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Intercultural Competence evaluated – the End of an Illusion

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Abstract

"What is important can be evaluated and what has been evaluated is important." This apparent evidence omits the methodological questions of what and how should be evaluated. Against current reductionism in evaluating intercultural competence it will be argued that intercultural encounters are basically "corporeal" (not corporal) communication. The instruments of this analysis are provided by the New Phenomenology of Hermann Schmitz.

Keywords: situations, "corporeal" communication, constellations, evidence based policy

1 Efficiency in Education and its consequences

To address the issue of evaluating Intercultural Competence means to be conscious about the mingling of a research topic with the politics of national and transnational institutions.

In general terms quality assurance in higher education has become omnipresent since the creation of a European Higher Education Area (EHAE) has been identified as an important driver of economic growth and technological progress.[2]

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[2] The Lisbon Agenda of 2000 states: "The Union has today set itself a **new strategic goal** for the next decade: to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.[2] http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm, 2.

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But there is evidence that within the EU countries and between them great differences subsist concerning the level of qualification. The European puzzle, then, demands in this perspective a standardisation of learning outcomes. The European Qualification Framework (EQF) together with national Qualification Frameworks is the response of political actors. Employability for a global work place as the goal of this standardisation effort implies, besides other measures, the internationalisation of the universities. One of the outcomes should be the intercultural competence. About competences the EQF says:

"'Competence' means the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development. In the context of the European Qualifications Framework, competence is described in terms of responsibility and autonomy."[3]

This diplomatic circumscription – not a neat definition – creates a critical tension with the overall objective of measurable competence standards. Personal development, responsibility and autonomy are stated but no methodology of evaluation is at hand. This weakness opens the way to pragmatic politics leaving academic distinctions behind. Ministers and OECD are eager of empirical results which fit to the conviction that education is a means of global competitiveness.[4] In this perspective the financial resources should be distributed according to the proven usefulness of educational arrangements, i. e. contributing to reach the goal of better competitiveness. The central criterion to measure this usefulness is the type of **evidence based statements**. Here we meet with the scientist dogma that useful knowledge obeys to the definition first developed in physics: a very limited quantity of data which can be easily identified and exactly measured and which are modelled on solid objects with characteristics as extension, position in space, arrangement, number, rest or movement etc. These data have an authority for the scientist only so far as his prognostic is confirmed and may easily be repeated in experiment.[5] What is tremendously successful in the scientific-technical domain is tremendously reductionistic in other areas of science and life. What according to the principles of analytical philosophy is not evi-

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[3] http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/education_training_youth/vocational_training/c11104_en.htm
[4] See the German Federal Minister for Education and Research (Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung): Richtlinien zur Förderung von Forschungsvorhaben zum Themenfeld "Kompetenzmodellierung und Kompetenzerfassung im Hochschulsektor" (2010),
http://www.bmbf.de/foerderungen/15285.php.
[5] Cf. Schmitz, Hermann (2005c), 115.

dence-based can be nothing but metaphysics or fantasy or individualistic idiosyncrasy, in any way not worth of being subsidised by public budgets. In the domain of the evaluation of competences the economics of education (*Bildungsökonomie*) have found a suitable ally: the cognitive psychology which sees the *psyché* as an apparatus of resources to be programmed in order to produce the outcomes the dominant groups in society see as useful.[6].

The cognitive psychology sees the human experience as mental processes. The *psyché* is a province in the objective world which is constituted independently from the subject. The mental processes (perception, thinking, making judgments and conclusions) are mostly understood as naturalistic procedures of information treatment which can't be observed directly. Therefore the evaluation has to deal with its outcomes. The main objective of cognitive psychology, then, is to place the resources to the student's disposal and to measure from the outcomes the extent they reached the goal.

Applying this procedure to intercultural competences we run the risk of reductionism and to generate a sort of academic *Legoland*. The accurateness of prognostics varies with the number of variables and its higher or lower preciseness. In the perspective of reaching a high probability (i. e. efficiency) of the prognostics, the number of variables must be low and the preciseness of the criteria high. But this is a preliminary decision about the part of reality which will be taken in account and which by this is distinguished as particularly relevant. A central task for researchers, then, is to sharpen the theoretical instruments in order to prevent a detrimental reductionism which can't be compensated by empirical results found under questionable assumptions.

This proviso has not to be mixed up with a general rejection of evaluation on the base of standards. It is certainly a useful effort to optimize the allocation of resources and to remove undesirable incentives. But there are sufficient reasons to remember that efficiency is not the only goal of universities. It is the international Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) which insists strongly on character

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[6] The need to make competences operational has led to the curious phenomenon that a great number of items (characteristic individual features, aptitudes, skills, talents, proficiencies etc.) now has turned to be competences or at least competencies

development as a criterion for good academic governance in an international context.[7] Business Education, then, is much more than teaching useful skills.

"The main goal is to generate an enhanced management competence through an awareness of tensions between business activity, societal issues and personal involvement and responsibilities in this context."[8]

The conclusion is that in the context of intercultural competence there is, besides quantitative methods, a need for **qualitative methods** to broaden the field of research and assessment. This is particularly urgent all the more a considerable number of companies which are present on the global market seem to ignore this need. What before was called aptitudes, skills, qualifications, personal features etc. now appears as "competencies" with subcategories as Personal Attributes, Involvement, Interpersonal Organizational Awareness, Communication and Clear Thinking. Apparently, the sum of these 26 competencies[9] is considered to be intercultural competence. The following section shows that this is an illusion.

2 Towards a Phenomenology of Intercultural Competence

2.1 The "Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters"

Michael Byram has recently established a critical register questioning the possibilities of current intercultural evaluation.[10] These are his observations:

1. Models of intercultural competence: The evaluation models with pedagogical interest have other implications than those with a descriptive interest: Pedagogical judgments imply responsibility for personal development and profes-

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[7] Cf. Jürke, Erhard (2009).

[8] Ibid., 91.

[9] 1. Self-confidence, persuasiveness, innovation, motivation, initiative, problem solving; 2. job knowledge, enthusiasm, self-discipline, integrity, commitment, productivity and quality; 3. personnal strength, time management, appearance, organizational sensitivity, management identification, interpersonal awareness and team work, flexibility, commercial awareness/entrepreneurship; 4. planning and organization, analysis and decision making, judgement, oral communication, writing communication, listening ability. Cf. German Centre for Industry and Trade Mexico, Praktikumsbericht, List of IB competencies, 38s.

[10] Cf. Byram, Michael (2009), 215-226.

sional career; descriptive research does not. On the other hand, the models have to be distinguished according to the objective of testing psychological dispositions or competences: Both positions refer to different theoretical assumptions about human nature.

2. Values and Evaluation: The purpose of evaluation should be defined in a specific context because there is no objective system of values at hand. The convictions about universality vs. relativity of values, for example, will leave traces in evaluating persons concerning their loyalty and personal aptitude to fulfil a task.

3. Attributing value and making judgments: Intercultural efficient and intercultural exemplary moral behaviour demand different types of testing. There is no objective possibility to say till which grade an individual trying to understand somebody should accept values of the other person. The ambiguity of openness for other people is shown yet in what Giambattista Vico called *entrare* in another group or culture.

4. The purposes of assessment: If a society decides to promote patriotism and ethnocentrism as central pedagogical value, assessment will follow this line. On the other hand, if the individual is put in the centre of interest, assessment aims, rather differently, at diagnosis and planning of further learning.

5. Portfolios and profiles: Portfolios refer to a progression of levels of competence. Contrary to foreign language learning this method is not viable for intercultural competence because of the absence of descriptors. Therefore, the Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (AIE) has been developed. This concept does without levels but focuses on intercultural dimensions. According to Byram it "links foreign language education more explicitly and systematically with education for citizenship".[11]

Given these constraints the AIE seems to be a suitable tool to bring forward the cultural awareness. Especially there is the expectation that it may adjust the positivistic procedure in international business studies and placements because the feelings between the concerned persons get a prominent place in the constitution of intercultural experience. For the first time we see a hint that emotional experience may be

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[11] Ibid. 224.

crucial for finding a common ground of interpretation. Several other authors focus also on clearing the notion of self-competence.[12] Making explicit the tacit monologue is a help in moulding one's own situation, affected or stired up, to become more consistent. Implicitly there is a hope that the multiplication of these individual processes may support common experience. In the past years intercultural communication has largely been analyzed as field of conflicts and misunderstanding. But nowadays it seems that the focus of current studies concerning intercultural affaires is changing.[13] Nevertheless the intercultural analysis is searching for a common language which is able to describe the phenomena of subjective experience. Neither scientific psychology nor modern neurobiology is helpful. Both dissolve the phenomena into something else: a consequence of stimuli, the unconscious result of judgements or neuronal processes, but in all cases my subjective experience is formulated as an objective figure which takes away the specific characteristic of **my** experience. In the following chapter I will present a conception which pretends to take emotions not as a reflex of something else but as a reality of its own.

2.2 The rehabilitation of common life experience in the New Phenonomelogy

The comprehensive reconstruction of the phenomena of our common life experience by the New Phenomenology[14] gives us the chance to detect three failures of occidental thinking. [15]

 ➢ The current *psychologism*: the thesis of an inner world (soul, the steering rational I) separated from the outer, physical world:

 ➢ The current *reductionism*: the thesis of elementarism, i.e. the world consists of quantifiable atoms or substances, and nothing else;

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[12] Bahl, Anke (2009), 220: „Das Lernen aus Erfahrung […] – die immer nur die eigene sein kann – können sie [Qualifizierungsansätze zur gezielten interkulturellen Kompetenzentwicklung] keinem abnehmen. Daran ändert auch die Durcharbeitung des x-ten ‚critical incident' als praktisches Fallbeispiel nichts. Entsprechend muss der Lernbegriff stets beim Einzelnen, bei seiner Selbstreflexion ansetzen und meint Kompetenz hier vor allem als ‚Selbst-Kompetenz'".

[13] Earley, P. Christofer (2010), 36: „My point in discussing this work is that too much emphasis has been placed on identifying differences between cultures and people rather than focussing on the universals that bind people together."

[14] Hermann Schmitz is the founder of the New Phenomenology (Gesellschaft für Neue Phänomenologie): www.gnp-online.de

[15] Cf. Schmitz (1997a), 29s.

> ➢ The current *introjectionism*: the thesis that all the phenomena which stand against the elementaristic reduction (the always changing states of my body, my emotions, atmospheres, norms) have to be evacuated in the inner world.

Schmitz challenges the general trend of occidental philosophy that man consists of a material body and a soul (or "Geist", "mens", mind or the idea of consciousness as the *locus* of states of the soul). The cornerstone of the New Phenomenology is the rehabilitation of my body as the non-physiological *Leib* (which is felt by everybody in his own, not substitutable way) in contrast with physiological *Körper* (which can be described objectively from outside).[16] When something deeply affects me so that I may run the risk loosing control, I sense it through corporeal restriction, a modification of my vital impetus (not of the soul). Schmitz understands subjectivity, then, as anchored in emotional affection (*elementar-leibliches Betroffensein*).[17] This pole stays the ever present reference in the search of personal emancipation: The different modes of *personal regression* may be provoked for instance by shame, fear, pain etc. But some modes induce, too, *personal emancipation*, i.e. a new rise of revitalised personal balance through, for instance, laughing and weeping. Subjectivity coming from the corporeal reality of an individual then is the inevitable reference for creating personal identity in a lifelong process. The need to redefine our roles, to make explicit what at a certain moment is felt as authentically mine supposes the continuous process of personal regression (striving for the pole of corporeal subjectivity) and personal emancipation (striving for the pole of distance from the body, imagination, planning, realizing targets). Further, to define my world in contrast to the estranged parts always implies distancing myself from and returning to the emotional base of corporeal subjectivity.

3 Intercultural understanding as "corporeal" communication

„Corporeal communication is the basic form of perception."[18] This statement underlines the epistemological implications of introducing the *Leib* as the cornerstone of

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[16] The English language does not dispose of the conceptional difference between *Leib* and *Körper*. In this paper, the noun *body* and the adjective *corporeal* mean *Leib* or *leiblich*, if not indicated otherwise.
[17] Cf. Schmitz (2005c), 76-78.
[18] Schmitz (2005e): 147. „Leibliche Kommunikation ist die Grundform der Wahrnehmung." (Translation of the author)

the New Phenomenology. For our purpose the sound and comprehensive structure and dynamic of the "corporeal alphabet" (*Alphabet der Leiblichkeit*[19]) is the breakthrough to a new understanding of intercultural communication and competency. Humans always find themselves concerned and attracted by other living beings or things what is sensed as a demand to adjust oneself to it, for example listening to or participating in a dialogue or the fascination provoked by a sport event. This dynamic of the *Leib* or corporeal communication (*leibliche Kommunikation*) integrates objects (for instance the motorcyclist with his machine, the sportsman or the speaker with his partner) and unifies persons and things to a structure with corporeal dynamic.[20] Before any communication by speech has taken place, the glance between partners is one of the channels of corporeal communication which opens the corporeal space of direction (*leiblicher Richtungsraum*): It introduces between the partners a sort of ping-pong-play between initiative and reaction including the struggle for the dominant role. The phenomenology of perception explains the so called You-evidence (*„Du-Evidenz im vielsagenden Eindruck"*) with the notion of encarnation (*Einleibung)* as the one side of corporeal communication.[21] In these cases of You-evidence we spontaneously refer to the capability of the mutual antagonistic and solidarity mode of encarnation (*wechselseitige antagonistische und solidarische Einleibung*) as a natural corporeal resource without being able to determine its elements in detail.[22] This way of spontaneous understanding is **resonant corporeal understanding**. In all these

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[19] See the definition in Schmitz [2]1995: 121ss.: „Grundlegend für dieses Gefüge ist der Gegensatz zwischen Enge und Weite, die in den einander entgegen gesetzten Tendenzen der Engung und Weitung dargeboten sind. Engung und Weitung können entweder in inniger Verschmelzung oder in mindestens partieller Abspaltung von einander vorkommen. Im ersten Fall wird die Engung zur Spannung, die Weitung zur Schwellung. Spannung und Schwellung konkurrieren miteinander in der Weise, dass sie einander unterdrücken und gerade dadurch fördern. Diese Konkurrenz kann simultan und sukzessiv stattfinden. Im ersten Fall ergibt sich Intensität, im zweiten Rhythmus. Wenn dagegen die Weitung mindestens partiell von der Engung abgespalten wird, ergibt sich privative Weitung, und ebenso privative Engung, wenn die Engung mindestens partiell von der Weitung abgespalten wird. […] Zwischen Enge und Weite vermittelt die Richtung, die aus der Enge in die Weite führt. […] Außerdem wird das Leibliche noch durchzogen von dem Gegensatz zwischen epikritischer (ortsfindender) und protopatischer (der Ortsfindung entgegengesetzter) Tendenz. Die epikritische Tendenz ist nah mit der Engung verwandt, die protopathische wesentlich entfernter mit der Weitung."

[20] Cf. Schmitz ([2]1995) 127.

[21] Excarnation (*Ausleibung*) being the opposite tendency like loosing oneself when beginning to sleep or driving a car vs. sitting in a train when being attracted by the monotonous landscape. This intertwinement of tendencies towards corporeal contraction and expansion underlies also all human communication.

[22] Cf. Schmitz (2002): 44-53.

cases there is a lot of understanding, programming and problem solving without a reflexive consciousness.[23] In the same way are perceived emotional atmospheres.

Intercultural competence needs much more resonant corporeal communication than when acting in a familiar cultural environment. Normally we dispose of the common communicative and cultural competence (implicit knowledge about social patterns, conventional expectations, mother tongue, social styles / milieu, roles, private vs. public, common ethical behaviour etc.). If something contrary to our expectations is happening, we have the possibility to refer to an accepted meta discourse or – if this doesn't work – we are able to rely on an experienced style of personal regression which gives us the chance to quickly regain our composure through personal eman-cipation (self-adjustment about our actual possibilities, the short capitulation of com-posure when laughing or weeping, but also the deeper modification of our personality induced by shame, withdrawal or aggression).

But if we do not have the plain communicative and cultural competence of a different culture, the so called critical incidents are unavoidable. In opposition to the majority of experts I do not plead for tolerance of ambiguity or a strategic arrangement as the best behaviour. In my opinion this attitude is merely defensive and not a positive goal for intercultural communication. It is an intellectual flight from conflict, a bit like the *epoché* of the sceptical philosophy, and does not contribute to digest obstacles. My point is that we are better off by cultivating a flexible composure which accepts to be touched by other people's corporeal presence even if this sensible response to emo-tional and atmospheric impressions runs the risk of bewilderment and confusion *(Ent-fremdung)*. This experience may build the basis of a flexible composure which can be the vehicle of understanding in corporeal communication. When corporeal communi-cation really breaks off, for ex. with disgust or horror, we experience strangeness *(Ur-fremdheit)*, not just otherness *(Entfremdung)*.[24]

4 Intercultural competence as organ for situations

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[23] Schmitz (2009): 47s.: „In allen solchen Fällen wird vieles verstanden (Sachverhalte), vorgenommen (Programme) und bewältigt (Probleme), ohne dass mehr als weniges davon einzeln bewusst wird (gar nichts bei ganz unwillkürlichem Tun)."
[24] Cf. Schmitz 2010a.

Our common orientation in the world suffers of a physiologistic reductionism. What can't be quantified, measured and used for prognostic isn't really of interest. To recapture the huge masses of not quantifiable experience for a philosophical reflection, Schmitz developed his theory of the situations (*Situationen*). This new item – very different from what we normally call situation – is the capital contribution of the New Phenomenology to ontology. It is no exaggeration to speak of a revolution because Schmitz shocks the dogma of our modern world orientation: Perception supposes the activity of the five senses but it is much more.[25]

Situations contrast with constellations (*Konstellationen*), the common form of analytical knowledge. Instead of handling exclusively with constellations intercultural perception namely is perception of situations, i. e. what can't be formulated as an algorithm which works with a finite number of clearly defined elements.[26] As mentioned above, the not substitutable corporeal communication is the basic form of perception.

I'll take an unconventional method to illustrate the difference between situations and constellations. Let's look first at the figure of Sherlock Holmes[27] investigating a crime. His conviction was to conduct his investigation based on the scientific approach of observation, deduction, experimentation and conclusion. A well known quotation of his attitude is the following: "When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth". Holmes's primary intellectual detection method is deductive reasoning. "From a drop of water", he writes, "a logician could infer the possibility of an Atlantic or a Niagara without having seen or heard of one or the other." Holmesian deduction appears to consist primarily of drawing inferences based on either straightforward practical principles which are the result of careful inductive study, such as Holmes's study of different kinds of cigar ashes. Sherlock Holmes makes great use of forensic science, trace evidence, fingerprints,

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[25] The title of his newest book published in 2010 titles Beyond Naturalism (see Schmitz 2010). Cf. Schmitz (1997b): 123. „Der Rückzug auf einen eng begrenzten Bereich primärer und sekundärer Sinnesqualitäten als Quelle der aus der Wahrnehmung zu entnehmenden Informationen ist eine unnötige Konzession an das Dogma des Physiologismus, der so tut, als müßten solche Informationen über physikalische und chemische Reize ins Gehirn geleitet werden und dort auf gänzlich rätselhafte Weise in Sinnesqualitäten umgewandelt werden […]."

[26] „Wesentlich für Situationen in meinem Sinn ist so etwas wie eine Aura, ein Hof oder Hintergrund von Bedeutsamkeit. [Also etwas], das im Inneren mehr oder weniger diffus, aber zusammenhängend, nach außen jedoch abgehoben oder geschlossen ist. Es handelt sich um ein Mannigfaltiges, in dem nicht durchgängig – im Extremfall sogar überhaupt nicht – darüber entschieden ist, was darin womit identisch und wovon verschieden ist, so dass es nicht aus lauter Einzelnem besteht und insgesamt keiner Anzahl fähig ist." Schmitz (1997c), 187.

[27] I owe the comparison between Holmes and Maigret to Michael Großheim, who holds the Hermann-Schmitz-Stiftungsprofessur für phänomenologische Philosophie at University of Rostock.

ballistics and handwriting analysis as well as of chemistry, for instance toxicology examination.

This method of investigation has been challenged by Georges Simenon and his Commissaire Maigret. Maigret has his method, but it is not a recipe that others can follow step-by-step. His method is an orientation to reality and a commitment to understanding in a certain way. He snoops around spending the necessary time close to the *concierge* to inform himself of the inhabitants of the building. No impulse of speed, indeed, in the investigation: he takes his time, observes this world that he is learning to digest. No desire to arrest the guilty quickly: This is the famous method of Maigret, the gradual cajoling, bullying, communicating corporeally with the suspect as he uncovers the truth one layer at a time. So, Maigret, unlike Holmes, almost never refers to previous cases in the effort to understand the matter at hand. Maigret makes mistakes. The Maigret detective method is rejecting Holmesian deduction and scientific procedures, the Inspector preferring to silently absorb the atmosphere of a place, the characters and faces of its people. The confessions in the Maigret stories do not confirm his suppositions, but release the tensions of the drama in a final solution.

Holmes is the prototype of somebody believing in a world built by simple elements which are combined into more complex factors each of them linked with other factors and resulting in a net of constellations. His world is nothing but constellations, Holmes is a constellationist. Maigret, yet, is convinced of the derivate nature of elements and constellations. They are explanations of a chaotic reality which nevertheless leaves us with characteristic impressions of significance. For him constellations are explanations (objectivations) of a situation linked with a lot of other situations. Therefore to catch the resonance of the embedded and embedding situations permits him a more adequate understanding of what really happened. Maigret is a situationist.

But there are different ways to deal with situations which may be illustrated by the following anecdote[28]: In a train, a Franciscan monk meets a Jesuit. During the travel the Jesuit gets out his rosary, lightens a cigarette and begins to pray. After having finished the prayer the Franciscan very astonished asks him if it is allowed to smoke while praying. The Jesuit replies that there is no problem at all. He adds that he even

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[28] This anecdote has been cited several times by Hermann Schmitz.

got an explicit authorization from Rome and encourages his *confrater* to do so. Some time later both meet again. The Franciscan doesn't wait a long time to tell the Jesuit with a tone of reproach that he did not get the precious permission. On this the Jesuit asks with a smiling curiosity, for what purpose his *confrater* exactly had asked. „Of course if it is allowed to smoke during the prayer," the Franciscan answers. On that the Jesuit replies laughing: "It is not that way that you should ask for. You should have asked if it is allowed to pray while smoking!"

What seems to be just a nice joke shows on the other hand the difference of the two clergymen in dealing with situations and its intrinsic significance. Whereas the constellation to smoke and to pray at the same time is only one and the same, the situation from which stems this constellation is quite differently treated in both cases. To the Franciscan the prayer is loaded with a contemplative atmosphere which includes for him a norm how to behave adequately. He is struck by the authority of this norm, an example of restricting personal regression. Nevertheless the example of the Jesuit seduces him. To the Jesuit of the anecdote the prayer seems more to be an *exercitium* where the mood of contemplation is rather a question of method, of mental discipline which does not block personal emancipation. He is a virtuoso in analyzing the situation in a utilitarian perspective to extract a constellation helping to control the situation. The control of emotions allows the emancipation of the self. The Jesuit personifies virtuosity whereas the Franciscan is – in a somewhat naïve way – at the emotion's mercy.

Schmitz states: Constellations are derivate factors linked in the form of a web. They are indispensable for human life in the sense of planning and emancipation from circumstances. They allow to seize complex situations and to manage them following fixed objectives. But constellations are abstractions from situations: There is a loss of nuances and atmospheres which give the situation a specific depth, weight and authority. Situations are defined as internally diffuse, comprehensive entities with a characteristic meaningfulness.[29] So, the reduction to constellations runs the risk to reduce the meaningfulness to only one perspective and to become short sighted. Following Schmitz all our perception is based on situations with the specific ontological trait that situations exist before a differentiation between subject and object.[30]

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[29] Schmitz (2005a), 22. The theory of situations is explained in detail in Schmitz ([2]1995), 65-79.
[30] Cf. Schmitz (1997c), 191.

Here we join the results of the first part: It is the "subjective" body (*Leib*) which is the basis of corporeal (pre-personal) world knowledge, and situations being the ontological basis of this fusion between man and world. To get in contact with the situations of my cultural counterpart, to sense it corporeally and to slip into them could best describe what happens in intercultural understanding.

The intertwinement of the anthropological and the ontological aspect in the phenomenological revision is the following: The corporeal existence is an existence in situations, i.e. the dialogical structure characterizes the corporeal existence as well as the coexistence with the transcorporeal world. The *personal situation*, established on this corporeal basis, is embedded thus in a huge number of *common situations* and is challenged by them. Knowing that *situations* are defined as internally diffuse, comprehensive entities with a characteristic significance, they have a programmatic content: They attract atmospheres and emotions loaded with a wide range of more or less demanding norms.

Schmitz[31] distinguishes three different grades of normative impact:

➢ Type A: The common situation with the lowest impact, for ex. an association which relies on calculable interests. There's no emotional impact.

➢ Type B: The common situation with a notable emotional impact called inclusive common situation (*includuierende gemeinsame Situation*), for example a family where the children understand and respect the preferences of their parents without having the same ideas. There is an emotional impact but not with a personally addressed norm so that it is possible to take one's distance.

➢ Type C: The common situation with a strong emotional impact called implementing common situation (*implantierende gemeinsame Situation*), for example a partnership with a personally addressed high emotional norm how to behave. To take a distance is not possible and the loss of the partner induces a serious and lasting injury.

Intercultural common situations are in a large number those of type A, say most of Business and political or institutional contacts. Here is the place of intercultural trainings for a special purpose, foreign language is seen as an instrument. The common situations consist mainly of facts, programs to realize and problems to solve.

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[31] Cf. Schmitz (2005a).

Common inclusive situations of type B are the minimum we are aiming at with our international university exchange programs. To understand and respect another culture demands the capability to link my personal situation with a common situation of another cultural context (cf. Vico's *entrare*). Through impressive situations (*impressive Situationen*) and our resonant corporeal features we have to seize the opportunity if possible to grasp an edge of a segmented, more complex situation (*segmentierte Situatio*n)[32] which speaks to us in that way that we sense the implicit norm how to behave. Language is experienced not only as an instrument but as a segmented situation which may facilitate the process of implication in a common situation. Nevertheless without the resonant corporeal sense of the implicit norms, language awareness will not be sufficient to create situations of type B.

Common implementing situations of type C are the maximum because they suppose the sense of situations and the involvement in it in that way that a new common situation is created with its own implicit norms. Here we have the fact that a personal situation is embedded in common situations but creates also a new embedding situation as for example confidence or love. In this case language catalyses these processes but must be always supported by corporeal enacting being the bridge to the pre-personal subjectivity.

Intercultural competence demands competence for common situations. They can't be steered merely by rules stemming from quantifiable knowledge, aptitudes, capabilities, skills and qualifications. The ability to steer (intercultural) situations demands *esprit de finesse* what distinguishes an office-bearer from a good diplomat, a professional expert from a cultured expert, a manager from a good businessman. Analytical intelligence (*esprit de géométrie*), then, has to be complemented by hermeneutical intelligence, i. e. the sense for the meaningfulness of situations. This is in line with the results of labour psychology research exposed by Erpenbeck / von Rosenstiel[33] and represents a plea for a narrow concept of competence.

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[32] Schmitz (2005b), 54: „Eine segmentierte, zuständliche Situation wie die gekonnte Sprache ist die Persönlichkeit einer Person, gleichsam eine zähflüssig sich fortwälzende Masse binnendiffuser Bedeutsamkeit, in der unzählige solche Massen – partielle Situationen wie kristallisierte Erinnerungen, Standpunkte, Gesinnung, Fassung, Wunsch-, Leit- und Schreckbilder, Bedeutungshöfe des privaten Lexikons – gleiten, und die in unzähligen sie einbettenden Situationen ihrerseits gleitet, teils nur äußerlich eingeschlossen (includiert), teils tief eingewachsen (implantiert)."
[33] Erpenbeck, John / von Rosenstiel, Lutz (Eds.) (²2007): Handbuch Kompetenzmessung. Erkennen, verstehen und bewerten von Kompetenzen in der betrieblichen, pädagogischen und psychologischen Praxis, Stuttgart: Schaeffer-Poeschl Verlag.

In opposition to controlling constellations, dealing with situations demands corporeal resonance. Following Schmitz the best comparison is with a natural language.[34] The speaker needs for his speech the language from which he takes the recipes for the states of affairs, programs and problems, but not as a cook who before cooking can read the text. The speaker obeys in the situation of speaking to what has to be said, except of course when reading a text. That's why it is misleading to say that somebody dominates a language, it is more the contrary. A competent speaker takes blindly but accurately what is needed and moves on intuitively because he discovers a familiarity with the segmented situation even if he does not know all the elements of this diffuse, but characteristic and meaningful entity. So, the speaker just fits to a part of the language (segmented situation) and can not claim for more. What he finds in his personal situation is a segment with individual linguistic registers, habits, preferences or antipathies. This language segment is connected with and embedded in the familiar language as a whole and thus enables the speaker to handle it.

Realizing that we are not the cooks of intercultural affairs who know the recipe before cooking, it is not recommendable to "culturalize" rashly the behaviour of persons: The intimate knowledge about and the experience with the moulding force of cultural traditions is, of course, necessary but it would be misleading to stop with establishing a "cultural map". These constellations may block our perception. With a sharpened sense for phenomena we are able to open us to a resonant corporeal understanding in order to form and transform our composure following the highs and lows of personal emancipation and personal regression.

Intercultural competence, then, is the capacity to estimate the distance or proximity a certain culturally marked behaviour imposes to my composure in the sense that I can realize possible opportunities and threats for my own personal differentiation (Schmitz calls it *homoeostasis*[35]) by creating new common situations (inclusive or implementing). The idea of control dominant in constellationist approaches[36] risks to suppress the continuous intertwinements that take place between the poles of personal emancipation and corporeal implication. On that ground the drama between cultural marked role play and search for authenticity as well as the culturally marked

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[34] Cf. Schmitz (2005a), 25s.
[35] Cf. Schmitz (2010b).
[36] Cf. the compilation in Lüsebrink (2008): 224.

balancing between the subjective world (*persönliche Eigenwelt*) and the estranged world (*persönliche Fremdwelt*) becomes a rich field of phenomenological research.

5 Conclusion

The constellationist need to control intercultural encounters by an evidence based policy misses the intercultural challenge because it supposes a reductionist approach to reality. Intercultural competence can't be learned as an always applicable qualification or skill, it is an organ[37] ready to establish a resonant relation with another cultural common vs. personal situation. What we can say is that it happens sometimes succeeding to establish common inclusive or even implementing situations, which for a wile hold the participants through the authority of invisible norms and then can last for years. It's not so frequent that we are gifted by implementing situations which bind us strongly together through atmospheres or emotions and which cause us a profound sorrow if they finish.

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[37] Cf. Schmitz (2005d): 263.

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