
5. Profession/occupation, institutions you belong to:
6. Religion/confession:
7. NGO activities, etc.:
8. Academic qualification, etc.:
9. How much help would you need to subsidize your travel to and from Sri Lanka?  
(This is absolutely essential so we can know our budget limits. If you are able to take care of your full travel expenses, please indicate that also.)

### **Coordination**

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