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Globalization and the Second Foreign Language

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Abstract

The paper explores the function, purpose and responsibility of foreign language colleges in a globalizing world. Entry point of the reflection is the widely shared consensus on the ambiguous nature of globalization. If remaining on its present course, the negative effects of globalization could easily turn out disastrous for the project as a whole. The repetition of a bang as the one bringing to an end an extensively interconnected world early in the last century is not impossible. Globalization has to be managed better. Educating those professionally facing this task, institutions of higher learning have to cultivate the competence or competences required. The paper describes as one of the negative effects of globalization the shrinking of spaces of unrestricted responsibility and the atrophy of spaces of restricted responsibility. International language, understood here as a practice that technically could be embodied by any language but at present is embodied by English, is considered the language of restricted responsibility. Foreign language colleges do have to teach the international language, but they have to teach other foreign languages – the *second foreign language* – as well. Teaching and studying the second foreign language cultivates a competence that goes beyond the competence of mastering just one more foreign language. Doing so cultivates awareness of the unsaid in any discourse, above all the discourse produced by international language. Making use and extending a distinction as introduced by Levinas, the paper characterizes the picture of the world as produced by international language as *mask* of the world.

The *face* hidden behind this mask – or frozen into it – is the dimension of emerging possibilities. The competence cultivated by the teaching and study of a foreign language facilitates the step from the *mask* of the world towards its *face*. Any attempt of managing globalization better has to start from the *face* of the world. The competence of proceeding from the *mask* to the *face*, therefore, is vital. Managers lacking this competence, no matter how well equipped otherwise, will always come too late. Cultivating a competence vital for the task of managing globalization better, the responsibility of foreign language colleges is a considerable one.

*Zwischen den Hämmern besteht
unser Herz, wie die Zunge
zwischen den Zähnen, die doch,
dennoch, die preisende bleibt.*

R. M. Rilke, *Duino Elegies*

1

In Search of a Competence

The following could be a quote, although it is none: “Remaining on its present course, globalization may well bring about a reality cheating on possibilities.”¹ It could be a quote from a pamphlet *against* globalization. This would be the least interesting option. It could be a quote from a discussion exploring alternatives. In that case it might continue this way: “But globalization does not have to remain on its present course. It can and must be managed. And it

¹ One of the inspirations of this fictitious quote is the following sentence from Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics*: “Womit negative Dialektik ihre verhärteten Gegenstände durchdringt, ist die Möglichkeit, um die ihre Wirklichkeit betrogen hat und die doch aus einem jeden blickt.” / “The means employed in negative dialectics for the penetration of its hardened objects is possibility – the possibility of which their reality has cheated the objects and which is nonetheless visible in each one.” Adorno (1966), p. 60 / Adorno (1973), p. 52.



must be managed better.” This option would be a more interesting one. But there is Giddens’ phrase of a *runaway world*, or his earlier reference to the Hindi *Dschagannath-waggon* as a useful metaphor for describing what is happening.² Perhaps there is a moment of intrinsic unmanageability in the process of globalization. This process, after all, is without parallel, leading towards an inside without an outside, or an outside, as we later on will have reason to modify, without an inside. It is a process not like any other. Managing this process may require more than bringing into play a set of tools and competences available already but for some reason neither in play nor in charge.

As globalization has been poorly managed so far, we have no reason for assuming tools and competences for managing it better are abundant. And we may have to go one step further. Tools and competences for managing globalization better may not only be lacking, we may not even be certain which tools and competences those lacking are supposed to be. As institutions of higher learning and education do have the responsibility of offering training in lacking qualifications, this conceptual uncertainty defines a research agenda of some importance.

A discussion on this lacking as well as unknown competence I would consider the most interesting context for my fictitious quote. In that case, it could continue the following way: “Whatever the competence capable of managing globalization better may be, part of it will have to be the competence of retrieving or responding to possibilities the present course of globalization is cheating on.”

² The phrase *runaway world* is the title of the *BBC Reith Lectures* later on published as a book. See... For the metaphor of the *Dschagannath-waggon* see Giddens (1990). / German edition (1995) p. 173



The Second Foreign Language

Here, I will be taking the line the study and teaching of foreign languages, and in particular the study and teaching of a second foreign language, has a contribution to make to cultivate this crucial aspect of the competence we are looking for.

Most of the time, the language we study as a first foreign language is the language considered the international language in a given setting. At the present time, the international language is English, and this will probably remain so for quite a while. I am using the term *second foreign language* in this specific sense, meaning a language studied and taught after or in addition to English. From here, the point I am trying to make can be rephrased as follows: The study and teaching of one or more foreign languages in addition to the study and teaching of English has an important contribution to make to cultivate a competence – unknown so far - required for managing globalization better.

An Experiment

Making such a claim requires some empirical backup. For this purpose I rely on nearly fifteen years experience of teaching German as a second foreign language to speakers of Mandarin Chinese in a German Department while at the same time teaching graduate classes on European thought and European literature using English as a working language. Presenting my data in a form compatible with the constraints of a short paper has some difficulties. I will condense what I consider relevant into the form of a brief report on a *quasi*-fictitious experiment.

(English edition not available at the time of writing this draft).



The experiment reported is fictitious, because it has not been carried out exactly as reported. It is *quasi*-fictitious, because it *has* been carried out, although in a less clear cut way. Reporting it in its original form would be difficult to manage within limited space.³ I will present it in the form of an experimental setup that can easily be repeated to corroborate results.

The setup consists of two weekly workshops on current international events. In the first workshop, participants are using sources in their mother language and sources in English. In the second workshop, they are using, in addition to that, sources in a second foreign language. Working language is English. In weekly sessions, participants present and discuss events of the past week.

It is very likely; presentations will be somewhat unorganized in a first phase of the workshop. Participants will heavily rely on sources in their mother language. Presenting information researched in one language in another language easily produces distortions. Above all, the information researched in their mother language will be closer to them than it can remain when they are presenting the same information in English. Instead of closeness we may as well speak of involvement. Using their mother language, participants will be involved with the information they are researching. The language is involving them because they are involved with the language. There will be a whole world of subtle responses to each piece of information, different for each participant, the unique world of a particular moment of encounter. Presenting the information in English, to them

³ The experiment has been carried out within a class taught over a whole term. The whole class, we might say, was the experiment.



the information presented will not remain the same, even if the content presented indeed is the same.⁴

After a while, the impact of English sources will show. Presentations will become better organized, a clear sequence of bits. International language purges involvement. As long as we do not confuse the clarity of a presentation purged from involvement with clarity in general, the clarity any presentation should aim to achieve, there is nothing wrong with this. After another while, students will be capable of presenting events from different perspectives as well, and with the same acuteness and clarity. The first workshop will celebrate this as its goal achieved. Further it cannot go.

The second workshop has to go further. Once the mentioned stage has been reached, the coordinator will put emphasis more than before on sources in the second foreign language. Participants will be expected to spend roughly the same amount of time with sources in each of the three languages they are using. Another phase of disorganization is likely to develop. Using sources in their second foreign language, participants will experience a form of closeness and involvement in analogy to the involvement they experienced when primarily researching in their mother language, but closeness and involvement that is not the same. It is closeness and involvement experienced from the outside. This will interrupt the clarity of presentation achieved during the previous phase of the workshop. Having purged their earlier involvement in order to achieve this clarity, they encounter a closeness and involvement they cannot purge, because it is not theirs.

⁴ An issue hard to decide. But I cannot go into this here.



Researching information in their second foreign language, the same information they may have been researching from an English source before, will produce the awareness of something lacking in any presentation purged from involvement. Participants of the second workshop will cultivate this awareness. After a while, they will regain their competence of using a language purged from involvement – if they wish doing so. But they will be aware there always remains something unsaid in this language. They will be aware of this not in the form of a general insight or conviction. It will not be an awareness produced by reflection but by perception from moment to moment.

2. International Language

Each one of us has been born into the midst of others we depend on for a long time. During that time, the option of withdrawal is not available to us in a physical – and therefore in a factual – sense. We depend upon the midst we have been born into. This factual absence of the option of withdrawal we may call *vulnerability*. Many of those encountering us in our vulnerability do have the option of withdrawal in a factual sense. They could walk away. If all made use of it, we would not survive a single day. Most of the time, those forming a midst do not even think about this option. There is an absence of the option of withdrawal in a sense overriding its factual presence. We could call this non-factual absence *normative* and explore various meanings of normatively that might apply moral and legal normatively among them. Settling with a paradox instead and considering this non-factual absence a *fact* too, although a *non-factual* one is enough for my present purpose. With that I want to point at the simple reality of



an inability of withdrawal when encountering the vulnerable, although the factual option of withdrawal may exist. Encountering the vulnerable, we tend to engage in establishing and sustaining a supportive midst. It is a response preceding any deliberation on how to respond. Deliberations, including those on the source of this response, come afterwards.

We may give a name to this source, without claiming it was more than a name. We may call it *responsibility*. Any deliberation on or theory of this source could be considered a theory of responsibility. We do not plan approaching such a theory at this point. For our purpose it is enough pointing at the reality of what any such theory would be a theory of.

Providing support when encountering the vulnerable requires resources. Without resources, responding to the vulnerable in a way driven by *responsibility* cannot but remain a mere attitude. An attitude establishes a positive atmosphere that may already function as a form of support. But it cannot remain all. Moving on from displaying a supportive attitude towards providing support, we have to acquire resources.⁵ Trying to acquire resources to support the vulnerable we encounter, we sooner or later will have to enter some form of centrifugal path.

We have to leave in order to bring something back. Thus turning away from the midst we are engaged with, we turn away, but our face does not. We engage on the centrifugal path with our face looking backwards. Looking ahead is the inverse of our backward looking face. We may as well say, and I will come back to this terminology towards the end of my reflections, what is looking ahead is a

⁵ In paradise, we just would take what is necessary from the next tree. Here, we are concerned with a world where resources are scarce.



mask, while our face remains looking backwards towards what we feel responsible for.

Encountering the vulnerable along the centrifugal path, nothing keeps us from displaying a supportive attitude. Providing support would imply withdrawing or withholding resources from the midst we are occupied with *back home*. Responding to the vulnerable whenever and wherever we are encountering it in ways shaped by *responsibility*, we would display a supportive attitude everywhere without being capable of moving on towards providing sustained support anywhere. The step from displaying a supportive attitude towards providing sustained support seems to require blocking or restricting responsibility from a certain point onwards.

As a utopian rest in these otherwise somewhat grim reflections I would like to keep the assumption most people do not actually welcome this restriction.⁶ With that, I am touching at an issue most philosophical and cultural traditions are debating under titles like “are human beings by nature good or evil?” What we can observe, is at least a tendency not to begin restricting responsibility at our doorstep but to postpone this restriction to a point further on along the centrifugal path. Encountering the vulnerable close by, we tend to engage in providing support. As we are occupied providing direct support elsewhere, we engage in providing support indirectly by contributing to networks of solidarity. Moving along the centrifugal path and postponing restriction of responsibility again and again, the networks of solidarity we are engaged in forming and sustaining are getting ever more inclusive. And *we* are many, each one of us engaged with



establishing and sustaining a midst providing direct support to the vulnerable he or she encountered first, moving from there along a centrifugal path in order to acquire resources, and contributing along the way to networks or solidarity indirectly supportive to all.

From a certain point onwards, however, our potential for further postponing restriction of responsibility is exhausted. We cannot but restricting it, thus establishing a border between an inside, where we feel obliged providing direct or indirect support to the vulnerable we encounter, and an outside, where we do not. It should be noted this border, different from my first description above, is an established border. We are not crossing it as something there. We are establishing it by restricting responsibility. Once established, such a border indeed is there. But it must not forgotten it is an established, not a given one.⁷

Wilderness

The space of restricted responsibility we establish by establishing this border is a kind of wilderness. We may put it the other way round as well. *Wilderness* means the very space we are establishing by establishing the mentioned border. *Here* is what we care for. *There* is the wilderness we may and have to venture into for acquiring resources we need. Establishing this border, we are establishing a space that may legitimately be developed, exploited, or otherwise made use of in the interest of the space where our responsibility

⁶ Exploiting vulnerabilities of others we encounter on the market place, that is how I would spell out my utopian assumption a bit more in detail, most people, if they had a choice, would rather not do. As is often the case with utopian assumptions, this may be counterfactual. So be it.

⁷ Our potential for postponing restriction of responsibility could grow. This would allow making networks of solidarity more inclusive. If borders are taken as anything else but established, this could become an unnecessary hindrance for doing so. National borders in Europe at the present time may be a case in question. But this again is another issue.



remains unrestricted.⁸ The space thus established is not an empty space, however. Understood literally, this is a tautology. Resources would be hard to come by in empty space. But I am rather talking about others having declared the other side of the border *their* outside, *their* space of restricted responsibility, *their* wilderness. The wilderness we are venturing into is a contested one.

We form part of their wilderness, as they form part of ours. Forming part of their space of potential resources, we cannot be anything else to them but a potential resource. The same holds true the other way round. To us, *they* are a potential resource as we are to them. In a space established as a space of potential resources, this cannot be otherwise.

The potential resource we thus encounter is competing with us for other resources in that same space. The mentioned space may not be what it first appeared to be. It has been established as a space of potential resources. However, it has not been established by us alone. It is a co-established space, a space established as a space of potential resources by us and by *them*. This defines forms of action and interaction possible and required within that space.

There are three clusters of action. A first one concerns the establishing and securing of access to resources. The crop from the same piece of land cannot be made use of twice, nor can the same ton of water, of copper, of iron. And the same gallon of oil cannot be burnt twice. Establishing and securing access to resources is a zero sum game. The access of others has to be blocked, our own given the form of something that cannot be otherwise. The most familiar form of this game is the carving out, the expanding and the defending of territories. A second cluster

⁸ Once established and embodied by institutions and symbols, the presence of the border is reassuring us again and again of the mentioned legitimacy.



of action develops accessible resources. Land has to be farmed; copper and iron have to be taken from the depth of the earth, to be processed, to be formed into tools, weapons, other goods. Resources processed and unprocessed have to be distributed and relocated within the established territory, be it for consumption, for processing or for further processing. These two clusters of action concern others, those co-establishing the space of potential resources together with us, only in the form of territorial exclusion. They are exercising the second cluster of action on their territory as we do on ours. This cannot be all. As we are encountering each other in a space established as a space of potential resources, there has to be a cluster of action addressing the other as a potential resource. In the language of today everything belonging to this cluster can be summarized under the heading *international trade and cooperation*.

We are trying to get our share of results produced by second clusters of action as exercised on other territories by exchanging results of this cluster as exercised on ours according to terms favorable to us. Terms are favorable as long as we receive more than we give. What is more and what is less depends on the respective system of values. What counts as less here may count as more there. Theoretically, everybody could receive more in an ideal world.⁹ Unfortunately there are lots of resources and products required but not available everywhere. A certain amount of aggression cannot be purged from this third cluster of action, although aggression there may often be aggression with a smile.

Playing the zero sum game of the above first cluster of action, the question whether enough resources are left to others does not count. Their establishing and



securing access to resources they need we consider their problem, not ours – their responsibility, not ours. *Mutatis mutandis* this holds true for the third cluster of action. Whether enough – not to speak of a fair share – resources and products remain in the hands of others in transactions of international trade and cooperation we consider their problem and responsibility. Lack on their side counts as our affair only as far as consequences extend beyond their borders.¹⁰ As long as it does not it remains an internal affair. Action in both clusters is governed by the very restriction of responsibility formative to the space of action these clusters belong to. More precisely put, the restriction of responsibility becomes visible there as an inversion of responsibility. It is the responsibility of the backward looking face. Better, it is the responsibility of the inward looking face occupying itself exclusively with interests of the constituency it belongs to and acting accordingly in encounters outside.

Inverted responsibility is the formative principle of international space as it developed after the peace of Westphalia in 1648.¹¹ According to a widely shared view, globalization is about to bring this form of international space to an end or at least to drastically transforming it. On my view, this transformation is above all an extension of range. International space as it used to be before this extension I call *Westphalia I*. International space as it is about to become I call *Westphalia II*.¹²

⁹ Whether glass beads or diamonds are *more* is – theoretically – a matter of the system of values guiding perception.

¹⁰ Lack of water upstream is an internal affair as long as there is sufficient water available from other sources downstream. If everyone has to take from the same river, a dryness upstream is not an internal affair. A struggling economy ceases to be an internal affair only when it begins disrupting the international financial system.

¹¹ For a brief summary see Baylis and Smith (1977), p. 40-42 or any other textbook on international relations.

¹² On debates concerning the transformation of international space see Youngs (1999).



International Language: a Practice

Before turning to *Westphalia II* we must draw out some implications of *Westphalia I* for the issue that made us begin the present reflections in the first place, the study and teaching of foreign languages.

In a historical perspective, the first one of the above three clusters of action concerns above all military history, colonial history and the history of diplomacy. The second one concerns the history of nation states and their overseas possessions. The third one concerns the history of economic exchange across borders and over long distances. It concerns the history of infrastructures and institutions making such exchanges possible, of the flow of goods passing through over time, and of balance sheets on each side.

At least the first and the third cluster of action imply the growth of contacts between agents who do not have the same linguistic and cultural background. Apart from actual events of violent confrontation, everything happening in these two clusters of action can only happen because a practice called *international language* developed.

International language is primarily a practice and not a language, although a particular language has to be made use of for cultivating and exercising this practice. Exercising it means using a language in a way mere fluency in the respective language would not imply. Using English as an international language has to be learnt by native speakers of English as well.

The practice I am talking about means using language with a backward looking face, using it as a representative of interests, and be it as a representative



of ones own interests alone. In principle, this practice is nothing new. We only have to think of the tension between philosophy and rhetoric as documented in Plato's dialogues. In scale it is, however. The two mentioned clusters of action are labor intensive. A considerable number of people has been and is being trained in a language foreign to them as part of an education preparing for positions offered somewhere within one of these two clusters of action. Positions offered there are usually attractive. Today and within the foreseeable future the language that has to be mastered as an international language to be qualified for any such position is English. Although there may be exceptions, the use of English those studying English as part of a professional education are preparing for is likely to be the use of English as a representative of interests. That is what the professional use of English – which must be distinguished from its native usage or lifeworld usage – usually is about.

There is no space for providing detailed examples here, and I would have to do more research to be capable providing them. An example familiar to everyone probably is the English of well trained employees in internationalized service industries like tourism. The key note of their English is *care*. The language of care is an essential element of the lifeworld use of any language. The transformation this language undergoes when recycled by international language could not be made more obvious than by a scene in a recent movie. There, the manager of international hotel in New York is telling a customer from Ohio: “If and as long as you are a paying guest, your concerns are mine. If not or not any more, you do not exist.”¹³ The recycled language of care as we find it in international language indicates the reduction of responsibility as the formative



principle of this practice. And this should not come as a surprise: According to what has been developed, international language is the practice of communication inherently belonging to a space established by the restriction of responsibility.

What I should add here is this: The establishing of this space in the form of *Westphalia I* and the practice of international language are not mutually independent. The practice of international language reproduces this space and the space reproduced stabilizes the practice as a meaningful and efficient one. This space-stabilizing practice is always performed by a particular person. Engaging in this practice, speaking or making use of international language, the person is stepping into the space of restricted responsibility, thus reproducing this space and reproducing himself or herself as an agent within this space. This latter reproduction must not be underestimated. If my utopian assumption is correct, leaving the space of unrestricted responsibility is always painful, even if this step is being performed to acquire resource the space of unrestricted responsibility we are belonging to is in need of. Reproducing ourselves as agents in international space of the form *Westphalia I* we are splitting off what we are doing there from our judgments as far as they belong to the space of unrestricted responsibility.

3

Westphalia II

Is there anything like globalization at all? There has been and still is, on the one hand, a cluster of developments, processes and policies producing rapid

¹³ The literal exactness of the quote I cannot guarantee. But that is without relevance here.



change, and together with it appalling trajectories of poverty, inequality, social disintegration, desolidarisation as well as environmental destruction. There is, on the other hand, the practice of approaching all these processes together as dimensions of an overall process called *globalization*. The question asked concerns the legitimacy of this practice.

The mentioned processes are taking place in very different areas, economical, social, political, environmental, to mention just a few. Is there anything in these processes that would allow us approaching them as different dimensions of the same, and doing so in a significant way?

There are other terms using the same logic. One of them is *internationalization*, describing as well an aspect of change in more than one area. The internationalization of a marketing strategy is certainly not the same as the internationalization of the editorial policy at a newspaper or a radio station, and both again are different from the internationalization of elementary school curricula. Other examples are *Westernization* and *universalization*. Both concern a change of standards, procedures and outlooks transcending any particular area activity, thus indicating, that at least is the idea, a direction common to many of them. The practice of considering certain aspects of change in different areas as different dimensions of the same, in other words, is an attempt of making sense, of trying to determine the overall direction of what is or has been happening. From here, the question whether or not there is anything like globalization can be rephrased as a double question. Is there anything happening terms in use for the mentioned purpose cannot take care of, thus requiring the introduction of a new term for making sense? Is the term *globalization* capable of filling the gap, and what does that imply for the meaning if this term?



A considerable segment of the literature on globalization proceeds the other way round. Terms already used for making sense are being used again for characterizing what globalization was all about. Following Scholte (2000), we can list at least four such terms. Three have already been mentioned: *internationalization*, *Westernization* and *universalization*. The fourth one is *liberalization*. Undoubtedly, these terms do describe formative aspects of what is happening. An increase of interaction and exchange across borders has taken place. A process of homogenization shaped by the West and together with it a certain universalisation of standards, procedures and outlooks can hardly be overlooked. The deregulation of transfers between countries dominates the agendas of most if not all governments. The mentioned four terms, however, are perfectly sufficient for describing the processes they have been and are being used to describe. If globalization is supposed to be one of the mentioned processes or any conceivable constellation of some or all of them, the term *globalization* is redundant, at best a mere name for the respective constellation. Otherwise put, if we feel sufficient sense of what is happening can be made by using the four mentioned terms, introducing any other term for the same purpose will only be a matter of refurbishing our rhetoric. There is nothing wrong with this, but we must be aware of what we are doing. Is globalization, then, nothing but the most recent flower of intellectual rhetoric, invented by intellectuals bored with constantly reprocessing the trope of the *post-whatever*?

Following again Scholte (2000), there is one aspect all four mentioned terms do have in common. They all share – or at least are “reconcilable” – with a particular understanding of social space. This understanding is most evident perhaps in the term *internationalization*. The core idea this term is based upon is



inter, “between”. As an increase of exchanges *between* nations, internationalization depends upon a social space organized in territorial units and concerns the exchange *between* these units. The same holds true for *liberalization*, meaning a deregulation of transfers *between* economic spaces organized on the basis of territorial units. *Universalisation* and *Westernization* are processes of territorial extension, a spread of procedures, standards, outlooks, practices from the territorial West into other territories.¹⁴ All four terms describe aspects of a process of change against the background of social space understood along territorial lines. The very increase of exchange and interdependence described and conceptualized as *internationalization* does only appear as inter-nationalisation if and as long as we take – or can take – social space arranged in territories as a constant. *Mutatis mutandis* the same holds true for the three other terms as well. All four terms, otherwise put, are condensed narratives, trying to make sense of what is happening by telling four different stories of change, while sharing the background assumption of the mentioned organisation of social space remaining unchanged.

Refiguration of Social Space

This indicates their limit. Something ineffable from the perspective of the four terms discussed has been happening indeed.¹⁵ Using Scholte’s terminology, a

¹⁴ See Scholte (2000), 47 and 49-50, with modifications.

¹⁵ Debates on *whether or not anything at all was happening* were common in the nineties. Its most notorious version probably has been the debate on global warming. That belongs to the past. At least in central Europe, the view something indeed *was* happening became commonplace with the flooding of summer 2002, not without consequences, as commentators believe, for the electoral success of the Red-Green coalition in Berlin, no matter how thin that success may have been. In other fields, the shift towards a rhetoric of certainty happened earlier. Peter Dicken opens the first chapter of the 1998 edition of his work *Global Shift* with the phrase: “The notion that something fundamental is



major aspect of change as taking place in recent decades can be described as the establishing and multiplication of contacts neither restricted by time, nor space, nor territorial borders. Social space has been refigured. Borders and territories still do count, but they alone do not define the basic matrix of social space any more. A transterritorial dimension is cutting across the territorial dimension of social space and massively reshaping what is happening there as well. As long as we use *globalization* explicitly as a term pointing at processes of change forming or in some form related to the mentioned refiguration of social space, *globalization* is a useful term and everything but redundant.¹⁶

Westphalia II

As long as international space has the form of *Westphalia I*, we are stepping into a space of unrestricted responsibility at the end of what I called a *centrifugal path*. Along that path we are contributing to and supported by networks of solidarity. The supportive midst we are trying to sustain and the networks of solidarity we are contributing to and supported by form the space of unrestricted responsibility we are belonging to. We are leaving this space at the end of the centrifugal path, but we are returning into it. Bringing together standards we have to follow there with those we are following here may be difficult. As long as a meaning to our restriction of responsibility there can be given here, we can manage. The procedure is risky and went wrong often enough.

happening, or indeed has happened, in the world economy is now generally accepted.” (Dicken 1998: 1). Scholte (2000) titles his first chapter decisively “What is happening?” (13) In that bold field of research which first called itself *Literary Theory* and later bluntly *Theory*, a rhetoric of the *event*, of something dramatic happening, approaching, already there, postponed, was commonplace at least since the seventies, but this may be – although not necessarily – another matter.



To make the tragedy we have to restrict responsibility at all bearable, all kind of myths declaring superiority here and inferiority there have been brought into play. What we are observing now does not require this any more. The results are not likely to be less devastating.

The refiguration of social space Scholte is talking about can be rephrased as a compression of the centrifugal path. This compression is largely brought about by a deterritorialisation of the second and the third of the above three clusters of action. Production has less and less the form of developing and processing local resources. The developing and putting together of a product increasingly draws from resources at different locations. Distance hardly counts and information technology solves problems of coordination that would have been insurmountable two decades ago. Efficiency requires sourcing on the most favorable terms that can be achieved. This requires restriction of responsibility here, as part of the process of production. Decisions based upon this restriction become part of everyday routine. Marketing has been deterritorialised as well. In principle, a product can be marketed anywhere. It cannot be marketed anywhere in the same way, but it has to be marketed anywhere on the best possible terms that can be achieved, be it in front of our doorstep or at the other side of the world. And there, not very far from there, sometimes even closer, the space of restricted responsibility is about to begin.

Commentators on international relations sometimes proclaim as one of the effects of globalization the end of foreign policy. On this view, any event anywhere in the world does have the form of an internal affair. This may be so,

¹⁶ For a survey of activities and institutions forming the transterritorial dimension see Scholte (2000), p. 50 – 61.



but the metaphorical setup is misleading. As developed above, international space in terms of *Westphalia I* is a space of restricted responsibility marked off from spaces of unrestricted responsibility. Foreign affairs are affaires within this very outside of restricted responsibility. Proclaiming the end of foreign affairs and the global reach of internal affairs suggests the end of the outside. If the outside is the space of restricted responsibility, the opposite describes what is happening. Far from fading away, the outside, the space of restricted responsibility, is extending its reach and the inside – spaces of unrestricted responsibility – is dissolving.

Foreign affairs in the textbook sense may come to an end. But internal affairs in the textbook sense are coming to an end too. They are taking the form of external affairs. Constituencies relating to each other based upon the principle of restricted responsibility are getting smaller and smaller. A status we are not too far away any more in some parts of the world would be individuals relating to each other as sovereign states did in international space of the form *Westphalia I*. This would be *Westphalia II*, the absence of any space of unrestricted responsibility, humans relating to each other exclusively according to the paradigm of foreign affairs.

As far as spaces of unrestricted responsibility do have the form of networks of solidarity, the shrinking and dissolving of such spaces can at present be studied in continental Europe. Against the background of what has been developed, a key figure of the discourse promoting this process could not be more telling. What will be increasingly necessary, this discourse is telling us, is taking responsibility. This means above all shouldering costs privately that previously have been shouldered by various insurance schemes. For a large sector of the present workforce this means contributing the same or even more to social



insurances while receiving less support and having to fund more privately in times of need. Those who can increasingly avoid contributions to social networks altogether and try taking care of themselves and their future through private investments. Minus the withdrawal from still existing insurance schemes, this precisely is what the term *responsibility* in the mentioned discourse means: taking responsibility for oneself, acting according to ones own interests – restricted responsibility. The rampant shadow economy is the embodiment of restricted responsibility pure.

Worth mentioning in this context is as well the model of the ideal participant of the job market of the future as drawn by various policy blueprints. He or she will not be looking for long-term employment. She will be entrepreneur of herself, constantly adapting the skills and expertise she has to offer to market conditions and marketing them on the best possible terms the market allows. The successful participant of the future job market will be the sole representative of her interests and responsible only to herself. She is the limit form of the backward looking face, with a constituency reduced to the representative herself.

From here, I finally can come back to the fictitious quote at the beginning of my reflections. Running its present course, that is what the quote said, globalization was cheating on possibilities. According to what has been developed, one effect of globalization is the dissolution of spaces of unrestricted responsibility. It is cheating, consequently, on possibilities unrestricted responsibility has to offer. And I do think anything we really care for somehow has to do with unrestricted responsibility. The life of a representative of our own interests, above all of a successful one, does have its attractions. In the middle of it all, however, always remains the expectation of something else to come. With



the melting away of spaces of unrestricted responsibility, the experience it never does quite likely will not remain the privilege of Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon.

Work to Do

The question was how to manage globalization better and which competence was required for doing so. Depending upon which dark side of globalization we are focusing on, there probably are many answers to this question. Here, my focus is the dissolution of spaces of unrestricted responsibility.

A world without spaces of unrestricted responsibility, with humans relating to each other always and anywhere as sovereign states do in international space of the form *Westphalia I* would not be a world we would like to live in. The more we are progressing towards such a world, the more we seem to observe desperate and sometimes even pathological attempts of preserving spaces of unrestricted responsibility or of reestablishing such spaces. Part of the fragmentation which accompanies globalization as its shadow may be related to this.¹⁷ The revival of nationalisms and of religious loyalties certainly is. Managing globalization better will have to sort out how globalization is compatible with spaces of unrestricted responsibility. To separate the vision of such a space from restorative or fundamentalist eclecticism of any sort, the establishing and cultivation of spaces of unrestricted responsibility should be addressed as part of any wise policy of globalization and not as a factor of resistance against globalization.

¹⁷ See, among others, Menzel (1998)



Pursuing this the administrative way by drawing and implementing blueprints would be a mistake. Spaces of unrestricted responsibility can only be developed as responses to a recognized need. We may even have to go one step further. Spaces of unrestricted responsibility cannot *be* developed. They have to develop by themselves. What can be done is affirming the need the developing of such spaces, if it happens, is responding to.

4

Towards the Face: The Second Foreign Language

There would be something deeply cynical about even asking the question which need that was. Repeating the numbers another time would come close to cynicism as well – the number of millions who do have to live beyond the poverty line, how many of them do have to make ends meet from less than one dollar a day, how many poverty related deaths occurred since any given point in time. All this is well known or can be known. Depending upon the sources we rely on, precise numbers may vary. The fact of tremendous, poverty related suffering is beyond dispute.

Where is the outcry? Why is it that no election can be won by focusing on world poverty as a major campaign issue? It is known and can be known as well,



that a transfer of wealth that hardly would affect the standard of living of citizens in developed countries would make a difference, the difference between misery and dignity as well as the difference between death and survival. The argument, consequently, the attitude towards world-poverty in developed countries was a case in point for the unavoidable restriction of responsibility in terms of the above centrifugal path is not valid. Taking this together with a far reaching consensus on ethical universalism, the silence and the lack of political will to make a difference that easily could be made are the more astonishing.¹⁸ We have to assume many reasons for this. A major one is to be related to the ways world poverty is present and presented in developed countries.

Making use of a distinction introduced by Levinas may be helpful at this point. Levinas distinguishes between face and mask.¹⁹ Looking at the other in a way that results in describing or characterizing him or her, we are responding to the mask only. Whether the description remains abstract or develops into a compassionate report does not matter. *Qua* description, it can only be description of a mask, the product of responding to the other *as* mask, which means, the product of failing to respond, of not responding at all.

The *face* we cannot describe. Proceeding from the *mask* to the *face* marks the collapse of description; it marks as well the breakthrough from description towards response. And response in Levinas' terms means accepting unrestricted responsibility. From here, the well informed familiarity with world poverty as we find it in developed countries equals the presence of the other as mask.

¹⁸ For a recent discussion of this puzzle see Pogge (2002).

¹⁹ See Levinas (1971).



Otherwise put, the existing discourse on world poverty in developed countries does not allow proceeding from the mask of world poverty towards the face. Given the mentioned silence, this statement comes close to an analytic one. If the given discourse on world poverty – the form world poverty is present in developed countries – would allow or encourage the step from mask towards face, the pressure of ethical universalism would have been irresistible for a long time already.²⁰

According to what has been said above, the study of a second foreign language cultivates the competence of being aware of the unsaid in any discourse, above all in discourses making use of international language. More precisely, the unsaid in question concerns the dimension of involvement. In view of world poverty, a discourse merely providing information on what is the case, although of the utmost importance, is not enough. Presenting the mask, allowing us looking at it with a backward looking face, mask looking at mask, such a discourse fails bringing about the involvement of a response in Levinas' sense. The mentioned competence is the competence of collapsing this discourse, of collapsing the mask towards the face. Making use of this competence does not primarily mean producing another discourse. And it is not at all a noisy matter. Rather, it means beginning to act, showing what can be done by doing it, exhausting to the utmost the concrete possibilities of actively responding to world poverty any given condition provides. In the last instance, the mentioned competence is a competence of being and becoming aware of these possibilities and – by making use of them – making others aware of them too. As world-poverty is and

²⁰ An indication the step from mask towards face has begun would be the emerging of world poverty as a campaign issue. Optimists might see traces of this in some European countries.



increasingly will be one of the main destabilizing factors in world politics, even the most sober school of thought will have to consider this competence as an increasingly relevant one.

Runaway World

Taking this one step further, we may come back to the metaphor of the *Dschagannath-waggon* as used by A. Giddens. The metaphor is supposed to describe a world running its course, with those supposed steering it helplessly standing by. Giving another twist to this metaphor may be worth trying.

The core idea of the metaphor is a shrinking of possibilities to a dynamics leading into a single direction. The respective single direction seems to constantly emerge and reemerge. Neither is it the product of deliberation or choice nor of the interplay between the two and given conditions. The direction emerges as the ongoing collapse of all possibilities except one. There are at least two ways of understanding this collapse, however. The first one corresponds to the standard reading of the metaphor. Those supposed to steer have lost control. As the magician's apprentice described by Goethe, power and skills were sufficient for bringing about a certain dynamics, but they are not sufficient for controlling its course. But the paralysis of the helmsman does not have to be a paralysis of muscles, skills and power. It could be a paralysis of imagination paired with a paralysis of situational awareness as well. Possibilities we do not see do not exist. They may be considered existing ones too, but only in the abstract. We do not *have* them, are not capable making use of them.



The vulnerable, as we understood the term so far, is that which requires a space of unrestricted responsibility in order to remain what it is; or, even, to become what it is; or, even more, to become what it could and is supposed to be. The newly born child we all once have been is the most straightforward example. Taking this together with what can be known about those millions who do not even have a remote opportunity of becoming what they could be, further comments become redundant. The example must not too much restrict our understanding of the term, however. The vulnerable is everything which requires a space of unrestricted responsibility in order – we may take all three aspects of the description into one – to become what it could be. In the last instance, this leads us one step beyond the field of *given* possibilities. We may call this field the field of *emerging* possibilities.

There may be possibilities bluntly given. Most are not. Most have to be taken in order to be given. This is not a paradox. The first step of any creativity is an illustration – perhaps more than an illustration. The beginning, the entry point, the point of departure has to be given. We always start somewhere. But the given beginning has to be affirmed, recognized – cared for. Only if cared for does the given beginning turn into a real beginning? Only then, something begins. Caring for given beginnings is unrestricted responsibility in the most comprehensive sense of the term. Given beginnings are emerging possibilities. Caring for them transforms them into possibilities really there, into given possibilities.

Emerging possibilities require trained or cultivated eyes. The contraction of spaces of unrestricted responsibility brought about by the present course of globalization is not favorable to the kind of cultivation required in order to become aware of the emerging. The smaller the scope left to unrestricted



responsibility, the more restricted the space of roaming where we could cultivate our eyes for the emerging, for that which might require attention in terms of unrestricted responsibility. For that reason, the present course of globalization appears to produce a certain blindness for the emerging, thus reducing given possibilities to the bluntly given ones. A dynamics cut off from the field of emerging possibilities and more and more tied to bluntly given ones may indeed be characterized as a runaway dynamics.

Internationalization

Once the study of the first foreign language – which means, as I am using the term, of the international language, at the present time: of English – has reached a certain level of maturity, two images of the world will begin to compete: the picture of the world, including the picture of the respective cultural location, produced by international media, and the picture produced by and through the language of that very cultural location.²¹ For more than one reason, the leverage of the former will be a strong one. First: The picture of the world as produced by international media will be taken as the picture of the world as seen by the world. It will be taken as a picture transcending all limitations imposed by local perspectives. Second: Professional and other advantages accessible to anyone fluent in the international language are overwhelming. Decisions based upon familiarity with the picture of the world produced by international media are considered farsighted, progressive, and up-to-date, those based upon the picture produced by local media alone are considered narrow and insular. Three: The



picture of the world as produced by local media increasingly relies on international media anyway.²²

In spite of this strong leverage, the picture produced by international media and the fact this picture is increasingly shaping the informational basis of decision making, an impression of lack and inadequacy remains and even grows. According to what has been said earlier, the picture produced by international media lacks the dimension of involvement. Although everyone probably is experiencing it, different groups will respond differently. To those strongly involved with international transactions, the issue will appear at the periphery of their concerns only, if at all. To those strongly involved with the local or regional language, its cultivation and enrichment, with the cultural fabric tied to it, with attempts of developing, even transforming this fabric, but without tearing it apart, the increasing weight of an uninvolved picture of the world and of themselves is likely to develop into a major concern. Between the two other positions will develop, more or less close and more or less far away from the two mentioned extremes.²³

As long as internationalization can prove being a synonym for economic well-being, positions will remain well balanced. Even those worried by the weight of international media will happily enjoy grants and other forms of support for cultural activities made possible by the flourishing of international business transactions. Once the economy begins stuttering and competition at the

²¹ The level of maturity I have in mind has been reached, when a significant percentage of the population at a given cultural location has become capable of consuming international media, news media above all.

²² Why reading reports on CNN reports in a local newspaper, when CNN is available in the living room and English fluency sufficient for consuming English speaking cable TV at ease?

²³ Each particular spectrum of opinions on globalisation indifferent countries, regions or intellectual climates can be read as a historical and local concretisation of the mentioned abstract spectrum.



international level becomes fiercer, the middle region of the mentioned spectrum begins thinning out. A polarization of views develops.

On the one hand, we will find those urging for an even higher level of internationalization, and for that reason an even higher level of fluency in the international language and of familiarity with the picture of the world as seen by the world. On the other hand will be those promoting a certain degree of withdrawal, of looking inwards. In most cases, neither one of the two polarized position denies the legitimacy of the other. Those urging for even more internationalization will specify their goal as internationalization with a local or regional face. Those promoting an increase of emphasis on the local and regional often see their efforts as an attempt of trying to achieve precisely that. Only in extreme cases a clash occurs. In that case, we speak of opposing fundamentalisms, an internationalist fundamentalism on the one side and a local or regional fundamentalism – using a religious, nationalist or other rhetoric – on the other. Although in principle the exception, this clash, and by far not the much discussed clash between cultures or civilizations does and will produce disruptions that do and will occupy regional and international politics in the present and in the time to come.

Looking at the logical structure of this conflict, we discover a deadlock. De-emphasizing the picture of the world as produced by and through international language by re-emphasizing the picture produced by and through the local or regional language will produce a picture more involved but as well a picture much narrower than the de-emphasized one. Undoubtedly, it will produce a whole set of positive affections, among them the feeling of homecoming, of belonging, of a defined position within the flurry of events. This may trigger a dynamics of caring



less and less for the narrowing of view which is the price. Working against this will then appear as an aggression against the regained cultural and national self-assurance.

Working for the internationalized view of the world appears as a blockage of cultural self-assurance. Working for cultural self-assurance appears a narrowing of view. The term *glocalization* tries to suggest a third way out of the dilemma, but *glocalization*, after all, is only a word.

The Second Foreign Language

What is required at this point is an option of regaining an involved picture of the world without having to pay the price of increasing narrowness. An involved picture fulfilling this criterion cannot be found at the hither side of the picture of the world as seen by the world. It can only be found at its other side, not *via* withdrawal from the picture produced by international language, but by transcending it. Transcending it *how* and *towards where*?

The study of a second foreign language in any case leads beyond the dichotomy of the international and the local. As indicated already, bringing into play a second foreign language means bringing into play a third picture. It is a third picture not only in a numerical sense, not just one more, but a third one in kind. In addition to the involved picture of the local language and the uninvolved picture of the world as seen by the world, the second foreign language is bringing into play the involved picture which is neither mine nor ours. It is the involved picture of the third person. There is always an involvement different from the one shaping our picture of the world. The involvement lacking in the picture of the



world as seen by the world, consequently, is not one and the same. It is our involvement and it is theirs.

With the second foreign language in play, a withdrawal from the picture of the world as produced by and through international language does not lead towards the fullness and homecoming we may be looking for. The picture we have been retreating into is a picture shaped by our involvement. So much remains true, and that is what makes the picture different from the picture produced by and through international language. But there always remains an involved picture different from ours. Our critique of the uninvolved picture we are retreating from does not provide any justification for leaving other involved pictures out of the equation as well. But how could we possibly bring other involved pictures into our equation? Their involvement, after all, is not ours. Or is it?

The study of a second foreign language, that is how we have been putting it earlier, cultivates our awareness of the unsaid in any discourse. It cultivates our awareness of the unsaid in international language no less than our awareness of the unsaid in discourses produced by our local language. This competence given and sufficiently cultivated, there is no temptation for retreat from international language. The only temptation there is lies beyond it. As a means for describing that very beyond and what it might mean approaching it, I rely for a second time on Levinas' terminology, although somewhat extending it.

The picture of the world as seen by the world, which means, by everyone and therefore by no one in particular, we may consider, corresponding to the picture of world poverty as presented by and through international language, as mask. Mask, no one in particular, again looking at mask. What then is the *face* of



the world frozen into this *mask*? The face of the world is the dimension of emerging possibilities in all its concreteness, a concreteness changing from moment to moment.

The competence cultivated by the study of a second foreign language, the competence of being and becoming aware of the unsaid in any discourse, will help us to proceed from the mask of the world towards its face, towards the dimension of emerging possibilities. Reaching this point, we are involved again. It is not a position of involvement established through withdrawal and narrowing of perspective. The involvement reached, right the contrary, is the point of involvement where all local forms of involvement converge like a cluster of circles with one point in common and through this point open towards each other. Involvement that does not reach into the dimension of emerging possibilities is no less frozen than the mask of the world as presented by international language. Reaching into that dimension, local circles of involvement are open, open towards each other. Only with such a point of openness included do they provide the fullness we may be looking for. But it another fullness, by far not the fullness of retreat.

Conclusion

Pulling, finally, some of the threads together: We started from the worry, globalization might not only open up possibilities, it might be cheating on possibilities as well. As a configuration of space in terms of the often discussed space-time contraction, globalization immensely multiplies points of contact.



Undoubtedly, this is a process of multiplying possibilities as well. On its present course, this process goes together with a shrinking of spaces of unrestricted responsibility. Among other things, unrestricted responsibility means solidarity. A multiplication of possibilities producing a shrinking of spaces of solidarity provides reason for concern.

An initial question was how globalization could be managed better. We asked for a competence capable of contributing to such an effort. In view of the facts, with globalization steering into a direction hardly desirable, we cannot assume any such competence was available in abundance. We then took the line, the study of a second foreign language, cultivating the awareness of the unsaid in any discourse, was cultivating a competence useful for the mentioned task.

Among other things, the shrinking of spaces of unrestricted responsibility is hampering our awareness of emerging possibilities. Requiring spaces of unrestricted responsibility for its cultivation, the shrinking of such spaces produces a progressing blindness towards emerging possibilities, thus reducing the space of possibilities to bluntly given ones. We saw this reduction as the process bringing about the impression of fatality often associated with globalization on its present course. If awareness of emerging possibilities indeed does require spaces of unrestricted responsibility for its cultivation, and it is hard to see how it could be cultivated outside of such spaces, their shrinking appears to imply the unavoidable *Good Bye* of our access to the dimension of emerging possibilities.

Bringing into play Levinas' distinction between mask and face at least allows consideration of an option that might keep us from giving way to the seemingly unavoidable.



Proceeding from the mask towards the face is not a cognitive act. We know we have achieved the step when we feel *summoned*, as Levinas sometimes says, into unrestricted responsibility. Against the background of what has been developed, we can read this event of being summoned into unrestricted responsibility as an event constituting a space of unrestricted responsibility. If such events do occur, and let us assume they do, they are events countering the mentioned shrinking. Extending Levinas' terminology, we characterized the picture of the world as produced by and through the practice of international language as mask of the world. The dimension of emerging possibilities we characterized as its face. Taking this together with the competence cultivated by the study of the second foreign language, we can proceed to our concluding move.

The study of a second foreign language cultivates awareness of the unsaid in any given discourse, including the discourse of international language. The unsaid as understood here does not mean anything in particular, anything we might have forgotten to say but easily could say later on. It is an unsaid intrinsically belonging to any discourse. To any discourse it belongs, *because* there are many discourses, many languages – and the other way round. Awareness of this produces an opening, transparency, intrinsic distance within any discourse, including the discourse produced by and through international language. Cultivation of this awareness, producing the mentioned inner distance, prepares the event of being summoned by the face – the face of the world, the dimension of emerging possibilities in its particular concreteness at the respective moment. Again, this is not a cognitive act. Awareness of emerging possibilities means being summoned into unrestricted responsibility for these possibilities. It means, as has been said before, constitution of a space of unrestricted responsibility. It



means a movement countering the ghastly shrinking of such spaces, countering the fatality of the *Dschagannath-waggon*.

The responsibility of foreign language colleges goes far beyond the teaching of foreign languages, although this already is difficult enough.

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