

Intercultural Competence: a phenomenological approach

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Introduction

Successful communication in an intercultural context normally means to maintain the control over the state of affairs in order to reach a pragmatic goal. To drive the ball would be the metaphor, above all in a Business context. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, boosted by the Council of Europe, is much more circumspective: Intercultural competence is seen as a complex matter which demands a scientific research design leading to the operationalization of the concepts.¹ Beyond it the development of an “intercultural personality”² seems desirable. Based on a lot of descriptors, groups of specialists all over Europe are working on lists of resources, of macro- and micro-competencies which are supposed to support a better linguistic and cultural understanding of European peoples. Nevertheless, there remains a serious methodological doubt if the dissection of the intercultural learning process in ever-decreasing constellations is adequate. Obviously, there is the belief that ideally competencies may run as algorithms.³ This conviction betrays the questionable position that reality consists exclusively of singular and neutral entities to which men attribute meaning.

On the other hand 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.⁴ Instead of speaking about cul-

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² GeR, 106s.

³ Cf. the three levels of competencies which are defined as procedures in Rey, B. / Carette, V. / Kahn, S. (2002). *Lignes directrices pour la construction d'outils d'évaluation relatifs aux socles de compétences*. Bruxelles: Rapport auprès de la Commission des outils d'évaluation, quoted in *RePA*, 14s. Cf. for an opposite view Erpenbeck / von Rosenstiel (²2007) who advocate a narrow definition of competency, and Müller-Pelzer (2010).

⁴ Earley (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.”

ture as an over-individual power which binds us, several authors focus on clearing the notion of self-competence.⁵

In two ways, then, the intercultural discussion turns to be an anthropological issue: What does it mean if two persons coming from a different cultural background are interacting and try to communicate successfully? The answer of this question is contingent on an ontological interrogation: How and what do we perceive when getting in contact with a different culture context? These two basic perspectives generate the need for an inspection of actual philosophical debates. This paper is meant to outline to which extent the New Phenomenology of Hermann Schmitz⁶ may contribute to the understanding of intercultural communication and competency.

1. The anthropological basis of Intercultural Competence

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) arguing that the greater part of spontaneous experience of the world is lost sight of to apprehensive attention (cf. Schmitz ²1995: 115ss.). What he calls the psychologistic-reductionistic-introjectionistic objectivation (cf. *ibid.* 17-25) means to enclose the fresh experience of a person in a private inner world. This dogma has the fatal effect that the person is hindered to reach the surrounding world because for this purpose it should overcome the barrier of its inner world. 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 and not substitutable) in contrast with physiological *Körper* (which can be described objectively from outside).⁷ When something deeply affects me so that I may run the risk losing control, I sense it through corporeal restriction, a modification of my vital impetus (not of the soul). Contrary to the old Phenomenology (Husserl) and its theory of intention-

⁵ Bahl (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‘“.

⁶ Gesellschaft für Neue Phänomenologie (GNP), founded in 1992 by Hermann Schmitz (*1928): www.gnp-online.de. The first English translation of one of his articles has recently been announced: *Emotions Outside the box – The New Phenomenology of Feeling and Corporeality*, translated by Rudolf Owen Müllan (German title: *Entseelung der Gefühle*), in cooperation with Jan Slaby.

⁷ 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.

ality (i. e. the constitution of the world from the pure consciousness), the New Phenomenology of Hermann Schmitz begins in the sense of *principium* with the experience of affective involvement (*elementar-leibliches Betroffensein*) as *subjective fact* (*subjektive Tatsache*, cf. Schmitz 2009: 31). The three dimensional physical body is a relative place in the world getting its position through measurable distances. It is our instrument to create something, to champion a cause, also the antagonist if we think about ascetic exercises. On the contrary the *Leib* is an absolute place⁸, it is the organon of motoric competence when we dance or perform something without thinking about rules. For our purpose the sound and comprehensive structure and dynamic of the “corporeal alphabet” (*Alphabet der Leiblichkeit*⁹) is the breakthrough to a new understanding of intercultural communication and competency.

2. Corporeal communication

„Leibliche Kommunikation ist die Grundform der Wahrnehmung.“¹⁰ This statement underlines the epistemological implications of introducing the *Leib* as the cornerstone of the New Phenomenology. The sensing of my own body is in itself dialogical because the corporeal dynamic finds its articulation in the antagonism between the poles of narrowness (*Engepol*) and of width (*Weitepol*). We struggle against the wind, an experience which can't be distributed on an inner side and an outer side, we are struck by an infectious rhythm, by a charming or threatening glance, we find our

⁸ Schmitz (²1995: 125): „Unter ‚Leib‘ verstehe ich das Gegenstandsgebiet alles dessen, was jemand ohne Rücksicht auf das Zeugnis der fünf Sinne und des perzeptiven Körperschemas – des aus dem Sichbesehen und Sichbetasten gewonnenen habituellen Vorstellungsbildes vom eigenen Körper in der Gegend seines Körpers von sich spürt.“ „*Einleibung* ist die Spreizung des schon zum eigenen Leib im vitalen Dialog gehörigen Dialogs von Engung und Weitung in solchem Maße, daß der eigene Leib dadurch mit begegnenden Sachen (z.B. Personen, Leibern, unbelebten Körpern), die ihm nicht angehören, zu einem Gebilde, das die Struktur leiblicher Dynamik besitzt, vereinigt wird.“

⁹ See the definition in Schmitz ²1995: 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 protopathischer (der Ortsfindung entgegengesetzter) Tendenz. Die epikritische Tendenz ist nah mit der Engung verwandt, die protopathische wesentlich entfernter mit der Weitung.“

¹⁰ Schmitz 2005c: 147. „Corporeal communication is the basic form of perception.“ (Translation of the author)

way in the crowd by catching and responding to suggestive corporeal movements etc. The dialogical character of corporeal sensing (*leibliches Spüren*) means that the concerned person finds himself on both sides, for instance in the case of ake being an antagonist but not an intrusion. This dialogical structure of corporeal sensing explains that it may be distributed also on partners (cf. Schmitz ²1995: 136). Men 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 (cf. Schmitz ²1995: 127).

This intertwinement of tendencies towards corporeal contraction and expansion underlies also all human communication: 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.¹¹

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.¹² This way of spontaneous understanding is resonant corporeal understanding. In all these cases there is a lot of understanding, programming and problem solving without a reflexive consciousness.¹³ In the same way are perceived emotional atmospheres.

¹¹ 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.

¹² Cf. Schmitz 2002: 44-53. Further on playing tennis or fencing are examples of antagonistic encarnation. On the other hand we have sports with mutual solidarity encarnation as singing together or rowing together. Playing football combines both. The frequently quoted empathy is just the bad conscience of an intellectualism trying to repair the lacks of a psycho-physiological dogmatism. Neither the projection hypothesis nor the identification hypothesis is reliable. Cf. Schmitz 1997b.

¹³ Schmitz 2009: 47s.: „In allen solchen Fällen wird vieles verstanden (Sachverhalte), vorgenommen (Programme) und bewältigt (Probleme), ohne dass mehr als wenig davon einzeln bewusst wird (gar nichts bei ganz unwillkürlichem Tun).“

3. The search for equanimity

The corporeally obtrusive phenomena would condemn man to a life between surrender and opposition if we hadn't the capability to personal emancipation (*personale Emanzipation*) from our body. This capability enables man to become a person, i. e. to take a stand on his feelings and emotions, to look for confrontation and to distance, i. e. neutralize or objectivate phenomena which before were subjective as modes of affective involvement (*affektives Betroffensein*).

In comparison with life in our familiar world the specific challenge we face in intercultural contacts is due to a dramatization of what Hermann Schmitz calls the instability of the person (*Labilität der Person*, cf. Schmitz 2010a: 301ss.). The way we deal with this challenge is *homoeostasis* (ibid.), the balancing of counter-rotating tendencies. This movement take place on three levels: the search for composure as a person (*Fassung*), the wandering between the surrounding personal situation (*persönliche Situation, persönliche Eigenwelt*) as a shell and the always moving person, and finally the balancing between the distanced, "estranged" parts of the personal world (*persönliche Fremdwelt*). These three interconnected dynamics interact and create the integrative search of the person for *homoeostasis*.¹⁴

But it would be an error to believe that man could escape by decision or analysis to his corporeal status. The axis of corporeal states (*Achse leiblicher Befindlichkeit*) will stay a companion throughout life; Schmitz compares its role to the bass accompaniment in tonal music. This corporeal presence is the reason for all type of subjective fluctuations but also the guarantee not to loose oneself on a high eccentric level of personal emancipation or in the storms of dramatic shifts from personal emancipation to personal regression. The person needs the breaks of personal regression to prevent the splitting between a façade and a closed subjective life. So, the personal composure is never a definite acquisition, above all when young people are concerned.

Intercultural competence needs much more corporeal communication than when acting in 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

¹⁴ The following part refers closely to Schmitz 2010a.

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 emancipation (laughing and weeping, but also the modification of our personality: 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 emotional and atmospheric impressions runs the risk of bewilderment and confusion (*Entfremdung*). This experience may build the basis of a flexible composure which can be the vehicle of understanding in corporeal communication.¹⁵ When corporeal communication really breaks off, for ex. with disgust or horror, we experience strangeness (*Urfremdheit*), not just otherness (*Entfremdung*).¹⁶

¹⁵ An example of the widespread possibilities of intercultural understanding is the following story: In 1960th my future parents-in-law made a journey through Spain and Portugal. Seen from a German perspective it was a fascinating time of discovery of new countries, without any "all inclusive mentality". In the North of Spain, in Ribadesella, Asturias, they happened to have serious troubles with their car. As my future-parents-in law, despite of their hunger to travel, were not really well-off people, an expensive, perhaps overpriced repair of their car represented a real threat to them. Above all, they didn't speak Spanish and felt more or less helpless. So, both were very relieved when the following day the smiling car mechanic handed them over their car asking just for some pesetas. They paid the amount but my future mother-in-law quickly bought a huge wine grape and offered it to the friendly car mechanic who was overwhelmed by this gesture. This man, late José Luis, became a close friend of the family and later on I inherited this friendship which lasted until his death in 2000. This case of intercultural communication was not based on the well trained attitude of intercultural awareness (the dos and don'ts in Spain, role attribution to female and masculine behaviour, "corporeal language" etc). In the following years my language capability certainly facilitated the meetings but it didn't change or intensify the relationship between my mother-in-law and José Luis. What currently is called non-verbal and paraverbal communication, was not the complement of verbal communication. Above all, instead of culturally coded signs this anecdote reminds us that nobody has to learn what to do when he/she is happy, is sad, when we feel anxious or relieved. These experiences are not firstly physical states of our body we can see and touch but belong to our *Leib*. Corporeal communication made it possible that my mother-in-law and José Luis met each other without making explicit by speech what they felt. Concretely speaking they intuitively relied on the corporeal competence of reciprocal antagonist incarnation. Glances, mimic and gesture are corporeal channels which may charm, subject or stimulate us and change our corporeal sensing.

¹⁶ Cf. Schmitz 2010a.

4. Bridging the gap between person and the personal situation

The person (not as a core character, the steering I or the rational soul / mind / brain) is twofold because she is her own partner in the way that she can't make her out but on the other hand has to show a face to the others, i. e. the never reached balance between "who am I really?" and the façade or role. The person, then, is in movement adjusting her authentic personal situation.

This case of *homoeostasis*, the balancing of counter-rotating tendencies, comprises the rise from the pre-personal subjectivity (*affektives Betroffensein*) to personal life. In this process, retrospective, prospective and present elements interact in the way that the previously diffuse states of affairs, programs and problems, mingled with emotions, atmospheres and norms are now made explicit. The process of differentiation is so complex that the person only partly and consecutively is able to establish a shell. But on the other hand the individual has to present a face to the others. This rather solidified face or role is a partner and the question of authenticity is raised. The uncertainty about what belongs to me (subjective relevance) and what belongs no longer to me (neutralized subjective relevance), is the reason why Schmitz speaks of a twilight zone (*Grauzone*, cf. Schmitz 2010b: 340) because this domain may be subject to a dramatic change between personal regression and personal emancipation.

Especially young people flight the challenge to objectivize themselves in a certain role by personal regression: to the expansive type of personal regression belong for ex. silly behaviour, exuberance, ecstasy, rage or lazy day dozing in the sun. The contrary type of contractive personal regression includes all occasions of shock, may it be perplexity, fright, pain, but also enthusiasm, an overwhelming happiness or admiration.

This form of instability, nevertheless, is compensated by the ambiguity (*Multivalenz*).¹⁷ Disintegration is thus overcome by the personal project where the person confirms to be something which is unambiguously more determined than itself. It is the chance of a new *contenance*, but more authentic only if the importance of corporeal disposition (temperament) is integrated.

On the other hand building and developing a complex identity by conscious attributions has to pass sooner or later the test of authenticity by going back to the initial

¹⁷ Cf. Schmitz 2010b: 315s

affective involvement (*affektives Betroffensein*): Some of the data may conserve or gain the status of subjective significance and those losing this excellence will be distanced / objectivized. This process of objectivization (*Ablösung*) may occur lingering but also abruptly like the popping off of the bark of the tree. Both modalities are well known during a longer stay abroad: "Today, I don't understand how I ever could be fond of X and detest Z!" This observation *post festum* reflects the slow procedure. On the other hand one may be struck by the sudden evidence that one's assumptions were wrong and losing one's footing. This evidence *in actu* shows the effect of the abrupt experience and illustrates at the same time the moment when one loses *contenance*.

5. Extraversion, introversion, ultraversion

There is the sphere which transcends the personal situation: the distance between the world of my own (*persönliche Eigenwelt*) and my estranged world (*persönliche Fremdwelt*). The balance on this level depends on the way the borderline between both is more or less clearly defined or more or less pushed in one or the other direction. The extraverted personality assimilates nearly everything so that everything may fascinate him. Compared with this personal profile, the introverted personality makes a clear cut between both domains: The subjective world is prior and must be defended against intervention coming from the distanced personal world. The ultraverted personality, too, is conscious of the borderline but embraces the whole world of relevance to him and sacrifices his subjective world for the sake of duty or "the company". In reality, the individual profile of a person is a mixture of these models, including transitions during the lifetime. Here we have the third application of the search for *homoeostasis*.

6. Ontology: situations vs. constellations

Intercultural contacts are built on the ground of intracultural experience but have the characteristic to intervene much oftener into our fairly balanced state of being with the consequence that sometimes we can't help to ask ourselves: What is real? What is appearance? Is there a clear structure in the puzzling impressions I have to face? Does the truth depend of my perspective, partly or entirely?

In this ontological area the occidental tradition together with modern science hinders the understanding of how we perceive the world, with especial consequences for intercultural contacts. It is a fascinating panorama which we find in Schmitz' extended historical and systematic analysis. Impossible to resume it here! Just one hint: Our orientation in the world suffers of a physiologicistic 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.¹⁸

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.¹⁹

I'll take an unconventional method to illustrate how we manage our relation to the world. Let's look first at the figure of Sherlock Holmes²⁰ 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

¹⁸ The title of his newest book published in 2010 is "Jenseits des Naturalismus" (Beyond Naturalism). Schmitz 1997a: 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 rätselhafter Weise in Sinnesqualitäten umgewandelt werden [...]“

¹⁹ „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 (1997b: 187).

²⁰ I owe the comparison between Holmes and Maigret to Michael Großheim, who holds the Hermann-Schmitz-Stiftungsprofessur für phänomenologische Philosophie at University of Rostock.

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, 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 *conciierge* 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 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 anecdote²¹: 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

²¹ This anecdote has been cited several times by Hermann Schmitz.

while praying. The Jesuit replies that there is no problem at all. He adds that he even 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.

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.²² So, the reduction to constellations runs the risk to reduce the meaningfulness to only one perspective and to become short sighted. Following Schmitz (1997: 191) all our perception is based on situations with the spe-

²² Schmitz 2005a: 22: „Eine Situation [...] ist charakterisiert durch Ganzheit (d.h. Zusammenhalt in sich und Abgehobenheit nach außen), ferner eine integrierende Bedeutsamkeit aus Sachverhalten, Programmen und Problemen und eine Binnendiffusion dieser Bedeutsamkeit in der Weise, daß die in ihr enthaltenen Bedeutungen (d.h. Sachverhalte, Programme und Probleme) nicht sämtlich – im prä-personalen Erleben überhaupt nicht - einzeln sind.“ The theory of situations is explained in detail in Schmitz²1995: 65-79.

cific ontological trait that situations exist before a differentiation between subject and object.

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.

7. Common situations

Rising from a pre-personal level we always live with situations which may obsess us and which may be neutralized to organize our personal life but they also are the stuff of social life. The personal situation is embedded 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, Schmitz distinguishes different grades of normative impact:

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

Type B: The common situation with a sensible impact called common inclusive situation (*gemeinsame inkludierende 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 impact called common implementing situation (*gemeinsame implantierende 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.

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. Through impressive situations²³ (*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 Situation*)²⁴ 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. Both types of intelligence²⁵ emerge from the corporeal communication and its features as impressive situations, suggestive figures (*Gestaltverläufe*) and synesthetic qualities (*synästhetische Qualitäten*)²⁶, i. e. the resonant corporeal intelligence.

In opposition to controlling constellations, dealing with situations demands corporeal resonance. Following Schmitz the best comparison is with a natural language.²⁷ The

²³ Impressive situations bring to light their significance (internally diffuse, comprehensive, characteristic) in one go, for example the driver who reacts appropriately avoiding an accident under difficult circumstances (rain, traffic etc.). Cf. Schmitz 2005b: 52ss.

²⁴ Op. cit., 54: „Eine segmentierte, zuständige 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).“

²⁵ Cf. Schmitz 2005c: 135.

²⁶ Cf. Schmitz 21995: 140-146.

²⁷ Cf. Schmitz 2005a: 25s.

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 pretend to 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 (*homeostasis*) by creating new common situations (inclusive or implementing). The idea of control dominant in constellationist approaches²⁸ risks to suppress the continuous intertwinements that take place between the poles of personal emancipation and corporeal implication. In the process of personal emancipation²⁹ there is the chance of implication by abstraction (or re-subjectivation, for example forming convictions) and of explanation (*Explikation*) by neutralization (desubjectivation, for example moving something in the realm of my estranged world, *persönliche Fremdwelt*). On the other hand in the process of personal regression there is, too, the chance of implication by the experience of affective involvement (*affektives Betroffensein*, re-subjectivation of something neutralized, for example overwhelmed by

²⁸ Cf. the compilation in Lüsebrink 2008: 224.

²⁹ Cf. Schmitz 2010a: 217.

emotion) and explanation by separating what is not belonging to the personality (de-subjectivation, for example an imagined qualification).

On that ground the drama between cultural marked role play and search for authenticity as well as the culturally marked balancing between the subjective world (*persönliche Eigenwelt*) and the estranged world (*persönliche Fremdwelt*) becomes a rich field of phenomenological research.

Conclusion

Shall we further on write Intercultural Competence with capital letters? I don't think so. First, the cross cultural approaches don't deserve this title: The constellationist need to control intercultural contacts misses the intercultural challenge. Second, intercultural competence can't be learned as an always applicable qualification or skill, it is an organ³⁰ 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 while 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.

³⁰ Cf. Schmitz 2005c: 263.

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