

European Ethnology and Intercultural Communication

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“European Ethnology” was proposed as a name of our discipline in Arnhem in 1955. Although it is now used in several European countries, it is still unclear what the name really denotes and what distinguishes it from “Folklore”, “Ethnography”, “Cultural Anthropology” or “Ethnology”. The article attempts to determine the position of European Ethnology and to outline some of its goals and tasks: While folklorists largely focus on the study of their own, national folk cultures, and ethnologists on the study of alien, exotic cultures, European Ethnologists should concern themselves with the study of both “own” and “alien” European cultures and their interrelations and interactions, both from the emic and the etic perspectives. Thus, on the macro-level, comparative and interethnic studies should be a main concern, while on the micro-level, face-to-face inter cultural communication should become an integral object of European Ethnology. It is argued that the problems resulting from increased culture contact caused by migrations, by the European Union, by globalization etc. make the application of ethnological knowledge to the solution of these social problems indispensable – and make new demands on European Ethnologists.

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I

The name European Ethnology appeared for the first time in 1937, as the title of a journal¹, and in 1955 it was proposed as the new name for the discipline at the International Folklore Congress in Arnhem. It was meant not only to replace the various, and partly encumbered old names like “Volkskunde”, “Folklore”, “Ethnography” etc., but was also to serve as a unified name in all European countries, positioning the discipline in the larger framework of ethnological sciences (cf. Lutz 1970: 29; Hauschild 1982: 11). Since then, European Ethnology has been introduced in some European countries, particularly in Scandinavia, as a name for the discipline (cf. Stoklund 1972, 1981), and it has been used in the titles of some introductions (Svensson 1973, Weber-Kellermann 1985, Brednich 1988); in addition, in spite of initial hesitation (cf. Lutz 1970), several institutes in the German speaking countries (Marburg, Frankfurt, Münster, Innsbruck, Vienna, Berlin) have since used this new name. In 1967, the journal “Eth-

nologia Europaea” was founded, and soon afterwards several other journals with analogous names followed.²

After the experience of nationalism in many European countries, the name European Ethnology was, in addition, also chosen to signal a change of perspective. In the 19th century, *Folklore or Ethnography* developed and gained legitimation as a “science of one’s own people” (Lutz 1970: 27f); the interest in the description, collection, study, preservation, and often exaltation of one’s own, ‘national’ (peasant) culture were its main tenets. In contrast, ethnology from its very beginning has focused on the study of *alien*, i.e., non-European “primitive” cultures. The consequence of this division of labor was that the cultural diversity of Europe, and the “otherness” of the European neighbors, remained largely unstudied, the assumption being that each country was best equipped for the study of its own folk culture. European Ethnology was meant to close this gap and to make Europe as a whole the object of ethnolog-

ical research. Today, 40 years after the Arnhem congress, it is time to take stock and to ask the question: What does European Ethnology really mean, what is its relationship to folkloristics and ethnology today, and has it fulfilled the expectations, or is Leopold Kretzenbacher's sobering description of "*Ethnologia Europaea* ... as a fata morgana floating before us" (Kretzenbacher 1986: 3) still to the point? In any case, the name has as yet not been able to fully replace the old and established names of our discipline.

II

What then does European Ethnology really mean? There is general agreement that it means more and something other than simply "Ethnology in Europe", and that it does not have as its goal to set Europe as a unified "own" against the "alien" non-European world. However, apart from this, it seems there is little agreement. Instead, the existing definitions and uses of the name display a variety of views and concepts which give rise to the following critical questions:

- Is the name European Ethnology simply a synonym for the old names, a neat new label for the well-known ("folkloric", "ethnographic") subject matter? Some of the books which bear this name in their titles do not really have a European perspective (cf. Bimmer 1983, Brednich 1988, and others).
- Or, has European Ethnology developed into a mere collective name for the "European Folklores", thus preserving their national focus (Niederer 1970: 46; Lutz 1970: 28)?
- Is it perhaps the goal of European Ethnology to unify the disparate national research traditions and methods in order to create "a uniform European folklife research in systematic form" and by doing so satisfy "the need of a systematic cooperation within ethnology" (Erixon 1967: 5)? Is it its sole intent to create a forum of scholarly discourse – for the European exchange of ideas and experiences, for the discussion of theories and methods on meetings and conferences, and

for the publication of these ideas in journals and omnibus volumes? Have these activities really contributed to the overcoming of the "national orientation in folkloristics that dominated in history", as Günter Wiegmann (1977: 10) once wrote in an optimistic vein?

- Is European Ethnology a regional sub-discipline of Ethnology concerning itself with the study of Europe in the same way as regional ethnologies focus on other continents? Is it, accordingly, a discipline primarily focusing on the "other", the "alien" in Europe? The founding of a Commission for European Ethnology in the German Ethnological Society in 1993 seems to point in that direction, at least it is an attempt to overcome the division of folkloristics (*Volkskunde*) and ethnology (*Völkerkunde*) – the "dual horizon" typical of the German speaking countries which Giordano (1984: 83) deplored.
- Or is it, on the contrary, the "Ethnology of Europe", i.e., a distinct discipline, which in its approaches and methods stresses the specificity of the Old World, a discipline studying the *European* cultures in their variety and their unity? This approach, which emphasizes the special character of Europe, appears to be fairly wide-spread, particularly in the debate on development and modernization (cf. Senghaas 1982); for European Ethnology, however, it bears the risk of eurocentrism and exaltation of the own, "civilized world" (Giordano 1984: 84). Folkloristics would have failed to learn its lesson from history if, under the guise of European Ethnology, it would replace the nationalism of yesterday (cf. Gerndt 1995) with a new "European nationalism".
- Isn't European Ethnology by its very nature a *comparative science*, a "Comparative Ethnology of Europe" and above all a science of cultural relations and influences in Europe, of interdependencies and interactions between its groups and peoples?
- In other words, does European Ethnology primarily concentrate on the study of one's *own* cultures, or does it, to the same degree, also include the study of the *other* cultures in Eu-

rope, the cultures of one's neighbors and minorities, as well as those of more distant peoples and groups? Isn't it, then, a science both of the "own" and of the "other", and of the relationships between the two, of the search for identity and the experience of otherness, of the *emic* as well as the *etic* perspective?

Before we attempt a definition of the locus of European Ethnology we first have to determine the object of the discipline. Do we define "Europe" *geographically*, stretching from the Atlantic to the Ural and Caucasus Mountains in the East, and to the Bosphorus in the Southeast? Or do we define it *culturally*, comprising all three "historical regions of Europe" (Szűcs 1990), "culture areas" (Axt 1993) or "civilizations" (Huntington 1993)? In the latter case, do the Balkans – which often feel excluded from "Europe" (Roth 1988) – or Armenia, belong to it? And what about Turkey or the cultures of the Americas, of South Africa, Australia or Siberia that are largely outcomes of European settlement and colonization? In view of the present debate, it appears that these questions should be discussed openly in our discipline.

The founding fathers of European Ethnology wanted it not only to overcome national boundaries and limitations, but also to shed light on the coexistence of, and the interactions between the European peoples, the interrelations between the "own" and the "other" cultures, and the "near-by otherness" of neighboring countries. The name European Ethnology thus signaled a change of paradigm, a move from a narcissistic preoccupation with one's "own", to an ethnology which constantly reflects on, and incorporates the "other". The name itself was a program and a claim, and it is the premise of this paper, that neither of them have as yet been fulfilled. If we believe that the inherent program of European Ethnology is necessary and meaningful (and I am decidedly of this opinion) we are soon confronted with a number of questions concerning the specific character, the goals and methods of European Ethnology, and of course, with the question of the reasons why it has found relatively little acceptance. What should the tasks and goals of a discipline be that deserves the name European Ethnology – and what must be done to achieve these goals?

Even though European ethnologists have successfully carried out many comparative international or pan-European projects, and have studied European cultures other than their own, we cannot fail to notice that the vast majority of them concern themselves exclusively with their *own* cultures or their regional or social subcultures, usually with an "ethnocentric bias" (Niederer 1970: 46); in other words, they continue to practise ethnography or folkloristics within the boundaries of national languages, cultures, and states. They do this almost always from the inside point of view (relative to the national culture), i.e., from an *emic* perspective.³ The necessity and the legitimacy of the study of national culture from this perspective is beyond doubt as this research serves the better understanding, and the making understandable, of one's own culture in all its complexity and dynamic change (cf. Stoklund 1972: 11). In addition, most European folklorists and ethnographers are competent only in their own culture or its subcultures. Folkloristics, as a discipline studying the national everyday culture, is of course very necessary, as long as it does not further national exaltation or the mystification and glorification of the own folk culture and history at the expense of others.

However, the study of national culture is only *one* aspect of European Ethnology and can only be a starting point for cultural understanding. This is so because of the simple fact that part of one's own culture is almost always the experience of other cultures, including the encounter with, and the management of, cultural difference: we meet the "other" as a part of our "own" already in the various regional, denominational, and social subcultures; but more importantly, the intimate neighborly contact with ethnic minorities and other peoples, with linguistic and cultural otherness, appears to be an intrinsic element of the European historical experience – at least in large parts of the continent. Indicative of this are, on the one hand, the great multiethnic states in history and the present European Union, and on the other hand, the numerous ethnically and culturally mixed areas, as well as the countries with more than one language or culture (for example Belgium, Finland, Romania, Switzerland). For

many centuries, foreigners such as refugees, emigrants, settlers, merchants, journeymen, soldiers or migrant workers, have moved in large numbers to almost every European country (cf. Schuhladen 1994); the modern "guest workers" in West European countries are certainly part of that long tradition.⁴ There can be no doubt that the investigation of the "other" as part of the "own", and of the processes of culture contact and acculturation should be a central task of European Ethnology.

In European folkloristics and ethnography we also find the reverse perspective: the study of the "own" as part of the "other". It was here that the older *Volkskunde* first became interested in the "other", but it was only the "islands of our own culture in a sea of alien cultures" that attracted scholarly (and political) attention. The surrounding peoples (mostly in East and Southeast Europe) were treated by this kind of "Folkloristics of Linguistic Islands" (*Sprach-inselvolkskunde*) in an excluding or even disparaging manner; only the post-war "interethnic research" was able to change and correct this attitude (Weber-Kellermann 1967). After the war, some of the home countries of refugees and displaced persons were studied⁵, but rarely did these studies treat both cultures in an equal way; the same holds true for most studies of European emigrants to other continents.

Judged by the total number of published works, the study of the "other", of European cultures outside one's own national or linguistic boundaries has as yet remained the exception rather than the rule for European ethnologists. In addition, many of the pertinent studies have been made from a distance, i.e., they are based on the evaluation of literary or similar sources, and not, or only to a small extent, on empirical work. However, it is precisely the exposure to foreign cultures which furthers the understanding not only of these cultures but also of one's own culture. It was Wilhelm Heinrich Riehl who emphasized the intrinsic value of studying foreign cultures in his essential paper on "Die Volkskunde als Wissenschaft" [*Folklore as a Science*] as early as in 1858. He wrote (Riehl 1910: 207f): "Only he who has been abroad is able to perceive and describe his home country in an objective manner; by its very nature,

Folklore is comparative, and from the comparative observation it develops its laws, and the genuine student of the folk does not travel around only in order to depict what is out there, but also to gain the proper perspective for the conditions in his home country." In 1970, Arnold Niederer stressed the necessity of experiencing the "other" for this "proper perspective" on the "own" with these words: "Indeed, the specific problems of one's own culture remain unproblematic, if they are not clarified through the comparison with other cultures" (Niederer 1970: 46).

The study of other (European) cultures or culture areas (from the *etic* perspective of the researcher as a *professional stranger*⁶) in the framework of a so-defined European Ethnology is guided by a diversity of research interests, approaches, and perspectives. I will indicate the most important ones:

1. There are several reasons why the study of national cultures by foreign researchers has remained relatively rare. Apart from the above mentioned intrinsic orientation of the discipline, the lack of knowledge of languages and cultures, as well as other factors, among them the fact that large parts of Eastern Europe were inaccessible to foreign scholars over long periods, must be held responsible. For some European regions – like the Balkans – it has been said that "with their diversity of languages, cultures, religions, denominations, political and mental changes, constraints, and hopes they have hardly ever been in the focus of German folkloristics" and will "continue to remain difficult to access because of the barriers of languages and political systems" (Kretzenbacher 1986: 3). The 'political system' Kretzenbacher had in mind has since disappeared ...

It is indicative and at the same time surprising that the folkloristic or ethnological studies by foreign scholars only rarely concern neighboring countries with related cultures or the larger industrialized countries of Central and Western Europe. In countries like France, England, Switzerland, or Germany only a handful of North American cultural anthropologists have ventured to do research (Theodoratus 1982); it has to be stressed, though, that the contribu-

tion of English and American social and cultural anthropologists to European Ethnology is remarkable (cf. *ibid*; Lange 1970, Stoklund 1972: 9–11). However, the rule of ethnological research in Europe is that ethnologists or folklorists from industrialized European countries⁷, or the USA⁸, study relict cultures in the peripheral, “exotic” regions of Europe, like the Mediterranean countries, particularly Southern Italy and Spain, the Balkans (cf. Roth 1993b), Ireland, Scotland or other marginal areas – sometimes in cooperation with native colleagues (cf. Hofer 1968).

2. *All-European studies*, i.e., studies covering all of Europe or at least large sections of it and treating them as one large cultural area, have rarely been conducted by folklorists (cf. Cuisenier 1979); if so, they usually limit themselves to very narrow thematic units like family forms (Gavazzi 1979/80), instruments of carrying (Kłodnicki 1982/83), threshing flails (Trojan 1983) or carriages (Viies 1977/78). More comprehensive and courageous treatments of larger cultural complexes have as yet emerged only from related disciplines like Cultural or Intellectual History (cf. Burke 1978).

3. *Parallel studies* are more frequent. In these studies, native researchers investigate and treat the same subject parallelly in their own (European) countries, usually without attempting a comparison. The approach gains a European dimension only through a later synopsis of the results in a larger framework, as is the case with such endeavors as the atlas projects in various European countries and the attempts at their synopsis⁹, but also the volumes on the folk cultures of the European countries (cf. Gebhard 1963), on food and food research in Europe (*Ethnologia Europaea* 5), on community studies (*Ethnologia Europaea* 6), on nationalism (*Ethnologia Europaea* 19), and on mythologies (*Ethnologia Europaea* 21).

4. *Comparative studies*, by contrast, explicitly focus on the comparison of cultures or culture elements, i.e., on the search for differences or similarities between two or more European cultures. It seems natural for European Ethnol-

ogy as an essentially comparative science that comparisons play a vital role (cf. Gerndt 1977/78), be it the comparison of folk tale variants for the determining of ecotypes according to the historical-geographic method¹⁰, be it the comparison of specific elements of folk culture (cf. Baumgarten 1983), or be it the comparison of national cultures, culture areas or little communities (cf. Bianco 1974).

5. Studies of the *relationships and interdependencies* between cultures and of the *interethnic relations* in Europe are of a different nature: they concern either the macro level of entire peoples or nations, or the micro level of regions, communities or groups. On the macro level, we have studies of the migration of folk tales (by the Finnish School), of cultural influences (cf. Schier 1966) and boundaries (cf. Weiss 1962), of processes of diffusion, migration or remigration (Burkard 1993), but in the same group we also have studies of the perceptions of peoples or nations of themselves and of the stereotypical images they have of others (cf. Gerndt 1988). On the micro level we have studies of interethnic relations in ethnically mixed areas or communities like the ones carried out in Southeast Europe by Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann and Annemie Schenk, as well as the more recent studies in villages or cities focusing on the relations between migrant workers and the indigenous population (cf. Greverus 1988).

6. Finally, *interactional studies* are located entirely on the micro level of personal contacts between members of different cultures. In these investigations of intercultural communication the focus is on direct culture contact and culture conflict¹¹, i.e., on personal interactions and *face-to-face* communications as well as on aspects that are relevant for them like the perception and understanding of the self (cf. Daun 1996), the perception and interpretation of the “other” (Niederer 1970), and on cultural differences and how to deal with them. While there already is a number of relevant ethnological studies from Scandinavia (cf. Ehn 1993, Daun 1989, 1996, Tuomi-Nikula 1993), they are as yet relatively rare in other European countries (cf. Roth 1993a, Volbrachová 1988).

III

Unlike the traditional names of the discipline, European Ethnology thus denotes and implies above all a science of the diversity of European peoples and cultures and of their coexistence and interrelations; more precisely: of the cultures *in* Europe, because by necessity the cultures of non-European migrants and refugees now living in Europe have to be covered by the discipline as well. In summing up, European Ethnology is no longer exclusively a science of the own culture, but also – and essentially – a science of interrelations and interactions between one's "own" and the "other". This is so for the simple reason that today the "own" and the "other" can no longer be separated from each other so clearly – if they ever could. It is no coincidence, then, that the boundaries between folkloristics and ethnology begin to disappear and that the latter moves closer to European Ethnology.

The research tasks and goals of European Ethnology can thus be defined on the one hand, and in accordance with Günter Wiegmann's view (1977: 9f), as the documentation, description, and classification of the material, social and spiritual cultures of the diverse groups and peoples living in Europe, and as the analysis of their changing expressive forms, norms and values; on the other hand, the tasks of the discipline must also include the study of these cultures in their interrelations and of the dynamics of their coexistence, their contacts and their conflicts.

While this claim to European Ethnology may be satisfied to some extent by ethnological research, this is certainly not yet true for teaching and practical application. Inevitably, the question arises as to what the purpose of ethnological research is. Isn't it also a task of European Ethnology to hand some of the vast accumulated knowledge back to those from whom it was gathered? Isn't it the duty of the discipline to contribute to the solving of social problems as was demanded at the Falkenstein conference¹² some 25 years ago? Naturally, many folklorists and ethnologists will feel uneasy at the thought of an "applied European Ethnology", because they remember the dangers involved in the

application of cultural knowledge, be it by politicians or administrators, by clerics or ideologists, by businessmen or the military. The fear that ethnologists or ethnological knowledge will be used for an unethical cause is certainly not unfounded, as the war in former Yugoslavia has again demonstrated.

Thus, we must wonder what the contribution of ethnological knowledge to the solution of what social problems can be. We have to know who can misuse this knowledge for what purposes, and how to prevent this misuse. However, the fear of misuse must not paralyze European Ethnologists, because they must be aware of the fact that our societies are presently (again) plagued with grave social problems, problems that concern, and challenge, our discipline in a very special way. While, for a number of decades it looked like ethnic conflicts in Europe were a matter of the past and that wars were unthinkable, we are now witnessing a frightening growth of ethnic self awareness, "cultural racism" and cultural fundamentalism, the "ethnification" of social and political conflicts and a new nationalism, and an ominous flaring up of interethnic conflicts (cf. Köstlin 1994, Kaschuba 1995). After the "end of systems", there are conflicts mostly along the old fault lines between the three major European culture areas (cf. Szűcs 1990, Axt 1993, Huntington 1993). Furthermore, in many West European countries, the influx of migrant workers, refugees, and asylum seekers as well as a popular skepticism towards the European Union has given rise to national, regional and ethnic particularisms. If we add the growing internationalization of all spheres of political, economic and social life and the increased number of culture contacts in everyday life, it appears that cultural difference has again become a problem. The sociologist Robert Picht pointed out in 1987, that with the intensification of international cooperation, the "cultural wall" will grow, because "alienness, this seemingly impenetrable and irritating strangeness of mentalities and orientations, is all the more perceptible, the more the partners are dependent on each other" (Picht 1987: 282). Today, millions of people are, to an almost unprecedented degree, expected to manage cultural diversity in everyday life. Neither the

people, nor the relevant disciplines, among them European Ethnology, seem to be in a position to actively contribute to the overcoming of the "cultural walls" and to the "reconciliation of differences" (Adorno 1951: 130).

What is the attitude of European Ethnologists toward these obviously increasing social problems? Will they continue to be the keepers and preservers of their own national cultures? Will they stand on the side of those who follow the arguments of cultural nationalism and ethnocentrism, of those who demand cultural homogeneity and may even legitimize ethnic cleansings? Such attitudes are certainly incompatible with everything the name European Ethnology stands for. Never again must it go the way "applied folkloristics" went, or was forced to go, in the service of nationalistic or socialist ideologies or party programs (cf. Jacobeit et al. 1994, Gerndt 1995). But can it, in order to avoid this danger, be the position of European Ethnologists to cautiously stand at the sidelines, to remain an observing and analyzing neutral third party, and deny their contribution to the reduction of interethnic tensions and culture conflicts in Europe? In view of the nature and seriousness of the problems this can hardly be the adequate position.

In order to satisfy these demands, European Ethnology has to become serious about the change of its paradigms. Although all the well-established activities will continue to be necessary, it will no longer suffice to merely organize international meetings and conferences, to publish journals covering Europe or larger regions of it¹³, to engage in comparative studies in cooperation with European colleagues, or to do occasional research in other European cultures. Today, European Ethnology is expected to come up with more far-reaching concepts and activities which will, however, make higher demands on all persons involved:

1. With its treasure of knowledge about the cultures and peoples of Europe and the relations and influences between them, European Ethnology is required to make this knowledge available in order to reduce damages and to further the communication and understanding between ethnic groups and nations. It should do

its share to increase the competence of people to cope with cultural difference and diversity, and it should point out ways to a better understanding and cooperation between European peoples and nations. This would constitute an "applied European Ethnology" in the service of a more fruitful and even synergetic coexistence of groups and peoples in a world that has become smaller, a world of globalization and of growing culture contacts in almost all spheres of life – from business, trade and politics to cultural relations and mass tourism.

How can European Ethnology achieve this goal of furthering interethnic cooperation and understanding? What will have to change? For the sake of its role in contemporary society, it has to develop new directions in research and teaching. Departing from the study of their own culture, European Ethnologists have to overcome the (still very relevant) national boundaries in favor of more comprehensive and problem oriented approaches. In doing this, European Ethnology should not deny the relevance of cultural differences (cf. Schiffauer 1996) and contribute to a unified culture: The diversity of European cultures is the basis, and to safeguard it is the goal of this discipline. But if this diversity should not unfold a destructive potential, it is inevitable to share knowledge and to teach cultural techniques for the successful management of diversity and otherness. In other words, it must be the goal of applied European Ethnology to facilitate communication between culturally diverse groups or individuals and to help them accept cultural differences and to learn how to deal with them in a positive way in everyday life (cf. Roth 1996).

2. From these general reflections follow some concrete consequences for those who do ethnological research and for those who teach and study European Ethnology at the university. For more and more university teachers, the competence in another European culture, i.e., the theoretical and practical knowledge of another language and culture will become a prerequisite. This should result in more lectures and seminars, but also in more research on these cultures; in particular, cross-cultural research projects will be needed, projects which

explicitly incorporate both the emic and the etic perspectives and thereby demand the close cooperation of native and foreign colleagues (cf. Hofer 1968). On the level of institutions it will be vital to increase and intensify the cooperations between European university and research institutes as well as the exchange of university teachers in the context of European mobility programs.

The same demands will apply to the students of European Ethnology, for whom the acquiring of intimate knowledge of at least one other European culture (with stress on everyday culture and on language) will become a prerequisite. This knowledge should be gained on the theoretical level through lectures and courses, and on the practical level through the participation in structured excursions and visits to the respective country, but mostly through exchange programs with other European universities (within the framework of European mobility programs) or through internships abroad.

In view of the ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity of Europe it must, in addition, be the goal of our discipline to enhance the understanding of other cultures by making the accumulated knowledge about these cultures available to the public. In almost all countries, the vast majority of ethnological research is published in the national language; for most European countries this means that they are read almost exclusively by small national audiences of scholars and laymen. An urgent task of European Ethnology should be to produce comprehensive bibliographies of individual cultures or culture areas comprising all the existent literature in all major European languages, to make research accessible across linguistic boundaries¹⁴, as well as to create data bases with information about individual cultures.¹⁵

IV

The most active and immediate contribution of European Ethnology to the better understanding between peoples, however, would be the incorporation of Intercultural Communication into its domains of research, teaching, and application (cf. Roth 1993a). Intercultural Communication, which closely relates the two basic

concepts of "culture" and "communication", is the science of the communicative interactions and exchanges of meanings between members of different cultures, of the perception and interpretation of the "other", and of the management of cultural differences (cf. Hinnenkamp 1994).

Intercultural Communication has emerged from several disciplines and is, by its nature and origin, interdisciplinary. Its methods, theories, and approaches are derived from (a) cultural anthropology, to which it owes its theoretical and methodological basis, from (b) Speech and Communication and pragmatic linguistics which contributed largely through the fields of text hermeneutics and discourse analysis, from (c) cross-cultural psychology with its valuable insights into human perception, identity, and the coping with cultural otherness, and from (d) intercultural education. Folkloristics and ethnography have also made invaluable contributions in important fields such as interethnic relations, migration, enculturation and acculturation, stereotypes, ritual, everyday narration, as well as in other related areas.

Both *culture* and *communication* are systems of symbolic interaction and exchange of meaning; by virtue of this they are closely related or almost synonymous with each other. For practical reasons, though, I will discuss the two separately.

The very basis of Intercultural Communication is the broad concept of 'culture' which – and this is vital in this context – comprises both the visible objectifications (artifacts, actions, behaviors) and the invisible subjectifications, i.e., the values and norms, attitudes and assumptions, ideas and concepts, ways of thinking and patterns of perception. Cultures are viewed as historical, dynamic, complex and highly differentiated systems. With regard to the question as to whether cultures have to be understood as *cognitive systems* (like languages) with their own "grammars", as W. H. Goodenough maintains, or as *symbolic systems*, as Clifford Geertz maintains, I believe a middle position should be taken which combines both approaches.

Both in research and in teaching, Intercultural Communication is confronted with the gap and the tension between the actual com-

plexity of cultural systems and human behavior, and the (necessary) human tendency to reduce this complexity in the perception and to create simple categories. Thus, on the one hand, we have to deal with the complexity and dynamism of cultural macro systems (like national cultures) with all their subsystems (like regional, class, group, gender cultures etc.), while on the other hand we are faced with the human inclination to create and pass on simplified stereotypical "images in the head" of one's own and of other groups and peoples. For actual encounters between individuals from different cultures, it does not so much matter how the other culture or its representatives "really" are, but how they are perceived and how these perceptions are interpreted and determine real actions. Fortunately, for the interpretation of the behavior and actions of a member of another culture, we usually do not need *all* the existing information about the *entire* culture, but must only know its basic assumptions and typical norms and values which bear on large sectors of real behavior.

Thus, Intercultural Communication has to concern itself intensely with the typical patterns of perception and of interpretation, with attribution and stereotyping, and with the use of stereotypes. It must fully consider the micro cultural or individual variation and the dynamics of symbolic social interaction, as well as determine the basic values and norms, concepts and standards of each culture, in a sense the basic elements of its "grammar".¹⁶

The second pillar of Intercultural Communication is *communication* in both its functions as exchange of meanings and as symbolic social interaction. In the case of communication between strangers, the *relational aspect* (Watzlawick 1967) gains special significance over the *contential aspect* for the outcome of this interaction. This is so because the larger part of meaning is not transmitted verbally (and thus more on the cognitive level), but para-verbally (intonation, speed, pauses etc.) and above all non-verbally and extra-verbally (through gestures, body language, behavior etc.). Intercultural communication and understanding is therefore very much dependent on the decoding of non-verbal signals, i.e., of the (largely affective)

human behavior outside language. Beyond the decoding of verbal denotations and connotations, intercultural communication thus involves to a large extent the deciphering of unfamiliar *actions* and their underlying norms and assumptions.

Intercultural Communication as a relational science is thus not so much concerned with the *comparison* of cultures but with concrete *interactions*. Its main question is: What happens when individuals with different cultural codes socially interact and communicate. Culture contact, culture conflict, culture shock, understanding and misunderstanding between members of different cultures are therefore the central problems of Intercultural Communication.

Various approaches have been developed and applied to the problem of diverging cultural codes and of cultural variation. In spite of the basic problem, both of intercultural communication and of intercultural research and teaching, that every person, including the scholar, always perceives and evaluates other cultures through his or her own "cultural lenses", it is nevertheless a fundamental demand on Intercultural Communication to take a neutral position between the cultures and to make *cultural relativism* its basis. But it is exactly the position of relativism which presupposes a *fixed point* and a common denominator from which the diversity of cultures can be grasped and made comparable. All extant theoretical approaches to intercultural communication agree in that they set this fixed point outside culture, in the universals of human nature. Departing from the assumption that (1) "there is a limited number of common human problems for which all peoples at all times must find some solutions," that (2) "while there is variability in solutions of all the problems, it is neither limitless nor random but is definitely variable within a range of possible solutions", and that (3) "all alternatives of all solutions are present in all societies at all times but are differentially preferred," the anthropologists Florence Kluckhohn and F.L. Strodtbeck in 1961 determined five such basic problems of humankind. They stated these problems in the form of questions to which each culture finds its own answers:

(1) What is the character of innate human nature? (*human nature orientation*), (2) What is the relation of man to nature (and supernature)? (*man-nature orientation*), (3) What is the temporal focus of human life? (*time orientation*), (4) What is the modality of human activity? (*activity orientation*) and (5) What is the modality of man's relationship to other men? (*relational orientation*). With regard to "man-nature orientation" they discern, for example, the three basic variations "subjugation to nature", "harmony with nature" and "mastery over nature", while "time orientation" has the three basic variations "past", "present", and "future orientation" (Kluckhohn 1961: 10–12).

Departing from the findings of proxemics and linguistics, the cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall as early as in 1959 developed a model according to which culture consists of ten *primary message systems*. These interrelated and interdependent information systems are founded in biology and human nature. Each of these message systems¹⁷ is culturally modified and value-laden. Hall focused on the message systems of territoriality (attitude to space), temporality (attitude to time), interaction, and association, and made such helpful distinctions as those between *high-context* and *low-context* cultures or between cultures with a *monochronic* or *polychronic* use of time: in high-context cultures there are dense networks of social relations and information, whereas in low-context cultures the density and flow of information is considerably lower; people in monochronic cultures usually do "one thing after the other", while in polychronic cultures people tend to do several things at the same time. These basic orientations influence large sectors of the entire cultural system and of individual behavior. It is one of Hall's core messages that language is a part of only one out of ten information systems (*interaction*) and that it belongs to the visible part of the *cultural iceberg*, while the much larger non-verbal "hidden culture" remains invisible to the eye.

In 1980, on the basis of over one hundred thousand questionnaires completed in 40 countries, the Dutch organizational psychologist Geert Hofstede was able to determine four basic factors which largely govern human behavior

at the work place. However, due to their deep-rootedness, these factors can serve as key indicators far beyond work relations, because they influence the answers to basic questions of human existence, and therefore influence many sectors of the cultural system. The four key cultural indicators are (1) the *Power Distance Index*, which refers to the fact that each culture deals with the given uneven distribution of power and wealth in a different manner and creates and tolerates different kinds of social hierarchies and distribution of power, (2) the *Uncertainty Avoidance Index*, which indicates the different attitudes to the risks of human life in each culture; cultures with a high risk avoidance tend to favor rules, rites, traditions, and security, (3) the *Individualism Index*, which indicates the different degrees of social cohesion and the relative strength of individualism or collectivism in a given culture, and (4) the *Masculinity Index*, which is an indicator of the culturally defined roles and properties of the genders and also refers to the "masculinity" or "femininity" of whole cultures (Hofstede 1980, 1991).

Given the limitations of this paper, it is impossible to discuss in detail the theoretical foundations of Intercultural Communication.¹⁸ Instead, I will conclude with a few remarks on how all these (and many other) theoretical and empirical findings are used for teaching Intercultural Communication at the University of Munich (cf. Roth 1996). In a joint project of the disciplines folkloristics (*Volkskunde*), ethnology (*Völkerkunde*) and German as a Foreign Language over the past six years, we have developed and tested concepts for the teaching of Intercultural Communication with a strong focus on ethnology and cultural anthropology. The primary goal is the creation of *intercultural competence*, i.e., the conveying of *cultural awareness*, of knowledge about, and sensitivity toward, one's own and other cultures. This implies a decision for the *culture general* and not for the *culture specific* approach. The first is well tested and is, in our opinion, the most adequate one for the ethnological sciences¹⁹; it does not aim at individual cultures, but rather at conveying general knowledge about culture, communication, perception and stereotyping,

hermeneutics, and the management of cultural differences. Individual cultures are, of course, dealt with in the discussions of concrete intercultural interactions and conflicts, and apart from that, the students are encouraged to acquire (in other disciplines) factual knowledge about individual cultures and languages, and to gain practical cultural competence in the relevant countries. These goals can be reached by different didactic means. As to the question whether a *cognitive* or *affective* approach is better suited for university students or adults, our experience shows that for the teaching of intercultural knowledge and competences the cognitive approach with the inclusion of some affective elements produces good results; at the university level, too much experiential and affective-emotional learning can be problematic (Roth 1992).

The indicated didactic approach consists of the following phases: In the first phase, the foundations of culture and communication theory are taught and the students are made aware of their own culture and of the degree to which their patterns of perception, attribution, and interpretation are determined by it. Making students aware of their "cultural lenses" is the prerequisite for the second phase, in which the interpretation and understanding of cultural "otherness" are treated, if possible on the basis of personal experiences. This means that the theoretical and practical development of awareness for cultural difference, for hidden signals, and for the logic of unfamiliar behaviors and actions are part of the curriculum. In the third phase the attempt is made to develop the capacity to adequately interact and communicate with members of other cultures, i.e., to teach techniques for dealing with other cultural codes. The development of empathy and of the ability to change perspectives is a precondition for successful mediation and solving of intercultural conflicts and for the creation of cultural synergy. In the fourth phase, the acquisition of knowledge about specific cultures or countries (including the topography, history, language, literature, institutions etc.) and the application of the theoretical knowledge to concrete intercultural contexts and research problems forms a central part of the program.

V

The specific tasks of European Ethnology do not only result from the increased gravity of ethnic problems at the end of our century (cf. Köstlin 1994), but rather from the historical realities of Europe. It is these realities which demand a synthesis of approaches of all ethnological disciplines, a combination of the study of one's own and of other (European) cultures, the incorporation of the emic and the etic as well as of the diachronic and the synchronic perspectives. The occupation with the problems of cultural diversity, of coexistence and influences, of relations and conflicts between the European peoples and ethnic groups, but also of intercultural communication between individuals – all this constitutes the specific appeal and the opportunity of European Ethnology. For these tasks it is not only well-equipped, but as a discipline engaged in the study of European cultures, it also has the duty to contribute to the solving of problems arising from cultural diversity and increased culture contact. Like no other discipline it can take into account both the specific historical conditions and the present complex ethnic and cultural situation in Europe. It would be very helpful if both the national and the international associations of European ethnologists²⁰ and the supranational institutions would react to this challenge in a more pronounced way. By doing so, they could certainly give new impulses to teaching and research – and thereby furnish the discipline with a new and fitting profile and open new fields of professional activity for young European ethnologists, for example as mediators between cultures.²¹

Notes

Translation and revision by the author of: Europäische Ethnologie und Interkulturelle Kommunikation. In: *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde* 91 (1995) 163-181. I am grateful to Rachel Baron, Munich, for her comments on the English translation.

All translations of quotations in this article are by the author.

1. In 1937, Sigurd Erixon published the first issue of *Folkliv* with the subtitle *Review of Nordic and European Ethnology*; in 1938, the name was changed to *Journal for European Ethnology and Folklore* (v. Bringéus 1983: 229f).
2. *Ethnologia Slavica* [1969], *Ethnologia Scandinavica* [1971], *Ethnologie française* [1971], *Ethnologia Fennica* [1972], *Ethnologia Polona* [1975]; on this problem see Wiegmann 1977: 9.
3. From the fact that folklorists favored the "inner exotism", i.e., the study of marginal regions and lower social classes (like peasants) in their own countries, and that the scholars almost exclusively came from urban bourgeois milieus, it follows that there always existed a certain *etic* perspective in folkloristic research.
4. Cf. Palairé 1987, and the numerous studies of migrant workers made at the Frankfurt Institut für Kulturanthropologie.
5. E.g. by Alfred Cammann, Alfred Karasek, Josef Hanika and others.
6. Cf. Michael Agar: *The Professional Stranger*. New York 1980.
7. Of the German speaking scholars one should mention: Maximilian Braun, Dagmar Burkhart, Christian Giordano, Ina-Maria Greverus, Leopold Kretzenbacher, Max Matter, Arnold Niederer, Klaus Roth, Rudolf Schenda, Werner Schiffauer, Alois Schmaus, Claudia Schöning-Kalender, Gabriella Schubert, Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, Gisela Welz.
8. If we take the works by American cultural anthropologists on European cultures listed in Theodoratus' bibliography (1982: 154-162) as an example, some 75% concern the Balkans, Spain, Southern Italy, Ireland/Scotland, and Russia, and only some 25% deal with the remaining European countries.
9. E.g. the volume edited by Matthias Zender and the Permanent International Atlas Commission *Forschungen zum ethnologischen Atlas Europas und seiner Nachbarländer, vol. 1: Die Termine der Jahresfeier in Europa - Erläuterungen zur Verbreitungskarte*. Göttingen: Schwartz 1980.
10. A case in point are the numerous monographs on tale or ballad types, most of which have been published in Helsinki in the renowned series *Folklore Fellows Communications*.
11. E.g. between members of ethnic groups or migrant workers (cf. Gyr 1989), at the work place in institutions and organizations (cf. Roth 1993a),

among expatriates or in intercultural marriages (Tuomi-Nikula 1993).

12. Cf. Wolfgang Brückner (ed.): *Volkskunde in Deutschland. Begriffe - Probleme - Tendenzen. Diskussion zur Standortbestimmung*. Frankfurt am Main 1970.
13. Like the *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures* [1992ff], *Ethnologia Europaea*, *Ethnologia Scandinavica*, *Ethnologia Slavica*, *Ethnologia Balkanica*, and others.
14. For Southeastern Europe cf. Roth 1993b.
15. The Institute of Folklore at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences is establishing (with the support of UNESCO) a "Data Base of Balkan Folklore" which is to contain analytical data on the spiritual, social, and material culture of seven Balkan countries; the data bases are to be made available on CD roms.
16. For the contemporary Swedish culture cf. Åke Daun 1989 and other papers in the same volume of *Ethnologia Europaea*.
17. Hall's ten Primary Message Systems are *interaction, association, subsistence, bisexuality, territoriality, temporality, learning, play, defense, exploitation* (Hall 1973: 95).
18. Apart from the literature already quoted see Dodd 1991, Desjeux 1991, Samovar 1991, Hofstede 1991, Hansen 1995, Hinnenkamp 1994: 1-25.
19. As well as for Speech and Communication, Linguistics, Education, Psychology and other disciplines.
20. Like *Ethnologia Europaea*, the Société internationale d'ethnologie et folklore (SIEF) with its commissions, and others.
21. The ethnologist as a "marginal man" is in any case predestined "for the role of an interpreter, arbiter and mediator" and his activity has "again and again been compared to that of the translator or interpreter" (Lindner 1989: 24).

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