

Foreigners in Philosophy and Openness to Dislocation

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Because of political, economic, technological, and other developments, foreigners who come as students or academics to practice philosophy in a country, geography, and culture other than their own are increasingly prevalent in academic philosophy today. Yet this reality is insufficiently discussed and is under-thematized, so that it remains opaque even to foreigners themselves. This article seeks first to dissipate that opacity by developing an account of what it is like to be a foreigner in philosophy. I offer an understanding of foreignness through a cluster of interrelated experiences, and I describe “existential dislocation” as the core experience that characterizes the foreigner. Next, the article follows some consequences of these descriptions and analyses. I address considerations of equality in the academy, and then I examine the significance of “existential dislocation” for the philosophical enterprise and propose that it occasions revitalizing possibilities for the discipline.

Although foreigners in philosophy—those who come to do philosophy in a geography and culture other than their own—are an academic reality today, this reality and its implications are not well understood or appreciated philosophically. Nor do philosophers often consider that who does philosophy can be decisive for what is considered philosophy. Other groups and subjects besides foreigners are also questioned: Can women do philosophy? Is “race” a proper subject for philosophical inquiry? Is it possible to say that a discipline is philosophy if it grows from non-Western origins? Can philosophy be practiced with children? If one has not had formal training in philosophy, can his or her intellectual production qualify as “philosophical”? Is it still philosophy once it is taken out of the academy and rendered accessible to the general public?

Philosophical practice is not immune to power dynamics, and its borders are policed by what already counts as philosophy. As Jacques Rancière reminds us, since Plato’s *Republic* philosophers have tried to distinguish those who are qualified to do philosophy—to be admitted into the legitimate discourse of truth—from those who

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are not, making the decision ultimately based on class distinctions even when workers' perspectives are elevated (Rancière 2004). Philosophy as an institution is interwoven with the existing power dynamics of the society; it has exclusionary tendencies, and these are reflected in the academy.

Foreigners challenge the borders of philosophy and the existing conceptions of what philosophy is and how it is to be practiced. It is the particular challenges that foreigners and academic philosophy pose to each other that I undertake to examine here. As I noted above, the presence of foreign students and academics practicing philosophy is insufficiently discussed and is under-thematized, so much so that it remains opaque even to foreigners themselves.

Below I try to dissipate some of that opacity. My emphasis on academic philosophy does not involve a claim that it is the sole or even the most appropriate environment for philosophical production. It is rather an act of paying attention, of directing a caring gaze, to our practice. Because academic philosophy is the typical location of our discipline today, it is important to understand its endemic processes, structures, and convictions as they determine what is put out into the world as philosophical production, what philosophy *becomes*. Nor do I claim that academic philosophy ought not to have any borders: that would be advocating its dissolution. Rather, I seek to understand how these borders may better occasion intimate and revitalizing encounters.

A "stranger," Georg Simmel explains, is someone who displays a synthesis of detachment and attachment, of remoteness and closeness with regard to the society. Strangers are not "aliens" in the sense of outer-space inhabitants; they reside within the society, but their position within that society is "fundamentally affected by the fact that [they] [do] not belong in it initially" (Simmel 1971, 143). The familiarity that they establish across a distance gives strangers an objectivity and freedom of perception that are not available to the locals as they are already entangled in social conventions and associations.

Alfred Schütz shows that strangers do not readily have this objectivity simply as a result of their position in the society, but that they acquire it through epistemological struggles. Strangers lack "knowledge about" the social world that guides the practices of the locals, and as a result are forced to obtain "knowledge of" that world. In other words, strangers have to "*define* the situation . . . [they] cannot stop at an approximate acquaintance . . . trusting in [their] vague knowledge *about* its general style and structure, but [need] an explicit knowledge *of* its elements, inquiring not only into their *that* but also into their *why*" (Schütz 1944, 506). It is this different kind of knowledge that gives strangers the ability to perceive what typically eludes the locals.

Bonnie Honig claims a still more vital significance for "foreigners" with regard to the society. Exploring foreigners' place in the founding and re-founding of societies in fictional, religious, philosophical, and historical accounts, she maintains that these "foreign-founder" scripts show that the figure of the foreigner embodies the undecidability that lies at the heart of the social order. Against familiar approaches to the question of foreigners, then, Honig proposes to switch the question from "How should we solve the problem of foreignness?" to "What problems does foreignness solve for

us?” (Honig 2003, 12). Stating the inquiry thus, Honig seeks to understand the question of foreigners beyond what is visible through the familiar logic of nationalist assimilation. She makes the question a matter not only of effecting a change in the foreigners, but also of being affected by them through conscious engagement.

Foreigners can thus be broadly described as those who establish familiarity with a society from an irreducible distance because of not being locals, who accordingly develop a specific kind of knowledge about that society, and who are potentially significant actors in the transformation of the society they join. In what follows, I first provide an account through lived experience of what it is like to be a foreigner in philosophy. I offer an understanding of foreignness through a cluster of experiences that characterize the foreigner *qua* foreigner, describing these experiences as predominantly physical, cognitive, and emotional. The grouping is meant only to serve purposes of description, as these are not at all isolated experiences. In fact, they are profoundly permeable, and I explain that an experience of “existential dislocation” results as they coalesce into a core experience that characterizes foreignness. I then follow some consequences of these descriptions and analyses. I address considerations of equality in the academy, and then I examine the significance of “existential dislocation” for the philosophical enterprise and propose that because of the possibilities this experience opens up, foreigners may contribute in important ways to “re-foundings” of the discipline. This requires, however, that locals undertake to have genuine relations with them, also embracing the discomfort that this brings. It requires maintaining friendship through proximity and distance, as Derrida describes (Derrida 2005), enduring the lack of a familiar common ground, thus constituting a possibility for new grounds, new beginnings.

DESCRIPTIONS AND ANALYSES OF FOREIGNERS’ EXPERIENCES

Rather than attempting to decide who is a foreigner based on geographical, political, linguistic, or similar determinations, I propose we understand the category primarily through a cluster of experiences that foreigners *qua* foreigners go through. Doubtless, these experiences correlate highly with such determinations and are in fact impossible without them. The core of being a foreigner, however, is constituted by experiences of foreignness that these determinations *occasion* but do not define. Nor do these experiences themselves “define” in the sense of clearly delineating a category; rather, they form a cluster that all foreigners experience in varying combinations and intensities. Because of consistencies and overlaps in foreigners’ experiences *qua* foreigners, this cluster may be described as thinner at the borders and more solidified at the core. An experience of “existential dislocation” appears at the core of this cluster. As experiences expand out from that core in many directions and in varying breadths, an abundance of specific ways of being foreign are made possible by their various combinations in different intensities, resulting in the richness of the category of foreigner.¹

PHYSICAL, COGNITIVE, AND EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCES

Perhaps the most recognizable experiences of foreignness are predominantly physical in nature. Foreigners are typically tired. Their bodies struggle to adjust to new environments, new climates, a new local ecosystem in general. They have to adjust to a new diet: to different ingredients when they cook at home and to a different eating culture when they dine out.² Foreigners deal with more bureaucracy than their non-foreigner colleagues at every turn. Being a foreigner means doing paperwork, learning policies, and visiting offices that locals do not even know exist.

Many foreigners initially lack the social and familial support system that one forms only over the course of years. This lack is even more apparent when one needs to rely on others' energies, for example, when one is sick, sad, or moving, making those situations even more exhausting. A foreign graduate student in Australia puts it in a way with which many others would agree: "[t]hings are not easy when they are done alone" (Brown 2014, 73).³

Everyday communication also makes significant demands on foreigners' energies. Even when their native tongue is the same as that of the country they reside in, communication is not as smooth for foreigners as it is for locals. There are differences in words and expressions that render it difficult to navigate everyday practices, as well as intralingual "false friends."⁴ And most foreigners live in a second language. This means that they not only have to teach, write, and do research, but also network, socialize, and even relax with friends in another language, all of which require significant amounts of extra effort that invisibly drain one's energy.

Physical experiences of foreignness quickly blend into cognitive and emotional ones. Being a foreigner has very little in common with being a tourist. For a tourist the peculiarities of a new place make amusing memories; for a foreigner they constitute an almost inexhaustible list of things to learn and to master. From the minutiae of everyday physical activities to the intricacies of managing social relations, innumerable components of life are different from what the foreigner anticipates. Light switches, doorknobs, the general layout of cities and the expected ways of interacting with them, norms of social interaction, indications of politeness and rudeness, ways of being entertained, claims about the significance of an individual, economic and social assumptions . . . surprises arise for the foreigner at every turn, requiring a constant routine of reorientation. The Heideggerian hammer keeps breaking in one's hand without respite. Moments of frustration and the amount of learning one has to do in order merely to maintain one's daily functioning continually sap foreigners' cognitive powers.

Foreigners are also likely to have specific cognitive challenges because of the disparity between their familiar conceptions about doing philosophy and the ones that they newly encounter and that now make demands on them.⁵ For example, they are likely to find themselves pressed to negotiate between traditions of intensive reading and extensive reading, rhetorical and analytic styles of writing,⁶ responsibilities as researchers and as intellectuals, claims about the appropriate combination of work and leisure time for a satisfactory life, and so on. Before such negotiations can even begin, however, foreigners have to overcome their deep confusion when things do

not work, and recognize the situation for what it is. That is, they have to come to understand that they are not functioning inadequately in a context where they would be expected to perform normally, and realize that it is rather the case that the assumptions and conceptions that form the ground of their familiar ways of functioning are being challenged. They then have to figure out the network of assumptions, conceptions, and valuations that underlie the new philosophical environment they join. They have to accustom their eyes to this new world, figure out its defining features, grasp what changes are being demanded of them, and decide what they are comfortable with when responding to these demands. As calm and methodical as that may sound, in reality these processes typically consist of series of failures, sleepless nights, self-questionings, and feelings of inadequacy.

Emotional strains thus almost always accompany foreigners' physical and cognitive burdens. Most foreigners are far away from their families, friends, and general support network. According to the *Expatriate Insider* reports conducted by InterNations, a worldwide community of expats, "missing personal support network" remains the most common expat problem, ranking above finances (InterNations 2015, 2016). This lack weakens foreigners' sense of security and causes most of them to experience a deep loneliness. Relocating with a significant other does not render one entirely immune to this loneliness either and also puts specific kinds of strains on the relationship (see, for example, Brown 2008).

Foreigners are subject to further feelings of insecurity if they are not citizens of the country in which they work. Their legal status needs to factor into all the decisions they make: a gap in employment, for example, might snowball into having to drastically change their life plans, if because of their visa situation they need to move out of the country. Foreigners are subject to still further anxiety and uncertainty about their life plans if there are instabilities in their home country, not to mention heaviness of heart. Lonely, lacking a sense of security, and anxious, foreigners are under considerable emotional weight.

This draining of physical, cognitive, and emotional energies is at its most intense at the beginning of living as foreigners, and it may result in foreigners being unable to perform even the simplest tasks, let alone survive in academia.⁷ I remember standing outside the door to my house one night a few months after moving to the US. I had been so exhausted just trying to get through that day that I was unable to remember or figure out what to do to open the door. Here doorknobs and keys worked differently than what I was used to. It took me about five minutes to get in. This inability to get into what was supposed to be my home was one of the first occasions when what I was going through as a foreigner had started to present itself to my understanding.

EXISTENTIAL DISLOCATION

If one experience is indispensable to the cluster that constitutes foreignness and forms its core, it is "existential dislocation." Existential dislocation arises through the

collective intensification of the characteristic experiences of foreignness. It is experienced most distinctly during the first and most intense periods of being a foreigner, and it is very difficult for foreigners themselves to discern and conceptualize it during these initial periods. “Existential dislocation” signifies not only a change of place, of context, but also being *out of joint*, dislocated with regard to the habitual order of things as a result of that change. Foreigners cannot function in the everyday through habit. They cannot anticipate, and they cannot anticipate *when* they will be unable to anticipate. They move in a world whose components may *look* the same but are in fact very different and are also ordered differently. The world, its shared significations, valuations, ways of life—the very structure of reality—is unfamiliar. Foreigners experience themselves as dislocated in the new world they join. And insofar as selves are formed in contexts and through relations, they are dislocated also from themselves.

Gloria Anzaldúa’s, María Lugones’s, and Mariana Ortega’s analyses of “world”-travelling and *mestiza* self help conceptualize this experience of existential dislocation. Anzaldúa announces the coming of a new mixed identity, the *mestiza*, and of a *mestiza* consciousness, out of “racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollination” (Anzaldúa 1987, 77). She explains that border-crossings and resulting collisions in one’s realities as communicated by different cultures occasion states of psychic unrest and inner war. By developing a tolerance for this inner strife, the *mestiza*, Anzaldúa holds, will be able not just to sustain the contradictions and the ambivalence, but to cultivate a new consciousness out of them.⁸

Lugones problematizes this strife by claiming ontological significance for it. She develops an account of “world”-travelling where she conceives of a “world” as actual worlds inhabited by living people as well as the conceptions and constructions of life in a society, and understands “world”-travelling as having to move from one world to the other, primarily out of necessity. She explains that when people “world”-travel, they find that they experience both having and not having certain characteristics depending on the world they are currently in. They thus experience “ontological confusion” (Lugones 2003, 86); they become “ambiguous being[s]” (92). According to Lugones, “world”-travelling entails not merely acting differently in different settings, but actually being another person in another world, without an underlying sense of “I,” retaining only the memories of who one was in other worlds: it is *shifting* “from being one person to being a different person” (89). “World”-travelling engages and challenges the entire being of travellers, it contests their very selves. This “travelling” is not tourism, it is not changing scenery; it is *being plural*, and Lugones embraces an “ontological pluralism” in her conception of the “world”-traveller.⁹

Ortega does not agree with Lugones that the *mestiza* self is ontologically plural. Drawing together Latina feminists’ and Heidegger’s phenomenological accounts of the self, she develops an account of a multiplicitous, *in-between* self. Ortega explains that these accounts from different traditions share an understanding of the “self” and of the “world” as co-constituting on the basis of practical involvements and permeating one another rather than standing apart as subject and object, and that they uphold an understanding of the self as situated, social, historical, and always in the

making. When a self thus understood, however, begins to travel and finds itself *in-worlds* or *between-worlds*, Heidegger's model is no longer adequate. A lack of mastery of the norms and practices of the context in which one finds oneself now begins to characterize one's experience: one is no longer "at ease" in the world. Lugones holds that the description of this experience of outsiders, while true to experience, is ontologically problematic (Lugones 2003, 91). Ortega offers a solution to this problem by proposing to conceive the self as multiplicitous and as allowing contradictions. Employing Heideggerean notions of temporality and "mineness," Ortega claims a *oneness* to the multiplicitous self beyond what Lugones provides through memory, and also without recourse to a traditional "subject."

Ortega's account of a multiplicitous *in-between* self and her existential pluralism "that captures the lived experience of the self" (Ortega 2016, 102) as being both multiple and one are helpful for conceiving the experience of "existential dislocation." Foreigners are not yet "world"-travellers; their selves have not yet multiplied; nor are they able to remain who they used to be; and they have a lived experience of this. Later, as they figure out the new world and as they transform, they will also become "travellers." But the primary and characterizing experience of foreignness is being *dislocated*, from the world and from one's self: it is *existential dislocation*.

Foreigners cannot continue to be their familiar selves. For them, the interpretive ground through which significations are woven is gone. They become shallow beings whose subtleties either go unnoticed or do not appear at all in the new world. To regain their richness as persons they strive to translate themselves into the local language and the local forms. Living in another language and a new culture is not merely using different names for the same things; it is learning a whole new orientation in communication and social relations. It is learning anew how to be surprised, how to complain, how to poke fun, how to laugh along; it is learning the possibilities for making jokes; it is adopting new facial expressions. Living in another language and another culture amounts to weaving for oneself a new persona. Performing this new persona, foreigners may at times feel fake, even dishonest: they may feel they are merely trying to blend in and wonder how authentic their new relations are. Yet these are not personas they wear on essential selves, but as Lugones's and Ortega's accounts also show, they become new ways that they *are*.

One is not at liberty to build a new persona from scratch either: the new self will be permeated by how the foreigner is seen through the local lenses given their race, class, ethnicity, religion, home country, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability, civil status, and so on. Upon entering a new world, foreigners' various identities change significance and degrees of visibility. They may feel classified by race for the first time; they may be relieved of the significance of their ethnic identity at home; they may experience an increase or decrease in the respect accorded to them, for example, as women, as queer people, or as people who dress according to their religious beliefs. Also, they are now people with accents, and their competence is judged accordingly, with only few accents possibly proving an advantage to the new personas, as, for example, a British friend once joked that he believes his students think he is smarter than he is because of his accent.

These experiences and transformations do not leave one's prior self intact either. As one experiences new ways to live, for example, one's gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability, as one discovers new possibilities of social interactions or new styles of working, one may come to appreciate and appropriate them. One may also, in the face of discrimination for example, prefer to embrace certain aspects of their identities more strongly and become more nationalistic or religious. The moment of dislocation is a moment of crisis, and potentially a very productive one.

An irreducible asymmetry in foreigners' experiences that requires considerations of intersectionality ought to be mentioned here. Although I do not conceive "existential dislocation" as an instance of oppression, in practice the broader power dynamics in the world inescapably play into experiences of foreigners in philosophy where Western political, economic, and cultural privilege prevails. Currently the philosophy departments with better material resources are found in places that are described as the Western world. Relocating to these places is less severe a shock for foreigners with Western backgrounds. They adjust and blend in more easily due to similarities in their appearance, life practices, and codes of social interaction. They do not strain the society's civilizational sensibilities. The question may then be raised if those with Western heritage typically have a milder experience of existential dislocation as foreigners. In some important senses, these foreigners may be said to be at home even when abroad. Native English speakers can teach in their own language in many universities throughout the world. Native speakers of German, French, and so on are also at an advantage, as they have command of those modern languages whose important works are accepted as constituting the canon of academic philosophy. More important, as the institution of academic philosophy itself has evolved through Western history, is interwoven with Western culture, and is resistant to opening itself up to other traditions (see, for example, Bruya 2015), those who are fluent in the West's cultural heritage and references are at a significant advantage in academic philosophy no matter where they are in the world. Moreover, because their upbringing and education has been more in line with the tradition that forms the background of academic philosophy, Western foreigners may appear as central subjects and be accorded more authority than non-Western people, in Western and non-Western settings alike. Nevertheless, although they may be relatively more at home in academic philosophy, foreigners with Western backgrounds still face specific challenges in non-Western contexts.¹⁰

IMPLICATIONS OF THESE DESCRIPTIONS AND ANALYSES FOR EQUALITY IN THE ACADEMY

Although it may and often does intersect with axes of oppression, the experience of being a foreigner is in itself characterized not by oppression but by "existential dislocation." This experience, however, does occasion specific disadvantages for foreigners that should be corrected for in order to ensure that the academy fulfills properly its function of producing knowledge. Recognizing the irreducible social aspect of the production of knowledge, Helen Longino argues for inclusion of diverse investigators

in epistemic communities. She holds that involvement of a diversity of perspectives is necessary for screening out biasing factors, detecting background assumptions, exposing hypotheses to the broadest range of criticism, in short, for sustaining a “vigorous and epistemically effective critical discourse” (Longino 2002, 131). This requires equality of participation in the discursive interactions that are the social processes of knowledge-production. Merely declaring investigators to be equally capable, however, cannot realize this equality. Longino points out that an epistemic community “must do more than be open to the expression of multiple points of view; it must also take active steps to ensure that alternative points of view are developed enough to be sources of criticism and new perspectives. Not only must potentially dissenting voices not be discounted; they must be cultivated” (132).

In a similar vein, Elizabeth Anderson addresses the necessity of ensuring equality among those involved in the production of knowledge, specifically in higher education. She embraces a liberal democratic epistemology to show how demands for equality among members of academia are “generated internally to the aims of higher education” (Anderson 1995, 218). Anderson takes Miranda Fricker’s arguments for virtues of hermeneutical and testimonial justice a step further to claim that they ought to be complemented with “structural remedies” in social institutions. Importantly, Anderson argues that such remedies are also necessary in cases where there is no epistemic or moral injustice but the situation still prevents a group’s “contributions to inquiry they could have made had they been able to participate on terms of equality with others” (Anderson 2012, 171). Longino’s and Anderson’s accounts help us understand why the academy, as the locus of knowledge-production, ought to ensure equality by actively correcting for systematic disadvantage, whether due to oppression or not. It is therefore necessary to think about structural remedies for the disadvantages specific to foreigners.

Foreigners, as described above, are typically fatigued, anxious, and their self-relations interrupted. Moreover, especially during the first phases of their relocation, they are unable to make sense of their experiences. The primary remedy, then, would be simply to *acknowledge* this reality. Fricker expresses this necessity for acknowledgment in terms of the virtue of “hermeneutical justice.” She defines “hermeneutical injustice” as a disadvantage caused when a gap in collective interpretive resources makes it difficult for one to make sense of their social experiences, and she calls for a corrective virtue on the part of the advantaged subjects that consists of “an alertness or sensitivity to the possibility that the difficulty one’s interlocutor is having is due . . . to some sort of gap in collective hermeneutical resources” and the realization that the person is “struggling with an objective difficulty and not a subjective failing” (Fricker 2007, 169). Without this acknowledgment and conceptualization, it is very easy for the already overwhelmed foreigner to feel incompetent, unfit, and depressed, and to have these feelings reinforced by the equally ignorant environment. Combined, these may hinder foreigners from realizing their true potential permanently.

Other structural remedies for ensuring equality need to begin as early as student admissions and job hires. Departments may develop a better awareness of the implicit bias based on academic pedigree that disadvantages foreign applicants (for an account

of this disadvantage, see Ayala 2015, 5). One foreign philosopher relates her experience of realizing that her transcript, which used the UK grading scale and which she included in her job applications to the US, looked as if she had failed everything (Bamford 2015). Departments may also develop sensitivity to the fact that foreign students and academics are probably writing their application letters in a second language and almost certainly in a second culture. In the context of applying for positions in the US, for example, unless people who are familiar with the processes are helping them, it is likely that the applicants will write a letter that sounds as if they lack self-confidence, when in reality they may only be trying not to sound arrogant.

Departments may consider institutional arrangements to accommodate foreigners better. Especially at the beginning, foreigners are full of questions, from the simplest details of a job task to the entire logic of the academic environment. This puts them in situations where they regularly have to ask for assistance from people they have only recently met. Arranging for their mentoring needs institutionally, for example by forming committees of foreigners who have been there for a while, would relieve incoming foreigners of having to ask for help, and it would create a space where they can share and begin to make sense of their experiences. Departments may also recognize that when foreigners are being employed, a healthcare plan is very important, both because of the specific physical and emotional strains that they experience, and also because they probably lack a support system to fall back on such as being included in relatives' healthcare plans.

Considerations pertaining to language form another set of justice requirements concerning foreigners. Saray Ayala-López shows that nonnative English-speaking philosophers may be "subject to some kind of testimonial injustice, both in their spoken and written contributions" (Ayala 2015, 7). As already noted, most foreigners have accents that do not work to their advantage when it comes to their perceived competence. Correcting for this situation requires active work on the part of nonforeigners regarding *how* they hear an accent. Fricker explains that the virtue of testimonial justice requires awareness of the likely presence of prejudice, and that when hearers suspect that their credibility judgments have been affected by prejudice, they ought to "shift intellectual gear out of spontaneous, unreflective mode and into active critical reflection in order to identify how far the suspected prejudice has influenced [their] judgment" (Fricker 2007, 91) and strive to neutralize its impact. A similar requirement also applies to written material, where accent is not heard but an unusual use of language may wrongly suggest to the reader that the author is not sufficiently educated. Ways of rendering language-editing services more affordable for foreigners may be considered in order to counteract this misunderstanding. Another consideration would be to make an effort to speak more clearly at conferences, meetings, classes, and so on where foreigners are present. I am not suggesting adopting an unnatural pace and a condescending tone whenever one perceives someone to be a foreigner. However, I have been in rooms where none of the foreigners understood what a way-too-fast native speaker was saying, and did not feel comfortable asking him or her to be more accommodating. Considerations of equality in communication

would require sharing the burden of language between native and nonnative speakers.

Foreigners' specific situations also ought to be included in assessing their teaching performances. Again, most foreigners teach in a second language, and almost all foreigners teach in a second culture. Foreigners with accents, different body language, different expectations of interpersonal communication, lack of knowledge about cultural references, and occasional moments of hesitation in their speech start out with much less credit in the eyes of their students than their nonforeign and otherwise comparable colleagues.¹¹ Of course, this changes in some degree as the semester progresses, but it does not disappear, and the foreign instructor is always in some sense swimming against a current.¹² A foreigner in education describes this experience as encountering "a glass wall" in the classroom that is put up by some students' body language, verbal reactions, facial expressions, disengagement, judgmental attitudes, and low expectations (Torres 2002, 89). She says, "then, I know that I have to use all my communicative resources and teaching strategies to engage them in the course activities and gain their trust" (89).

One may also discover ways to employ their foreignness in beneficial ways. I discovered, for example, that I could use my lack of popular culture references to provide comic relief in the classroom and as a way to engage students' attention by having them explain things to me. I also observed that my level of comfort with my difference encourages participation from students who might otherwise be more reluctant to speak. Others find ways to deal with or to make creative use of their foreignness. All this, however, takes extra effort and personal creativity, and although students' involvement in the course is a valuable result, the time and the effort that the instructor allocates to trying to swim against this current goes unnoticed by systems of professional acknowledgment. Acknowledging this extra work would mean taking it into consideration quantitatively, for example when assessing foreigners' actual workloads or reading their teaching evaluations.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICING PHILOSOPHY

Ensuring equal opportunity of participation in the philosophical community benefits not only foreigners but also philosophy. As explained at the beginning, nonforeigners, their cognitive powers notwithstanding, are bound to view their own world, at some level, as *the way things are*. The rationality underlying the interpretations, assumptions, and valuations that constitute "the way things are" remain, to an important extent, invisible to them. Foreigners may indeed provide a "knowledge of" this rationality, as Schütz describes. They may also, as Longino explains, help detect background assumptions and biasing factors in intellectual production. But what foreigners have to offer to philosophy goes beyond such discursive knowledge.

Foreigners in philosophy are not "subaltern."¹³ They can certainly speak; they are active members of academic philosophy. But insofar as they are foreigners in the home discourse, something remains untranslatable in them, regardless of the extent of their

powers of expression. When agents determined by two cultures that are irreducible to each other attempt to communicate, there is always a remainder, “a residue of meaning” (Schutte 1998, 56). Ofelia Schutte refers to this residue as “a principle of (cross-cultural) incommensurability” (56). She explains that, when communicating, one not only has to understand what is being said, but also be able to relate it to a background. This background consists of elaborate networks of significations and processes of reasoning against which what is said acquires its actual meaning. Since in cross-cultural communication the background is not adequately shared, the interlocutor lacks the means to receive the communicated content as it was intended. The speakers’ discourses are then likely to appear incoherent or insufficiently organized to each other. In reality, attempts at communication are always permeated with power dynamics and take place in a space that is home to one of the parties. It will then be only the foreign speaker who appears incoherent and insufficient, while the actual problem may not be incoherence, “but the lack of cultural translatability of the signifiers for coherence from one set of cultural presuppositions to the other” (62). Speakers from the dominant culture typically overlook this and demand clarity; they demand to be communicated with on their own terms. As they are not disadvantaged and remain untouched by the reality of “incommensurability” in cross-cultural communication, they do not have an experience or knowledge of it. Schutte maintains that in this attempt to communicate it falls on speakers of the dominant culture to make up for this privileged ignorance by active effort and not to silence the others by foreclosing the meaning of their statements by reducing them exclusively to familiar ones.

Schutte points out that the cross-culturally “incommensurable” may be “the most important part of the message my Anglophone interlocutor needs to receive” (60), and yet this message cannot be delivered as discursive knowledge in the home discourse as it is precisely the impossibility of cross-cultural translation without remainder. To receive this message, speakers of the dominant discourse cannot expect that foreigners *explain themselves*; they have to resist this demand for comfort. This “most important part” of what foreigners have to offer appears only when one is *with* foreigners, together in their mutual irreducibility.

Foreigners experiencing “existential dislocation” occasion a similar experience for locals who come to meet them beyond the logic of assimilation. In this encounter, letting speak, *listening*, involves letting oneself and the habitual order of things be unsettled. In *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida describes the structure of an *originary* “friendship.” He explains that the origin of society, of sociability, is a proximity established through an irreducible distance and lack of common ground: it is a friendship that is “*atópos*,” “outside all place or placeless, without family or familiarity, outside of self, expatriate, extraordinary” (Derrida 2005, 178). He thus recognizes (as does Honig after him) the founding role of foreignness for communities. Derrida explains that such a friendship is also the origin, the possibility, of philosophy. He explains that the “new philosophers” *to come* that Nietzsche hails are “new” “not because *they will come, if they do, in the future*, but because these philosophers of the future *already are philosophers capable of thinking the future*, or carrying and sustaining the future—which is to say ... capable of enduring the intolerable, the undecidable, and the

terrifying” (36–37). The unsettled and unsettling grounds that relations with foreigners open up then have a vital significance for philosophy.

Being with foreigners in philosophy makes it possible to read worlds and canons through different sensibilities, to open them up to new interpretations. But beyond that, it also challenges one’s world and one’s self, forcing them out of their epistemic and existential inertia. Schutte explains that attempts to reduce the “incommensurable” reflect a desire not to let “the other (as other) make any demands in [one’s] everyday world, for in this case [one] might have to change [one’s] way of being” (Schutte 1998, 60). This “incommensurability” indeed causes foreigners and nonforeigners to make demands on one another in their encounter *to be otherwise*. They thereby acquire the possibility of cultivating a collective space for *creative communication* where those involved—unsettled, decentralized, and embracing an experience of being dislocated—may explore new possibilities to *be* and to *know* together. Lugones calls this interaction “play.” The appropriate mode of play that is occasioned by foreignness involves “openness to surprise, openness to being a fool, openness to self-construction or reconstruction and to construction or reconstruction of the ‘worlds’ we inhabit” (Lugones 2003, 17). It is a friendship where one is not afraid to let oneself go, to be together with another, to be *there creatively* (16). It is how foreigners and locals can play and grow and transform their playground together.

NOTES

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1. Intersecting with other axes of identities, specific experiences of foreignness are of course even more complex and rich. For a discussion of gender and foreignness in academia, for example, see Czarniawska and Sevón 2008; Johansson and Śliwa 2014; and Sang, Al-Dajani, and Özbilgin 2013. These considerations, however, remain outside the scope of the present examination.

2. A North American expatriate in Geneva states, “I like to cook, and none of my recipes work any more because I can’t get the ingredients” (Haour-Knipe 2000, 63), and those in France struggle with sleepiness after business lunches that traditionally include wine (Usunier 1999).

3. This volume compiles accounts of eleven foreign graduate students who discuss their experiences concerning their relations with their families and their home countries, as well as adjusting to new social cues and academic styles, among others.

4. For an examination of the “hilarious situations, serious blunders, and curious pragmatic differences” that the latter may cause, see Roca-Varela 2010, 132–38.

5. For a consideration of how the “culture of justification” in Western academic philosophy works to exclude diverse practitioners, see Dotson 2012.

6. For an examination of academics' and students' accounts of navigating academic writing in a nonnative language, see Canagarajah 2004.

7. For a study of how being a foreigner also results in increased risk for mental health and substance use, see Truman, Sharar, and Pompe 2011.

8. Linda Martín Alcoff expresses a concern regarding this consciousness, noting that it may develop in ways to preserve existing power relations, as "such figures who can negotiate between cultures have been notoriously useful for the dominant, who can use them to better control their colonized subject" (Alcoff 2006, 281).

9. For her account of how the denial of this pluralism and the claim to an underlying unity is itself an exercise of power and domination from a privileged vantage point, see "Purity, Impurity, and Separation" in Lugones 2003.

10. For a study of the identity struggles and professional and social conflicts that expatriate professors with Western backgrounds experience in Qatar, for example, see Romanowski and Nasser 2015.

11. Deborah Merritt describes how a faculty member's learned mannerisms affect student perceptions. Mannerisms such as the pace of speech or frequency of eye contact that differ between cultures affect how students perceive the professor: "Cultural differences like these can prompt a classroom of predominantly white American students to believe that faculty of color or foreign-born professors are less attentive, less candid, or otherwise less engaged with the material than white faculty members who more closely track white American cultural norms" (Merritt 2008, 258–59).

12. For a study of the effect of instructors' perceived foreignness on students' judgment of their competence as teachers, see Rubin 1992.

13. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak explains, "Simply by being postcolonial or the member of an ethnic minority, we are not 'subaltern.' That word is reserved for the sheer heterogeneity of decolonized space" (Spivak 2010, 65).

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