Interstices
Center for Transversal Thinking

Alain Daniélou Foundation

PLURIVERSE: AN ECOSOPHIC DIASPORA IN THE MAKING?

Venue: *The Labyrinth*, Fondation Alain Daniélou (FAD)
Colle Labirinto 24, Zagarolo (Rome), Italy.
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WORKSHOP CONCEPTION

The notion of "pluriverse" proliferates in postcolonial thought and decolonial studies. Originally coined by William James at the beginning of last century as an alternative to dominant Western conceptions of the universe that reduce its manifoldness to an "idealized monad", the pluri-topic hermeneutics displayed by this term has become, over the last two decades, a rhetorical battle horse of indigenous leaders, ecological activists, and geopolitically-minded scholars emphasizing the ecological and socio-political need for multiplicity, diversity and relationality against centuries of epistemic universality, capitalist homogenization, and colonial domination. As happens with any conceptual innovation pointing to alternative forms of "making world", there has been an explosion of effects on university research, social media, divulgation of knowledge, political militantism, and ecological politics. The greater the expansion of the debate around the term, the subtler the awareness of the groups concerned with a possible transition from "universe" to "pluriverse", but such discursive proliferation inevitably entails a certain loss of critical intensity through rhetorical back-feeding and the "integration" of indigenous and communal practices in political and scholarly institutions.

Central to all these conflict-laden debates is the fact that the historical moment of the pluriverse, as pointed out by Arturo Escobar, does not simply concern the transformation of an economic model, or a set of cultural traits

inimical to life on the planet earth, or specific geopolitical power struggles, but *a crisis of a civilizational model* imposed by the modern West which has become a "global world-system" (Aníbal Quijano) affecting the idea of "humanity" and all the (trans-cultural) practices that result from it. It is in this sense that Brazilian anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro speaks of the "end of the world" as "end of a specific idea of the human" (perpetrated by Eurocentric thought), provincializing thus what was thought to be the only valid model for humankind. Dipesh Chakravarty's proposal, namely to question the "naturalized universality" imposed by the heritage of the European/Western model, finds not only different embodiments according to locations and types of world-configurations, but also a radical affirmation within scholarly reflection, a form of internal critique not witnessed in the history of Western thought until the so-called "ontological turn in anthropology".

The challenge of facing the real implications of the idea of "pluriverse" is difficult to grasp and even more difficult to elaborate properly. It compels anyone involved with it to engage in complex alliances and partnerships between very different groups and world configurations: traditional societies, alternative communities, post-colonial anthropologists, cross-cultural philosophers, ecological activists, non-governmental organizations, urbanized indigenous leaders, afro-descendant writers and artists, etc. The presupposition is that all those groups work *in principle* toward the same goal, but the reality is more complex and nuanced than the presuppositions approaching it. Can the local, the communal, the alternative, the singularly pluri-versal be grasped in its specificity and *at the same time* in its intrinsic and potential relationality in order to create a living-system reacting to the dominant world-system that has been imposed as "only possible world" for centuries?

Interstices: Center for Transversal Thinking approaches the pluriverse by interrogating the possibility of *an ecosophic diaspora* – where "ecosophy" should be understood in the light of Guattari's ethico-political attempt to transform philosophy into a vector of practical wisdom. If the practice of "a world of many

worlds" aims at the preservation and defense of ways of living opposed to current global world-making (based on extractivism, exploitation, cultural asymmetry, epistemic and technocratic violence, unscrupulous profit, and destruction of any traditional and communal formation that gets in the way), the accomplishment of such attempt rests on *an ontological shift*. It is necessary that key aspects of that potential mutation be traced back within Western thought, as well as in different settings mostly rejected, ignored, or "explained away" through the lens of modern Western episteme. But even more important: the *geo-political character* (in the sense of Bruno Latour) of such an ontological shift requires above all bearing in mind a coherent and effective confluence of "heterogeneous wordlings" (to use an expression of Marisol de la Cadena), defining the place and scope of each group or assemblage in a grammar of relations.

The workshop, held in collaboration with the Alain Daniélou Foundation, will explore the interdisciplinary and transformative scope of the idea of the pluriverse. For this purpose, some aspects of the challenge implied by the pluriverse impose themselves as relevant for the type of interaction expected by the *Interstices* Center: 1. The conflict-laden and, at the same time, inevitable combination of (modernity-based) intellectual work with (traditional or indigenous) practical wisdom; 2. The possibility of creating a way of thinking and an art of living that does not blindly follow the epistemological principles and convictions of the dominant world-system; 3. The prospect of a serious political engagement to defend ways of living opposed to the current strategy of global world-making; 4. A configuration of thinking that may not only acknowledge but in a way also accomplish the idea of an "ontological turn" in anthropology – with its inevitable effect on other human sciences like philosophy, sociology, and history of religions.