

Traditional wisdom – its expressions and representations in Africa and beyond

Exploring intercultural epistemology^{1,2}

Wim M.J. van Binsbergen

Abstract. Traditional wisdom – its expressions and representations in Africa and beyond: Exploring intercultural epistemology. Taking our lead from Aristotle's influential distinction between theoretical and practical

© 2008 Wim M.J. van Binsbergen

¹ An earlier version of this argument is to appear in the *Comptes-Rendus de l'Académie Royale des Sciences de l'Outre-mer*, Belgium, on the basis of a keynote address, International Symposium 'Expressions of tradition wisdom', The Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences, The Royal Museum for Central Africa & The Royal Museums of Art and History, Friday 28 September, 2007, Palais des Académies, Brussels, Belgium. I wish to express my sincere thanks to these organising institutions. I also wish to acknowledge the inspiration from my colleagues in the Philosophical Faculty, Erasmus University Rotterdam; and the continued support from the African Studies Centre (especially the Library department directed by Jos Damen) for my current research into 'Connections in African knowledge', of which the present paper is a product. Finally, I wish to thank the participants for their response to this paper, particularly Professors Baetens Beardsmore and Weidtmann.

² Quotations of words and sentences from other than modern European languages in this paper preferably include the original script and its transliteration, not in order to pretend a philological expertise I do not have, but in order to affirm the right of the original expression, in its own local cultural form, to take precedence over the transformative appropriation in a modern North Atlantic language; and also to drive home the fact (of crucial importance from a point of view of intercultural philosophy) that our scholarly encounter with foreign wisdom is far from transparent and tends to be filtered through multiple layers of translation and interpretation. However, the conventions of modern scholarship are not conducive to consistency where these good intentions are concerned – for instance, I have had to resign myself to the distortive, conventional English renderings of the names of Ancient Greek, biblical, and Ancient Egyptian proper names.

knowledge, wisdom is initially defined as creative practical knowledge that allows one to negotiate the pitfalls and contradictions of human life (especially in domains that are not tightly rule-governed, and that thus carry considerable uncertainty, ambivalence and incompatible multiple truths), and to accept both the social nature of human life, and its finitude. After indicating (1) the resilience of wisdom as a topic in modern thought and science (in such fields as the auto-critique of Western culture, globalisation, technological development, psychology and philosophy), a brief overview of wisdom in various periods and regions of the world is presented (2). The dilemma of *expression* in wisdom is highlighted (3): while scholarship thrives on explicit and specialist language use, wisdom is often secret and risks being destroyed by expression and translation. Next (4), a context for the appreciation of expressions of traditional wisdom is created by offsetting these against four modes of ‘tacit modern unwisdom’, in such fields as corporality, conflict regulation, the concept of mind, and myth. The next section (5) deals with the possibility of an intercultural transmission of wisdom, within and outside an academic context, and identifies the mechanism of situational oppositional framing that makes traditional wisdom both an altered object of study and a site of identification and encounter. The argument then proceeds (6) to define the specific difference between scientific and wisdom modes of knowing, and sees this in the former’s reliance on standard, repetitive, intersubjective *procedures* of knowledge formation embedded in limiting conditions. The four modes of tacit modern unwisdom (4) are then contrasted with – much more convincing – African perspectives on the same topics (7). Finally intercultural philosophy is argued to refer to a situation where Western mainstream philosophy has to give way to a wisdom perspective as defined above.

Key words: epistemology, tradition, phronesis, Africa, intercultural, intercultural philosophy, wisdom, negotiating the practical problems of social and political life

Résumé : La sagesse traditionnelle – ses expressions et représentations en Afrique et ailleurs : Des explorations dans l’ épistémologie interculturelle. En suivant la distinction tellement importante d’ Aristote, celle entre le savoir théorique et le savoir pratique, la sagesse est provisoirement définie comme le savoir pratique créateur qui nous permet de négocier les pièges et les contradictions de la vie humaine (surtout dans les domaines qui ne sont pas étroitement réglementées, et qui ainsi impliquent de l’ incertitude considérable, de l’ ambivalence, et des vérités multiples et mutuellement incompatibles ; un tel savoir nous permet aussi d’ accepter la vie humaine dans sa qualité sociale et dans sa finitude. Après avoir indiqué (1) la résilience de la sagesse comme sujet dans pensée et dans la science modernes (l’ autocritique de la culture occidentale, la mondialisation, le développement technologique, la psychologie et la philosophie), nous présentons un coup d’ œil de la sagesse dans plusieurs périodes et régions du monde (2). Puis nous mettons la lumière sur le dilemme de *l’ expression* de sagesse (3) : tandis que la science dépend sur l’ usage de langue explicite et spécialisée, la sagesse souvent est secrète et risque d’ être

détruite par l' expression verbale et par la traduction. Puis (4) nous proposons un contexte pour l' appréciation d' expressions de sagesse traditionnelle, en les contrastant avec quatre modes de 'folie / non-sagesse implicite moderne', dans les domaines de la corporalité, la régulation des conflits, la conception de l'esprit, et le mythe. La section prochaine (5) s' occupe de la possibilité d' une transmission interculturelle de la sagesse, soit au sein soit à l' extérieur d' un contexte académique ; ici nous identifions le mécanisme d' encadrement oppositionnel et situationnel qui rend la sagesse traditionnelle un objet altérisé aussi bien qu'un lieu d' identification et de rencontre. L' argument continue par une tentative de définir (6) la différence spécifique entre deux modes de savoir, celui de la science et celui de la sagesse : la science se base plutôt sur des procédures de connaissance (standardisées, répétitives, intersubjectives) encadrées dans des conditions limitatives. Puis (7) les quatre modes de 'folie implicite moderne' (4) sont contrastés avec des perspectives africaines sur les mêmes sujets, en démontrant que les dernières sont beaucoup plus riches et convaincantes. Finalement, la philosophie interculturelle est définie comme s'adressant à une situation où la philosophie dominante occidentale n' a qu'à reculer devant une perspective de sagesse telle qu' elle est définie dans notre argument.

Mots-clefs: épistémologie, tradition, phronèse, l'Afrique, interculturel, philosophie interculturelle, sagesse, négociation pratique des problèmes de la vie sociale et politique

1. The resilience of wisdom as a topic in modern thought and science

In the first booming period of Western philosophy, the fourth century BCE, the analytical mind of Aristotle distinguished³ between *sōphía σοφία*, as specialist theoretical knowledge including that of the philosopher, and *phronēsis φρόνησις* as creative practical knowledge that allows one to negotiate the pitfalls and contradictions of human life. *Phronēsis* deals with sensitivity to life's problems in concrete situations – the wisdom that we also find in the widespread genre of 'wisdom texts'. Emphasis here is on those domains of life of which we would say today that they are not tightly rule-governed – cf. Wittgenstein 1967 – and thus carry considerable uncertainty, ambivalence and mutually incompatible multiple truths), and to accept both the social nature of human life, and its

³ Arist., *Eth. Nicom.* 1140a and following.

finitude. The concept of *phronēsis* has been influential throughout the history of Western thought and especially in the twentieth century has been reconsidered from various angles.⁴

Throughout, the perspective on finitude has remained important in approaches to wisdom. Already prominent in Plato, it plays a central role in the work of Dilthey, Heidegger, Sartre, Gadamer, and Ricoeur.⁵ On the psychological side, Taranto, in a synthesis on the preceding decade of wisdom research, concludes – and I find this very illuminating – that

‘factors relating to wisdom (age, experience, intelligence, knowledge, intuition, common sense, and personality) can be unified theoretically if wisdom is viewed as *the recognition of and response to human limitation*’ (Taranto 1989, my italics; also cf. Fowers 2003).

Meacham (1983), emulating Socrates’s famous paradox

‘I know nothing except the fact of my ignorance’ (Diogenes Laertius II 16),

stresses another dimension of finitude in the context of wisdom: *knowing that one doesn’t know*. Two decades later, Ardel (2004) in a review of the Berlin Wisdom Paradigm in psychology (with such names as Baltes, Kunzmann, Sternberg and Achenbaum), and seeking to steer away from the latter’s expertise-centred orientation,⁶ makes significant additions to the Taranto position:

‘...I consider compassionate and sympathetic love, which represents the affective dimension of my three-dimensional wisdom model, an integral component of wisdom, and I would predict that wisdom as a personality quality is positively related to forgiveness.’

Also Kramer (1990) speaks of the ‘primacy of affect-cognition relations’

⁴ Modern treatments of *phronēsis* include Gadamer 1960; MacIntyre 1981; Bernasconi 1989; Flyvbjerg 1993; Gallagher 1997; Noel 1999; practical studies of phronesis in a concrete modern setting are Halverson 2004; Jamal 2004. Also cf. the stimulating Brussels 2007 paper by Koutsoumpos & Zhuang (2007).

⁵ Cf. Heidegger 1983; Ricoeur 1960; Sartre 1943; Gadamer 1960; also cf. Hyland 1995; de Mul 1993; Smith 1991.

⁶ Cf. Horn & Masunaga 2000. At the 2007 Brussels Symposium, the expertise aspect of wisdom was articulated by Professor Baetens Beardmore in response to my keynote address.

in the conceptualisation of wisdom.

However, another major form of finitude which so far has been understudied in the context of wisdom, is *the awareness of the finitude of one's own and the other's specific cultural orientation in intercultural situations, hence the awareness of plurality, incompatibility, conflict, and the need to negotiate these within a wider socio-political framework*; we shall come back to this point repeatedly.

In recent decades, there has been considerable philosophical and general-intellectual / academic effort directed at affording wisdom a more central position within philosophy, science, and modern thought in general. This heterogeneous movement can be seen as responding to a number of major developments in the North Atlantic region and the world at large:

1. Beyond the Enlightenment heritage

The recognition that the project of the Enlightenment, with its firm belief in the liberating and world-innovating power of specialised reason, has been shattered in the wars and genocide of the North Atlantic region in the twentieth century. These violent conflicts have further intensified, for a considerable part of the world population, a crisis of meaning already brought about by secularisation, urbanisation, and scientific and technological advancement; from this crisis, time-honoured local and foreign wisdom may offer relief in a new bid for survival through spirituality (cf. Waaijmans 2002: 335f).

2. Globalisation

The second point is globalisation, which after the demise of European colonialism and despite subsequent North Atlantic claims (recently less and less convincing) of global hegemony, yet drove home (partly through such globalising knowledge strategies as anthropology, intercultural philosophy and – however criticised, cf. Said 1978 – Orientalism; partly through millions of people's personal experience with intercontinental travel and migration; partly through the quest for transcontinental roots)

the irreducible potential of modes of knowing (often designated as ‘wisdom’) outside the Western mainstream tradition of thought and science. These modes of knowing are now being recognised,

- a. not just for their own intrinsic value in their original geographical context, but also
- b. because they have been subjected to globalising reformulations (one conspicuous form of such a globalising reformulation is the appropriation of ancient ‘non-Western’ wisdom – especially from South and East Asia, Africa and North America – into the global New Age movement, where it is blended with selectively appropriated state-of-the-art science and technology), and particularly
- c. because effective globalisation has produced complex problematics concerning the co-existence and conflict of worldviews, religions, cultures, ethical systems, legal systems, for which North Atlantic thought and experience (caught in an Aristotelian and Cartesian logic of insurmountable opposition and difference) does not offer ready answers, and which may only be negotiated through a combination of practical wisdom strategies (especially those aiming at the avoidance, reduction and termination of violent conflict) from various origins. It is worth noting that scholars from all continents have contributed to this exploration.⁷

⁷ Cf. Takahashi 2000 (who stresses, for the ancient wisdom literature from Western Eurasia, analytical ability, as contrasted for more inclusive and synthetic orientation in South and East Asia – a similar distinction is made by García & Pelechano 2004 – and who highlights the themes of void and co-dependence as central to the Asian tradition. There is no consensus in the literature as to the relation between scientific or intellectual knowledge versus wisdom-related knowledge. Coomaraswamy 1943 and Ardel 2000 rely on such a distinction. However, Strijbos 1995 sees the two forms of knowledge converge from a systems perspective, while Bethe 1968 calls science ‘a road to wisdom’ (thus also Maxwell 1984; also recent Chinese philosophers have been interested in the transformation of knowledge into wisdom: Guorong 2002). For a Neo-Thomist approach to the relation between science and wisdom, cf. Maritain 1940.

3. New technologies and ancient wisdom

In the third place, globalisation has inevitably brought the encounter between the technologies of the developed countries, and local technologies in other parts of the world, in the agricultural, medical, organisational, and other fields. After hegemonic North Atlantic ethnocentrism had dominated the development scene for several decades from the middle of the 20th century on, in the most recent decades the awareness has grown that, since any specific technology is part of the culture and worldview of its owners, the one-sided hegemonic imposition of technology is as violent as it is ineffective, whereas a combination of imported technology with ‘ancient wisdom’ often stands a better chance of success – perhaps in terms of the maximising rationality informing developed technologies but especially in terms of such ecological considerations as have come up recent decades.⁸ Remarkably, traditional wisdom not only may appear to be *complementary* to modern technology and science – it may also be argued to be based on parallel and similar modes of thought.⁹ And apart from highlighting ancient local forms of competent and efficient interaction with the forces of nature, these ancient wisdom traditions must also be recognised as empowering peripheral local communities and reducing their vulnerability and dependence vis-à-vis the encroachment of a global capitalist economy and ideology.¹⁰ However, the more typical effect in a context of globalisation is *destruction* of traditional wisdom, and then foreign researchers and local specialists may be exhorted to join hands in order to preserve and record local ways of knowing that may be unique in the world (Balick 2006).

Meanwhile the following example may bring out the dangers involved in the

⁸ Cf. Agarwal & Narain 1997; Sen 1999; Samoff et al. 2001; Berkes et al. 2000; Haverkort & Hiemstra 1999. Indian scholars have been particularly prominent in exploring these possibilities. Here we are touching on the discussions, during the last quarter of a century, of ‘indigenous knowledge systems’, which however our present scope does not allow us to go into.

⁹ Cf. Jiang 2005; Jones & Culliney 1998; Capra 1978; Zukav 1979.

¹⁰ Cf. Quanchi 2004.

idea of such complementarity: In the 1930s-40s great excitement was caused by ichthyology identifying the first living Coelacanths (*Latimeria chalumnae*) off the coasts of South Africa and the Comores Islands – as a species of jawed fishes virtually unchanged since the Devonian geological period, c. 400 million years ago, and thought to be extinct for at least 60 million years. However, it turned out that this fish had been commonly known since times immemorial among the modern population of Madagascar. Here, under the name of *combessa* its meat had constituted a despised but cheap relish, while – more recently – the rough scaly skin was used as an abrasive *e.g.* in repair of bicycle tyres! If international science had been able to make contact with local fish-related practices on Madagascar at an earlier point in time, it would never have considered the Coelacanth extinct. Yet we cannot say that African wisdom here surpassed global science, for whereas the fish was less than common from an African perspective, it is only from the evolutionary perspective as emerging in global science since the mid-19th century CE that the scientific identification of a living Coelacanth was a significant event, even (Terofal 1975) ‘the most important scientific feat in modern history’.

4. *The psychology of wisdom*

For the fourth point, we turn to the field of psychology. Here, intensive work over the last few decades on such topics as personality, life span, maturity, aging (in other words, gerontology), moral reasoning, and acceptance / forgiveness of finitude including failure and death (stimulated, in part, by the progressive aging of the population of the developed countries) has produced a focus on wisdom that is empirical, comparative, theoretically orientated, and conceptually highly sophisticated. Here, in the consideration of what makes a good life; what, a wholesome society and future; what forms of interaction and communication are conducive to well-being and meaning; and what attitudes and skills can be identified and taught towards these goals; an extensive and exciting psychology of wisdom has come up, increasingly re-uniting intelligence with wisdom.¹¹ Here there is generous attention for wisdom texts and teachings belonging to literate traditions (including world religions) from all over Eurasia;¹²

¹¹ Blanchard-Fields et al. 1987; Kunzmann & Baltes 2003.

¹² For Islam, *e.g.* Choudhury 2001, Lewin 2000 (Sufism), and the work of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, cf. Norton 2004; Massignon 1922; Faḥd 1966; Ullman 1972; Bakhtiar 1991; Shah 1971; Chittick 1989; for Buddhism: Levitt 1999 (Tibet), Epstein 1985, Vokey 1999, Humphreys 1987; for a Vedantic perspective, cf. Atchley 1993; Yang

spirituality; the reception of diffuse, oral wisdom traditions from all continents; the analysis of expertise and expert systems; along with the psychological discipline's habitual methods of conceptualisation and theorizing, measurement and both qualitative and quantitative analysis.¹³ Especially illuminating are studies in which the world's various regional traditions of wisdom are compared and contrasted.¹⁴ Among the many remarkable findings I cite the following: *the interaction of minds facilitates wisdom performance* (Staudinger & Baltes 1996); and *the narrative is a typical context for the production and transmission of wisdom* (Kenyon 2003) – which reminds us of the closely-knit face-to-face relations and fire-side recreation in small-scale groups, as the typical situation in which traditional wisdom is being enacted in real-life situations in historic settings. Whereas in these studies the emphasis is on the significance of wisdom for the individual, the sociologist Schloss (2000) has offered an approach to wisdom as part of (cf. Parsons 1949) the integrative mechanisms of society at large.

5. Recent rapprochement of wisdom and philosophy

In the fifth place, the gradual dissociation of the empirical sciences from the domain of philosophy proper, and philosophy's concentration on questions of logical, conceptual and theoretical foundations, made that, in the course of the history of Western thought, we have tended more and more to see philosophy, in practice, and regardless of the original meaning of the word *philosophia* ('love of wisdom'), as the opposite of the quest for wisdom. Perhaps we should see this as an apt illustration of the question Robert Sternberg (a leading wisdom psychologist) has sought to

2001 studies wisdom concepts in Taiwan, where Taoism and Confucianism have remained important orientations. For references to Judaism and Christianity see notes below.

¹³ Cf. Erikson 1963, 1982; Sternberg 1990; Ardel 2004; Baltes & Freund 2003; Baltes et al. 1990, 2002; Hanna & Ottens 1995; Kramer 2000; Maercker et al. 1998; Maslow 1968, 1971; Pasupathi & Staudinger 2001; Brown 2000a. I have considerably benefitted from the extensive bibliography of Trowbridge 2005.

¹⁴ Assmann 1994; Takahashi & Bordia 2000.

answer: ‘*Why Smart People Can Be So Foolish*’ (Sternberg 2004). Yet the quest for wisdom, and the encounter with the wisdom of others, has continued to inform some of the greatest minds, including de Spinoza, Leibniz, Schopenhauer, Heidegger, Levinas, and Derrida.¹⁵ The intellectual developments, as outlined above, outside the field of philosophy proper have made that ‘wisdom’, far from remaining an obsolete and antiquarian topic, has become one of the main growth points of a global intellectual culture, and as such constitutes an obvious bedding for modern (or rather, post-modern) scholarship aware of its social and existential responsibilities as well as of its limitations. It stands to reason that philosophers, in such fields as the history of philosophy, philosophical anthropology, and intercultural philosophy, have risen to this challenge, and have sought to contribute to the growing literature on wisdom by studies investigating the nature and development of the various wisdom traditions in philosophy worldwide,¹⁶ philosophical foundations for wisdom psychology, for the encounter of wisdom traditions with each other and with modern science, for the interaction between cultures (or rather, the situational articulation, dissimulation, and fusion, of ‘cultural orientations’)¹⁷ within today’s globalising space, and for the reconstruction of meaning and practice under post-Enlightenment conditions.¹⁸

¹⁵ General: Hadot 1995. Spinoza: de Dijn 1996 – despite de Spinoza’s banishment from the Jewish religious community, Hebrew wisdom was an important influence on this philosopher. Leibniz (cf. 1994) was fascinated by Chinese Taoist thought 道教 / 道家 as mediated by the Jesuit fathers resident in China. The Indian Vedic writings, notably the Upanishads उपनिषद्, had reputedly great influence on Schopenhauer (e.g. Janaway 1999: 12). Heidegger’s great inspiration was the Pre-Socratic ‘wisdom’ philosopher Parmenides – Heidegger 1982, 1977: *passim*. Levinas (cf. 1976) was considerably inspired, again, by biblical wisdom. This also applies to Derrida (cf. 1999, 1996).

¹⁶ For China: Weiping 2005; for the European middle ages, cf. Celano 1995, Hopkins 1996 (on Cusanus); European Renaissance: Rice 1958; Early Modern Europe specifically Hegel: Rosen 2000.

¹⁷ cf. van Binsbergen 2003a, ch. 15: ‘Cultures do not exist’, pp. 459-522.

¹⁸ Cf. de Mul 1993, implicitly on the wisdom relevance of Dilthey; Gadamer 1960; Kekes 1983, 1995; Manheimer 1992; Curnow 1999; Geyer 1989; Godlovitch 1981;

It would appear as if the dividing line between wisdom traditions worldwide, and the Western philosophical tradition, lies specifically in Kant's 'Copernican revolution' – in his critical writings, where direct and certain knowledge of the world 'as it is' came to be supplanted by the realisation that reality as such is unknowable unless through the deceptively distorting appearances of representation, so that, in Oosterling's (1996) apt expression, we are *Moved by appearances / Door schijn bewogen*. The dominant trends of subsequent Western thought, especially on the European continent, have largely been elaborations of the Kantian position. It is therefore that Mortimer Adler, editor in chief of the collection *The Great Ideas* (1952 / 1992), rejected modern philosophy from Hume and Kant onwards, and instead advocated a return to Aristotle. While Adler pretends that this is a move inspired by wisdom, it might have been wiser to try and find, in the history of ideas (in interdependence with political economy and the history of formal organisations, the state, absolute monarchy, citizenship, classes, art and *belles lettres*), an answer to the question as to what specific socio-political and ideological constellation brought Kant (thinking beyond Hume) to his remarkable departure, that has had an incomparable impact upon the history of modern thought. However, there is some simplification in the idea of such a revolution. For Kant, not all knowledge is of the shaky nature of appearance and representation; for the *transcendental* categories which make thought and knowledge possible in the first place (space, number, causation etc.), are said to be given *a priori*, and these tools could arguably be claimed to be on the side of the wisdom with which we confront the practical problems of human life – they are what allows even a Lower Palaeolithic¹⁹ hunter to fabricate his spear, take aim and kill his prey. The transcendental is one of Kant's central concepts, and its incisive and innovative analysis such as executed by the leading Dutch philosopher Duintjer (1966), reveals that here layers of knowledge, intuition and mys-

Hartshorne 1987; Jacobs 1989; Kuczyński 2001; Marquard 1989; Maxwell 1984, 2004; Nielsen 1993; Smith 1998.

¹⁹ The oldest attested spears derive from Schoeningen, Germany, as long ago as 400,000 years Before Present (Thieme 1997).

ticism may be mined that are in continuity with, rather than in revolutionary denial, of the great wisdom traditions of Western thought, and that, after Kant, found their greatest expression in Heidegger.

In fact, a wisdom orientation could be argued to be implied in all of Continental philosophy, whereas Analytical philosophy, with its exclusive concentration on specific procedures by which the truth claims of a statement may be substantiated, are more in line with procedural, repetitive approaches to the construction of knowledge. In other words:

Continental Philosophy : Analytical Philosophy = traditional wisdom : academic philosophy

as if what we are dealing with here are two complementary modes of knowing which kaleidoscopically, or rather fractally, reproduce and proliferate at whatever level we approach them.

All of the above drives home the message of the topicality of traditional wisdom as an object of modern scholarship.

Meanwhile, the word wisdom is often used vainly in academic texts today, to denote, not time-honoured modes of knowing complementary to scientific knowledge, but rather, within a given North Atlantic / globalising discipline (*e.g.* physics, law, econometrics) the obsolescent conventional approach of an earlier vintage. Thus an experimental physicist may chide the ‘conventional’ or ‘traditional’ wisdom’ of measuring the interaction of particular particles by means of a specific experimental setup – thus referring to intradisciplinary practices of global physics that may only be one or two decades old, and that have nothing to do with ‘expressions of traditional wisdom’ as understood in the present context.

While such usage of the word ‘wisdom’ is still transparent and neutral (although irrelevant in our present context), an extensive inspection of the enormous literature referring to wisdom also shows a usage that is far from neutral, but rather appropriative, distortive and ethnocentrically implying that the perspective from the North Atlantic is the only permissible one. This occurs when the term ‘wisdom’ is perfunctorily and alterisingly used in order to designate representations and practices which originate from outside the Western tradition and which deviate from

common-sense views of a North Atlantic moderately educated middle class; these practices are indicated in sweeping stereotyped terms. The use of the word wisdom in such cases merely serves to smother, under a cloak of a politically correct term suggestive of respect, the implicit rejection of these alien traits. The internet, in its tendency to identity-biased (in other words particularist) nutshell formulations of dubious reliability and authority, is the typical site for such usage. Modern organisational management may develop into another such site (Small 2004). In these specific cases, the phrase ‘expressions of traditional wisdom’ refers to a quality that we ourselves imply to lack, and by that reference we are constructing ourselves by contrast with some stereotyped other. Thus we emphatically claim not to have wisdom by ourselves, but we reserve wisdom (euphemistically, again) as an attribute of that which we are not and do not wish to be. Such contrastive wisdom constructing, by negation, our own self-image then is likely to turn out as: knowledge that is obsolete, local, essentially invalid, and incapable of generalisation. It is typically the kind of knowledge non-specialists in African affairs, and non-Africans, attribute to Africans, *in a deceptive bid at contrastive self-construction as more rational, universalist and objective non-Africans*. Understandably, therefore, that among champions of secular, democratic modernity ‘wisdom’ may become a pejorative term implying retarded divisiveness (e.g. Jacoby 1994).

2. In search of traditional wisdom

The term wisdom has often been used as a respectful evocation of the cultural achievements of the ancestors, be they Ancient Italians, Africans, or Ancient Egyptians from the Egyptophile, Afrocentric perspective and the New Age perspective.²⁰

Like in the Graeco-Roman classics, in the context of Asian phi-

²⁰ Cf. van Os n.d (general); Vico 1710 / 1988 (Ancient Italians); Carruthers 1986 (Afrocentric); West 1987 and Schwaller de Lubicz 1955-1956 (New Age perspective). For Africa, see footnotes below.

osophy and ethics the term wisdom tends to stand for a mystical worldview that combines cosmology, theology and ethical teachings.²¹

A prominent place in the global wisdom literature is occupied by so-called wisdom texts from Ancient Mesopotamia,²² Ancient Egypt,²³ and the Bible.²⁴ Here a senior person, well defined in time and place, ethnic and linguistic belonging, gender, age, and worldview, dishes out life lessons and magical instructions, against the background of the dominant local worldview. But the genre is far from limited to the Ancient Near East.²⁵

Next to Graeco-Roman classics, the Bible was North Atlantic scholars' principal frame of reference until well into the nineteenth century CE, and I suspect that, with the Egyptians (often metonymically designated by a conventionalised external term for their head of state, 'Pharao'²⁶) being presented as unrivalled in magic powers and as Ancient Israel's ultimate others, the combination of respect and alienness in conferring the notion of wisdom may have something to do with the images of Moses and Solomon, founder and greatest king of the Israelite nation




²¹ Cf. Müller 1875-1910; Yutang 1938, 1943, 1986; Wilhelm 1931; von Schlegel 1808; Mehlig 1987; van Praag 1962.

²² Cf. Tanred 2007; Lambert 1960; Foster 1974.

²³ Cf. Cannuyer 2007; Simpson 1973; Lichtheim 1973-1980; Lange 1925; Brunner 1988; Gundlach 1996; Kaplony 1968.

²⁴ The Bible books of Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther; and cf. Albright 1955; Noth & Thomas 1955; Camp 1985; Crenshaw 1969; Lebram 1965; Müller 1977-78; von Rad 1971; Sarkio 1994; Römer *et al.* 1990; Talmon 1963; Murphy 1981, 2002; Brown 1996; Dell 1994; Whybray 1989; Kirk 1999 (who follows Perdue in the application of Victor Turner's model of the ritual process, to wisdom texts – cf. Perdue & Turner 1978); Crenshaw 1995; Scott 1971; Achenbaum & Orwoll 1991. For a general theoretical perspective on wisdom literature, cf. Brown 2005.

²⁵ As several contributions in the 2007 Brussels Symposium brought out for Asia and the Americas.

²⁶ The word *pharao* is an Hebrew corruption of the Egyptian *pr*  'house', or (by an alternative suggestion)  *pr wr*, 'Great House, palace' – although the latter expression, if written with the 'shrine' determinative , is reserved not for the palace but for the pre-dynastic national shrine of Upper Egypt (cf. Gardiner 1994: 492 n. 1, 494).

respectively, both of whom were said to excel in ‘all the wisdom of Egypt’. In the key passage on Solomon, wisdom appears as Hebrew חִכְמָה *khokmah*, as in over a hundred other places in the Old Testament; in Acts 7: 22 wisdom appears as *sōphia* σοφία, as in 25 other places in the New Testament. It would take us too far to attempt an extensive semantic analysis of these words here; a few remarks must suffice. The *Acts* reference to Moses has a suggestion of magical, technical and social, rather than sacred knowledge: the verse deals with what Moses learned as an Egyptian prince, and how this made him an Egyptian aristocrat competent in words and deeds:²⁷

<p>[21] τοῦ πατρὸς: ἐκτεθέντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀνείλατο αὐτὸν ἡ θυγάτηρ [22] Φαραῶ καὶ ἀνεθρέψατο αὐτὸν ἑαυτῇ εἰς υἱόν. καὶ ἐπαιδεύθη Μουσοῦς πάση σοφίᾳ Αἰγυπτίων, ἧν δὲ δυνατὸς ἐν λόγοις καὶ ἔργοις αὐτοῦ.</p>	<p>[21] When he was thrown out, Pharaoh’s daughter took him up, and reared him as her own son. [22] Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. He was mighty in his words and works.</p>
--	--

The I Kings reference to Solomon combines exalted sacred and magical knowledge, social virtue, proverbs and songs, and knowledge of non-human visible world; such wisdom is explicitly declared to have a supernatural provenance and in the preceding verse is paralleled with תְּבוּנָה *tebunah*, a word commonly translated as ‘understanding’ and also used dozens of times in the Old Testament:²⁸

<p>ט וַיִּתֵּן אֱלֹהִים חִכְמָה לְשֹׁלֹמֹה הַוְּתוּבֹנָה, הַרְבֵּה מְאֹד; וְרָחֵב לֵב-כְּהוֹל, אֲשֶׁר עַל-שֹׁפֵת הַיָּם.</p>	<p>9 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore.</p>
<p>י וַתְּרֵב חִכְמַת שֹׁלֹמֹה, מְחִכְמַת כָּל-בְּנֵי-קִדְמָה, וּמִכָּל לְחִכְמַת מִצְרָיִם.</p>	<p>10 And Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east, and all the wisdom of Egypt.</p>

²⁷ Electronic text source (slightly edited): Perseus online version at <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/> of the Greek edition by Brooke Foss Westcott, Fenton John Anthony Hort – English translation ed. Rainbow Missions, Inc.

²⁸ I Kings 5: 9-14 or 4: 29-34; electronic text source Mamre 2005.

- יא וַיְהִי כִּי הָיָה חָכְמָתוֹ מִכָּל-הָאָדָם, מֵאֵתָן הָעֲזָרְחִי וְהִימָן
וְכַלְכָּל בְּנֵי מַחֹל; וְנִי-שְׁמוּ בְּכָל-
הַגּוֹיִם, סָבִיב. 11 For he was wiser than all men: than Ethan the Ezrahite,
and Heman, and Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and
his fame was in all the nations round about.
- יב וַיְדַבֵּר, שְׁלֹשֶׁת אֲלָפִים מִשְׁלֵ; וַיְהִי שִׁירָו,
חֲמֵשֶׁה וְאַלְפֵי. 12 And he spoke three thousand proverbs; and his songs
were a thousand and five.
- יג וַיְדַבֵּר, עַל-הָעֵצִים, מִן-הָאֲרֶז אֲשֶׁר בְּלִבְנוֹן,
נֶעַד הָאֲזוֹב אֲשֶׁר יֵצֵא בְקִיר; וַיְדַבֵּר עַל-הַבְּהֵמָה
וְעַל-הָעוֹף, וְעַל-הַרְמֻשׁ וְעַל-הַדְּגָיִם. 13 And he spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Leba-
non even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall; he
spoke also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things,
and of fishes.
- יד וַיָּבֹאוּ, מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים, לִשְׁמֹעַ, אֵת חֲכָמַת
שְׁלֹמֹה הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל-מְלָכֵי הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר שָׁמְעוּ
אֵת-חֲכָמָתוֹ. {ס} 14 And there came of all peoples to hear the wisdom of
Solomon, from all kings of the earth, who had heard of his
wisdom.

The conventional translations into modern European tongues have frozen the multidimensional semantic dynamics of the underlying Hebrew and Greek biblical expressions, wrongly suggesting a narrowly uniformity and unidimensionality of meaning which, due to the immense influence of biblical texts in European cultural history, have greatly informed the way in which we conceptualise ‘wisdom’ today. The phrase *wisdom of Egypt* was adopted as title for several scholarly works setting out Ancient Egyptian science, theology and practical wisdom (e.g. Petrie 1940; Brown 1923; West 1987).

The fact that the Ancient Near East (including Egypt) recognised divinities whose special province was wisdom, gave rise to scholarly studies concentrating on such divine figures, in which the term ‘wisdom’ was no longer an obvious scholarly imposition but could pass as a translation of a native concept (e.g. Arthur 1984).

In classical studies dealing with Graeco-Roman Antiquity the term ‘wisdom’²⁹ is often used to pinpoint the transition

²⁹ Cf. Lloyd 1987; Sedley 1998; Kern 1888; Burkert 1962, 1968, 1987; West 1983; Riedweg 1995; Bernabé 2002; Betegh 2001; Graf 1974; Götze 1923; Halliwell 2000;

- from a diffusely mystical worldview that was admitted to be highly indebted to ‘the Orient’ (i.e. Ancient Egypt, Syro-Palestine, Anatolia, Mesopotamia, Persia and Scythia – the latter two especially transmitting to Greece the shamanistic trends that were to be hotly discussed in classics in the second half of the twentieth century CE),
- to Greek contrastively rational philosophy and science, the latter often being presented as an original, local Greek achievement.³⁰

Wisdom then typically marks the intermediate phase, of the Seven Sages, Hesiod, the Pre-Socratics. The connection between the Pre-Socratic philosophers and traditional wisdom, especially in the form of Orphic and Eleusinian mystery cults and shamanism, has been studied intensively in the last fifty years and is now generally acknowledged; MacLennan (2006) offers a useful summary (although he wrongly attributes a North Asian, instead of Central Asian, origin to shamanism):

‘It is now well established that ancient Greek philosophy had roots in the shamanic practices common to many cultures (...). The Greeks learned these techniques from the “Scythians” when they colonized the north shore of the Black Sea in the seventh century BCE and from the Thracians and Persian Magi, who also knew north-Asiatic shamanism (...). These practices are reflected in the stories of Orpheus, who exhibits many of the features of a “great shaman” (...); of Aristeas (...) whose soul could leave his body in trance and accompany Apollo as his raven: of Abaris (...), the healer-sage (*iatromantis*) who traveled on a magic arrow (a typical shamanic wand), which he later gave to Pythagoras; and of the semi-historical Epimenides (...) who purified Athens (...) and was also known for leaving his body while in a trance state (...). They all exemplify many of the characteristics of shamanic practice (...), and were closely associated with Hyperborean Apollo (...). Evidence of shamanic practice is also apparent in ancient biographies of historical figures, such as

Shapiro 2000 examines how the use of proverbs enables Herodotus to strike a bridge towards older wisdom traditions in the Aegean, and cites various Greek specialist terms for wisdom expressions: *παροιμία paroimia*, *ὑποθήκη hypothēkē*, *ἀπόφθεγμα apofthegma*, and *γνώμη gnōmē*.

³⁰ Dodds 1951 initiated a more relative view of the stereotypical juxtaposition of rational Greeks versus irrational barbarians. Also cf. Kingsley 1995a, 1995b; MacLennan 2006.

the pre-Socratic philosophers Pythagoras (...). who descended into the underworld and claimed to have the soul of Hermotimus, an ancient shaman, and whose followers venerated the *Orphica* and sometimes wrote under the name “Orpheus” (...); Parmenides (...), whose poem, with its progress from the illusory world of duality to The One, has many of the hallmarks of a shamanic journey (...); Empedocles (...). a magical healer who boasted that he could control the weather and retrieve souls from Hades (...): and other less well-known figures. They all combined “the still undifferentiated functions of magician and naturalist, poet and philosopher, preacher, healer, and public counselor”³¹.

In ways that Bernal’s *Black Athena I* (1987) has exposed most convincingly and impressively, the stark contrast between exalted Greek science and lowly barbarian ‘traditional wisdom’ has especially served in order to construct European racialist superiority in the nineteenth and twentieth century CE, which had made continuity with the ancient Greeks the basis of its identity. In deviation from such geopolitical delusions, the historical facts show how greatly the Greeks were indebted to West Asia and Egypt, and how well they were aware of this state of affairs, despite some anti-Oriental othering (as for instance in Herodotus) in the aftermath of the Persian wars.

Thus philosophy in the Western tradition was engendered in the Pre-Socratic ‘wisdom’ context. Also in Plato the movement towards insights that are both true and wise in the conventional sense is still very marked (cf. Rhodes 2003; Stern 1997). I already referred to how Aristotle brought us his distinction between theoretical and practical knowledge; his contributions to both forms of knowledge (e.g. to poetics as the practical art of writing, and to rhetorics as the practical art of making things appear true before an audience) have constituted firm pillars of Western thought. Stoic philosophy, in turn, reverted to a wisdom-centred stance (with, for instance, Plutarch – Patterson 1991 – and Cicero as prolific dispensers of *phronēsis* texts), and so did Neo-Platonism, with Plotinus and Iamblichus as main exponents.

In Africa, which is the continent of my principal expertise, expressions of traditional wisdom (beside the attention for proverbs, riddles and

³¹ MacLennan 2006; his standard sources largely coincide with those already cited, and include: Butterworth 1966; Dodds 1951; Eliade 1951; Kingsley 1994, 1995, 1999.

other oral genres)³² have been recorded by such anthropologists as Griaule and Turner, highlighting the lessons of the Malian village philosopher Ogotomèlli and the Zambian village diviner Muchona, respectively.³³ More in general, the African philosopher Odera Oruka has identified a genre of African knowledge production which he has termed ‘sage philosophy’ or ‘sagacity’ – *wisdom*, in other words –, and to whose documentation all over Africa he has contributed.³⁴

In the Africanist anthropological literature the word wisdom is used in a number of different ways. Werbner (1989), writing on divination among the Tswapong people of modern Botswana, uses the word wisdom in the sense of the diviner’s skilful, subtle evocation and symbolic redress of the contradictions in the life of his client and the latter’s kin, based on a dextrous manipulation of symbols and rhetoric, and of sacred material objects multifariously alluding to such contradictions. Werbner was much influenced by Fernandez’s work (1982) on the Bwiti cult in Gabon, which has a similar orientation and is at the same time (more even than Werbner’s work) an example of the way in which modern ethnographers have sought to bring out and explain in great detail the poetics and dramatics of rituals of expression and catharsis. Here wisdom turns out to be, far from a static attribute of people in certain roles of authority and responsibility, on the contrary a dynamic product of sym-

³² Mainstream scholarly approaches to African wisdom include: Scheub 1977, 1985; Madu 1996; Opoku 1975, 1987; Barber & Farias 1989; Horton & Finnegan 1973; Fabian 1990; Kimmerle 1997; Wanjohi 1997; Doke 1947; Mve Ondo 1991; Rogers 1985; de Veyrières & de Méritens 1967; Ameve 1989; Sumner 1999; Bryant 1995; Razafintsalama 1988; Ford 2000 with his collection of African myths; Murithi 2006 on Southern African *ubuntu* philosophy (which however is to some extent an invented tradition in the Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983 sense, cf. van Binsbergen 2001); and Ntekim-Rex 2007.

³³ Griaule 1948; Turner 1967.

³⁴ Odera Oruka 1990a, 1990b; cf. Presbey 1999; Somé 1998. In an excellent article Kimmerle 1993 puts these efforts in a wider critical perspective, which includes academic African philosophy and points, beyond the ‘everyday-life philosophers’ that Oruka’s sages mainly are, at the esoteric keepers of exalted secret and initiatory knowledge in African; here Kimmerle relies particularly on M. Tchiamalenga Ntumba 1989.

bolic and communicative work, which generates social resilience and resourcefulness by enhancing meaning and belonging.

Fernandez (2000) again suggests a link between wisdom and peripherality: under today's cultural globalisation and North Atlantic hegemony, cultural attitudes and worldviews may well be considered wise because they are *not* part of the dominant mainstream culture, thus (but this is my own excessively liberal paraphrase), in a nostalgic way, constituting a harmless defiance of the structural, ideological violence which the dominant culture is exerting. It is in this way that cultures distant in time and place may be held to produce expressions of traditional wisdom: as forms of nostalgic but important cultural criticism. Such usage of the word wisdom is also found with several other authors.³⁵ The authority-generating and healing-generating connotations of alienness, although seldom discussed explicitly (however, e.g. de Boeck 1993; Colson 1966), are recurrent and widely distributed, from alien healers in rural Central Africa; to diviners in East, Southern and West Africa, Madagascar and the Comores Islands representing a geomantic divination system deriving from ^cAbbasīd العباسيون Mesopotamia end of the late first millennium CE (where it came to be known as *ilm al-raml* علم الرمل 'sand science'), with related forms in China under the Shang dynasty 商朝 and earlier, where it was known as *yì jīng* 易經; to astrologers and wonderworkers (Chaldaei, Magi) from the eastern periphery of the Roman empire coming to work in Hellenistic Greece and later at the Roman heartland (cf. Momigliano 1975). I have sometimes (e.g. van Binsbergen 1981) appealed to similar connections of alienness in order to try and explain why foreign forms of ritual and divination would command such great respect and attraction in the regions where they have been introduced: coming from afar, and hallowed by their unmistakable foreignness, they represent the fascinating, immense, and potentially destructive power of the ultimate other; however, below we shall see how it is more attractive to seek the explana-

³⁵ E.g. Maybury-Lewis 1992; Vitebsky's 1995 well-known book on shamanism appeared in the 'Living Wisdom' series. Already in the hands of certain enlightened authors in the (proto-)colonial period, the term wisdom amounted to a respectful evocation of distant otherness (cf. Burton 1865).

tion not in alienness, but in the diffuse internalisation of proto-scientific repetitive, standard procedures as the hallmark of truth in knowledge.

Our initial overview of approaches to traditional wisdom has brought up a number of interesting and promising ideas and perspectives. Let us now try to penetrate a little deeper into this fascinating but difficult matter.

3. The dilemma of expression in wisdom

Given our own reliance on method in the production of our academic scholarship, traditional wisdom can only come within the orbit of our investigations if it does not remain implicit, *not* a *totally* unrevealed secret, *not* a *totally* tacit assumption, but if it is laid down, in whatever oblique and distorted form, in an expression that has some material manifestation: for instance in the sound waves carrying the spoken words of our living informants; or the clay tablets, bamboo leaves, papyrus sheets, or knotted *quippus* of the texts at our disposal; or the stone reliefs, rock paintings or masquerades that may express traditional wisdom iconographically. Without such *expressions*, we would scarcely be able to make scholarly pronouncements on traditional wisdom.

Here we must acknowledge the problematic status of ‘expression’. Many wisdom traditions, from all parts of the world and from all documented periods, have *restricted, veiled, or downright prohibited expression*, and have tended to organise themselves around the secret – even if in itself meaningless and void – that binds and unites the initiated happy few (cf. de Jong 2007). As far as the history of Western specialist thought is concerned: ever since the pre-Socratics many philosophers have realised that language (even though allowing us to name, organise and lend meaning to the world) at the same time *obscures* Being, smothering it under a deceptive layer of enunciation that may well be the opposite of wisdom. The Chinese counterpart of this insight is in the famous second line of the opening chapter of *Dao De Djing* 道德經:

名可名 非常名 *míng kě míng fēi cháng míng* ‘naming that

fixes the reference is not true naming'.³⁶

Thus we meet one particular awareness of finitude as the organising principle of wisdom: *the finitude of language*, both in its limited capacity to express essentials of life and the world, and in the multiplicity of human languages, which makes for grossly imperfect transmissions from one language to the other.

Perhaps my best, *wisest* option would be simply to shut up here. And I would be inclined to do just that, if on a worldwide scale, modern scholarship were coterminous with traditional wisdom – but (to put it mildly) there are indications that it is *not*. The interplay between modern scholarship and traditional wisdom is complex and paradoxical, as my entire argument goes to show.

4. 'Tacit modern unwisdom'...

Further aspects of the meaning and heuristic uses of the phrase 'expressions of traditional wisdom?' may also be captured, somewhat flippantly, if we take the multiple opposite of 'expressions of traditional wisdom', which would be something like '*tacit* (taken for granted – as opposed to explicitly expressed and argued) *modern* (as opposed to traditional) *unwisdom* (as opposed to wisdom)'. It is not difficult to give a few examples (albeit, admittedly subjective, even tendentious) of such tacit modern unwisdom. I will quickly pass over such obviously spurious modern myths as that of the market and of commodification or commoditisation (according to which everything is merchandise), and that of rational maximising, especially as far as the attainment of material goals is concerned;³⁷ and the myth of North Atlantic cultural superiority and independent origin – recently exposed in the *Black Athena* debate and its aftermath.³⁸ Let me merely outline four examples of 'tacit modern unwis-

³⁶ Of the numerous editions of this text I only mention Ames & Hall 2003.

³⁷ Cf. van Binsbergen & Geschiere 2005; Bowles & Gintis 1993; Cramer 2002.

³⁸ Bernal 1987, 1991; Lefkowitz & Rogers 1996; van Binsbergen 1997; an expanded

dom’, which in a later section will then be contrasted, one by one, with African traditional wisdom:

1. The immensely alienating myth of *the human body as basically an industrial product*,³⁹ i.e.
 - uniform and standardised (hence advertisements’ emphasis on young, healthy and perfect)
 - modular in its composition, so that body parts may be modified, overhauled and replaced at will
 - and saturated (ever since the times of de la Mettrie (1747 / 1999) with the imagery of the machine, so that the same language (‘check-up’, ‘engine’, ‘plumbing’) may be used for our body and our motor vehicle (which is said to have its own ‘body’).

2. The myth of the fundamental closedness of the human person, who thus is depicted as
 - in the first place an individual, rather than a member of a group
 - whose mind, by an inveterate axiom of modernist science, is to be considered a closed system impervious to other minds except, indirectly, through conscious reflection upon sense impressions (including those produced by speech) that may be taken to express the movements of other minds (cf. Dennett 1991).

3. The myth (going back to Aristotle,⁴⁰ as far as the Western tradition is concerned) of *the excluded third and of logical consistency*. In many ways this allows us to respond adequately and pragmatically in our interaction with the non-human world (which therefore can

and updated version of the latter book is now in the press under the title *Black Athena Twenty Years After* (Berlin / Boston / Munster: LIT).

³⁹ Smith et al. 2004; Sharp 2000; Martin 2006.

⁴⁰ *Metaphysics* IV.4, 1006^b and following; IV 7, 1011^b.

be argued to display, most of the time, and at the meso⁴¹-level of our conscious human interaction with it, a structure similar to that of our binary logic. Yet we cannot close our eyes to the fact that, in the interaction between human individuals and between human groups, the same logic incessantly creates intransigent positions of recognised and emphasised difference which cannot come to an agreement since both sides, by their own logic, are justified to consider themselves right, yet their respective truths are mutually incompatible and in conflict. The main conflicts in our globalising world of today (*e.g.* those between North Atlantic military capitalism on the one hand, and militant Islam on the other hand, as rival paths through modernity; those between economic short-term maximising globalism and a future-orientated ecological responsibility; those between consumption on the one hand, and integrity and global solidarity on the other hand) remind us of the potentially paralysing and destructive implication of such consistency. In Western thought it is only recently that such poststructuralist concepts as *différance* and *differend*⁴² and the elaboration of ternary and multi-value logics have created a context where we can think beyond binary logic.

4. Typically but paradoxically, again, in this discussion of ‘Tacit modern unwisdom’ we have taken the word *myth* itself in the modernist sense of: ‘widely held collective representation that yet constitutes an untruth’. Usually such a use of the word ‘myth’ carries the implication that specific modern science is available to explode that myth – which implies (contentiously) that in all situations

⁴¹ I take the meso-level of phenomena to be that of our normal Galilei-Newton world, at the order of magnitude of the human body: 10^0 (= 1) metres. At very much higher and very much lower orders of magnitude (galaxies, elementary particles), the self-evidences of our Galilei-Newton world dissolve, and the paradoxes and wonders of the theory of relativity and quantum mechanics replace the (appearance of the) transparent logical structure and the object-subject distinction of the meso-level world, bringing out the restrictive boundary conditions of the latter.

⁴² Cf. Derrida 1967, 1972; Lyotard 1983.

modern science is the source and the touchstone of truth.

These are some of the themes of tacit, modern unwisdom against which we can begin to appreciate the wisdom of earlier times and different continents. We will come back to these points below, when we will reconsider them in the light of African expressions of traditional wisdom.

5. On the possibility of an intercultural transmission of wisdom, within and outside an academic context

If the West can be argued to have its share of modern *unwisdom*, the intercultural transmission of foreign *wisdom* becomes all the more desirable. But is such transmission at all possible?

One of the most important problems of the scholarly study of expressions of traditional wisdom turns out to be: *can we understand and represent these expressions in such a way that their original, local meaning is optimally preserved also in the new, globalising context into which these traditional expressions is mediated through our scholarship?*⁴³ This touches on the central question of all intercultural knowledge production and representation, and it does not have a simple answer.

The standard anthropological position is affirmative but patently naïve, and could be rendered as follows: *'if only we apply the proper procedural methods (long-term immersion in a local community aided by language mastery, more or less formal interviews, apprenticeships towards the competent assumption and discharge of local roles, and specific field methods of recording, analysis, host participation and feedback) we are bound to end up with an ethnographic representation that is both reliable (i.e. repetitively reproducible by other researchers) and valid' (i.e. adequately represents the original)*'.

We note that this anthropological approach implies a procedural


⁴³ A special case of this question is: is it possible to express and transmit traditional wisdom in a new, state-of-the-art format, e.g. through the internet? Cf. Ess 2003 and van Binsbergen 2003b for discussions on this point.

and repetitive conception of the production of intercultural knowledge – shortly we will come back to this conception of knowledge and contrast it with the wisdom mode of knowledge. Anthropological naivety lies in a number of points (van Binsbergen 2003). In the first place, from Kant onwards modern philosophy is predicated on the insight that direct knowledge of essence is an illusion, and that all representation is inevitably appropriative and distortive. To this we may add Quine's (1960, 1970) related principle of the indeterminacy of translation, which particularly applies to anthropologists' and philologists' attempts at intercultural knowledge construction through various forms of translation. Moreover, the ethnographer's commitment to the local society, its collective representations and existential predicaments is (even if subjectively conceptualised by that ethnographer as an existential encounter) largely optional and instrumental, and not supported by such early childhood socialisation as makes for inescapability on the part of the local actors themselves – instead, the ethnographer brings very different mind sets and gut reactions of her own to the field; therefore the local actors' life world largely remains that of others, and their wisdom remains largely irrelevant. Finally, the ethnographer's understanding is expressed in theoretically underpinned analytical terms, to be processed and ultimately published in a specialist technical language which, even if in principle accessible to the local actors, is utterly alienating and distancing.

In this light it is understandable that a non-anthropologist like the philosopher Niels Weidtmann (2007) articulates the thesis (but I am not sure whether he himself totally agrees with it) that, for instance, African wisdom cannot be represented in Western discourse; we will come back to this.

What ethnographers can do, and have done (for instance in the excellent work by Turner, Fernandez, Werbner, Devisch, as cited in the present argument), is: rendering explicit, and rebuilding or remodelling in specialist globalising scholarly discourse, what the formal components are of wisdom texts (both written and oral) and the accompanying social and ritual dramatics; and clearly indicating through what communicative and performative mechanism the practical knowledge they contain is

communicated to their original intended audience. Such dissections of other people's wisdom may still speak to us in some poetic sense, but they no longer speak to us fully as the wisdom they originally constituted. Philosophers and scholars of textuality and performance may even be more skilful at such analytical exercises than anthropologists, and may go about them with more uninhibited cleverness, because their armchair approaches have (with few exceptions) been performed upon isolated texts that were already cut and dried to begin with – they were seldom forced to discharge their professional duties while at the same time intensively engaging with real foreign local actors, speaking in real time in concrete and confusing foreign situations in which the researcher finds himself deeply involved, using a tongue that he mastered only recently, and imperfectly.

The saving grace of both ethnography and text-based, philological approaches to expressions of traditional wisdom lies in the fact that their attempt towards intercultural knowledge production is never just othering and distancing and nothing more – it also hints at an existential interpersonal encounter in which streaks of understanding and identification light up, in the recognition of the fact that the local actors have a body and a mind very similar to that of the researcher, and in the recognition of their struggle with common dilemmas of the human condition (illness, death, competition and conflict, love and loyalty, meaning and consolation). The physical closeness and the *couleur locale* of fieldwork are conducive to a sense of adoption and transcultural intersubjective fusion; but, given the subtle, millennia-old tradition of cultivated textual sensitivity pervading the humanities, fieldworkers can by no means claim the monopoly on such encounters. Like the anthropologist, the Egyptologist reading an Old Kingdom wisdom text such as the *Precepts of Ptah-Hotep* i.e. Tsw n md.t nfr.t pth-htp ;⁴⁴ or the Sinologist reading the great T'ang 唐朝 poet Li Bai 李白 (701-762 CE), will have a similar sense of communicative fusion in which wisdom resides and makes itself deeply felt. My own experience, as a mere amateur reader of

⁴⁴ Ptah-Hotep 1917; van den Dungen 2002-2004; Lichtheim 1973f: I 62.

such texts, is that something of this quality may survive highly deficient language mastery (but anthropologists' language mastery in the field is usually deficient, or worse, anyway), and may even survive the distortive intermediary of translation. The fieldwork situation, just like the text, turns out to be not just a vehicle for specialist knowledge production along professional lines (which would appear to be destructive for the transmission of wisdom), but also (as a non-professional incentive without which most of us would have long given up our scholarship) a vehicle for amazed but affirmative human encounter, which makes light with cultural, linguistic and somatic difference, and highlights the common humanity we share – as position of wisdom in itself, as well as one conducive to the transfer of wisdom. The same argument could be given for intercultural transmission of beauty.

The problems of intercultural contact and knowledge production are not fundamentally different from those at the interpersonal individual level. What is involved is the transmission of specific meanings and insights from sender to receiver, but beyond that, and more importantly, there is the very fact of such transmission and of the ensuring partial fusion in itself (regardless of the specific contents being transmitted), – which liberates the receiver of his or her articulated boundedness as an individual.

At this point we become aware of a mechanism of *situational, oppositional framing* attending specialist intercultural knowledge production. As a scholar, equipped with intersubjective disciplinary methods and commitments, the specialist has no option but to retreat into a frame of conceptual and analytical othering, where the traditional expression of wisdom is objectified, and thus virtually destroyed, into a mere target for North Atlantic / globalising scientific discourse. This can only be destructive: for it denies that the exchange of wisdom is a communicative undertaking, and therefore requires a common cosmological frame of reference (however implicit and inarticulate), recognition of a shared basis of valuation however diffuse, recognition among both sender and recipient of each other's shared humanity, recognition also of each other's potential familiarity and competence in the problematic at hand, and agreement

as to a shared medium of communication (which could be as basic as a shrug of the shoulders or a wink, or as elaborate as an actual spoken *lingua franca*). Only when these requirements are met can the sender's pronouncements move the receiver to an affirmation inspiring emulation, to a re-arrangement of the receiver's view of self and world. All these requirements are left unfulfilled if, in the intercultural encounter with expressions of traditional wisdom, the receiver emphatically identifies as a North Atlantic / globalising scholar detachedly applying her specialist tools. Then the situation is dominated by the need to produce and to use specialist alienating language, which can never coincide with the original wisdom utterance but thrives on its difference vis-à-vis that utterance.

The alienating frame is in the first place a language frame. However, to the extent to which the academic specialist coming to the intercultural wisdom encounter (whether in the field or in text) manages to avoid such framing, and to reduce, or at least defer, the imposition of appropriative and alienating scientific language (to the extent, in other words, to which all language use on the part of the receiver is deferred, or at least an inclusive, fussily accommodating language format is chosen *e.g.* that of poetry or dance or song, or silence), to that extent the transcultural, potentially universal implications and applicabilities of the sender's wisdom may come across to the receiver, as an existential message quite comparable to the sender's conscious intentions, and equally comparable to what passes between close kin and between friends in a mono-cultural setting. It is not the *intercultural* nature of the wisdom exchange, but the *scholarly framing*, that to my mind is responsible for the truth articulated by Weidtmann: that traditional wisdom cannot be represented in Western scientific discourse; but let us not forget that there are other forms of discourse, and that much of life, on both sides of the cultural boundaries we tend to construct, is non-discursive anyway.

I could go one step further, and claim that the situational, oppositional framing identified here – *the dynamic field of tension between identification / fusion and dissociation / confrontation, which incessantly oscillates back and forth, but tending to dissociation / confrontation if the situation is dominated by specialist language use and its classifications* –

is a fundamental mechanism in all intercultural knowledge production, and the source of many problems that have cropped up in this field.⁴⁵ Although public thought and geopolitics of the 20th century CE have persuaded us to reify cultures as firm givens of the human existence, they are yet intangible, ephemeral, and situational constructs – social facts (Durkheim 1897), no doubt, yet (because competence in a culture is learned, because people can be competent in more than one culture, because they often situationally toggle between cultures, etc.) facts at a different ontological level from the facts that make our bodies occupy space, makes them perceptible to other human and animal bodies, bring them into being, sustain them through life, cause them to die. We cannot live without specific cultural programming, and part of it is so deeply ingrained that we cannot trade it for the specific programming from another culture, yet we can take a relative view of cultural difference and have encounters, learn wisdom lessons, dispense and receive knowledge across the ever so relative, intangible and situational (hence often merely illusory of non-existent) boundaries that separate cultures.⁴⁶ Knowledge,

⁴⁵ Here I find that a useful and illuminating model is provided by the physico-chemical mechanism of the cell ‘membrane’, for instance (but that is only one very special case out of myriad such situations) as operating in the context of the human ovum being fertilised by a spermatozoon. Built up out of a tight network of lipid (i.e. fat) molecules, the membrane is only one molecule thick, and as long as the molecules are aligned i.e. in their hydrophilic state, between them they leave enough room for very small bodies to pass through – the membrane is then essentially porous; however, as soon as one body has been allowed to pierce through this array of molecules, the membrane’s condition changes instantly from hydrophilic to hydrophobic, the porous transitions close shut, and the membrane is no longer permeable, although given the right trigger it can easily return to a permeable state. In the same way I see the interconnectedness, and the dissociation, in interpersonal and intercultural encounter, as two complementary aspects between which the process of intercultural encounter incessantly oscillates: with articulated speech, academic distancing, and encapsulation in a formal organisation (the state, a world religion, a voluntary association) as major situational triggers towards dissociation – and on the other hand silence, dance, music, recognition of mutual corporality and finitude, as major situational triggers towards interconnectedness.

⁴⁶ This reiterates my adage that ‘cultures do not exist (anymore)’, which gave its title to van Binsbergen 2003e.

in some post-Gettier⁴⁷ reformulation of the time-honoured definition as ‘justified true belief’, is inherently culture-bound, because justification, truth and belief are meaningless without a specific cultural embeddedness. Culture is just a machine for the production of local self-evidence, of local truths. But here the same framing mechanism is at work, for we may also opt out of the specialist analytical frame, and instead consider knowledge, in a more diffuse, intuitive, and essentialising metaphysical way, as ‘an individual orientation (of cognition, emotion and / or motivation) that seeks to coincide with Being’. As the leading intercultural philosopher Mall (1995) has aptly stated,

‘no language can claim to be the mother-tongue of Being’,

yet, to the extent to which we do not allow ourselves to be carried away by our own language use, we are not necessarily exiled from Being, we are granted considerable knowledge within our own cultural framework. Nor are we necessarily deaf to those expressions of knowledge (i.e. wisdom) in which others testify to their endeavour to coincide with Being, and this may well include *linguistic and cultural others* – after all, in the face of Being their otherness may appear as merely superficial and situational; it is oscillatingly complemented by a sameness that would be liberating if only... to the extent to which it does not threaten our own, and the other’s, construction of self-identity.

The less we speak of interculturality, and of the situations to which this term refers, in technical academic terms, the more we seem to be invited to achieve intercultural knowledge and to partake of intercultural wisdom. But this paradoxical lesson could only be learned by thinking the scholarly endeavour through, in a critical and scholarly way. In the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge, scholarship is a Wittgensteinian ladder (Wittgenstein 1921 / 1964: §6.5.4) we may cast away once it has brought us, as an indispensable tool, to within reach of where we were heading.

⁴⁷ In a path-breaking article, Gettier (1963) questioned the validity of this definition but it largely survived.

6. Towards an epistemological perspective

In the preceding section 5, I have approached the encounter between global scholarship and expressions of traditional wisdom, from the question as to the intercultural transmission of such wisdom. I will now develop a complementary perspective, notably an epistemological argument that allows us to articulate more clearly what the specific nature is of traditional wisdom as a form of knowledge – thus going beyond the Aristotelian *sophia* / *phronēsis* distinction of our opening section. In section 4, I gave four examples of ‘tacit modern unwisdom’. They can maintain themselves as self-evidently true collective representations in North Atlantic society today, by virtue of the place science has acquired as the central legitimating and truth-producing instance in the modern world, having replaced in this respect religion, magic, and other traditional worldviews (cf. Foucault 1966, 1969). When we try to take a distance from such modern Western collective representations, exposing them as dubious collective representations (as ‘myths’ in the modernist, pejorative sense; but see section 7.4 below) and nothing more, we can only do so in the hope of an alternative viewpoint that affords us greater relevance and a closer approximation of the essence of Being – in other words, a viewpoint illuminated by *traditional wisdom*.

Such hope testifies to the fact that, as modern scholars, we are divided within ourselves, and given to an amazing nostalgia. Although there is a wide range of disciplines and disciplinary paradigms currently exploring traditional wisdom and its expressions, nearly all researchers involved in this undertaking subscribe to the canons of modern scholarship: objectivity, rationality, and universalism (cf. Harding 1997; cf. van Binsbergen 2007). The point of universalism may surprise and arouse those – the majority – who are emphatically involved as specialists, not in world-wide intercultural comparison, but in specific geographical regions, historical periods, and subject matters – Ancient Mesopotamian proto-science, African traditional worldviews as expressed in proverbs, Chinese Taoism up to the T’ang dynasty, the Central American peasant worldview today, etc. Such specialities are the backbone of scholarship in

that they are sufficiently focused to afford the researcher a combination of a delimited field of study, in which extraordinary expertise and profundity of insight can be achieved. If I yet apply the concept of universalism to such particularising scholarly endeavours, it is for the following reason: however much our subject matters may differ; however much the languages, scripts, literatures, field situations may differ that each of us employs in the pursuit of her or his speciality; yet our concepts, methods, goals, modes of scholarly expression and argument remain recognisable, and communicable, within the universalising, and globalising, academic context – we can speak to each other, and find that, across the boundaries of our disciplinary and regional specialities, we have a lot to say to each other, and much to share. Our looking at expressions of traditional wisdom is in itself an invitation to universalism in the sense I have used that term above.

Why then is such an endeavour a sign of being divided in ourselves? Because, however we may choose to define the concept in detail, *traditional wisdom* necessarily constitutes a mode of knowing that differs from the knowledge that is our joint scholarly pursuit. No traditional wisdom could ever be produced by our scholarly methods (all we can do with our scholarly methods is try and represent, document, and analyse, such traditional wisdom as is not ours). If yet such a traditional mode of knowing fascinates us enough to spend years of our lives trying to come near it, then there must be an unmistakably nostalgic element there – as if we recognise that that traditional mode of knowing has a claim to continued relevance and understanding which today's global science has been unable to destroy or replace. Calling a mode of knowing 'wisdom' means that we take it seriously as an aspect of the human endeavour to understand the world and human life and meet their practicalities, as complementary to modern science rather than as to be superseded and exposed by modern science. We use the scientific mode of knowing to represent, and bring to intercultural recognition, a different mode of knowing.

What does that difference reside in? Having characterised the scientific mode of knowing as objective, rational and universal, we are tempted to define traditional wisdom as *subjective, a-rational* (not to say

irrational), and *particularising*.

From wherever in the world, these expressions of traditional wisdom constitute texts (written or oral) whose main point is to instruct the audience on *the practical dilemmas of human life*, hence contradiction, tautology and ambiguity are as common, in this genre, as in most other oral and written text genres from all parts of the world and all periods, except specialist academic prose; the characteristic ‘a-logical’ is not totally inapplicable here. However, the important thing is that what is presented in these wisdom texts is unmistakably meant to be more than just subjective, particularising and personal, – it is meant to have a wider, more general applicability beyond the speaker’s own life experience and specific situation; the lessons are implied to be worth giving, and taking, because they are claimed to capture something of the human condition in general. So in fact we are, with such wisdom texts, rather closer to scientific knowledge than is suggested by the inverted formula ‘*subjective, a-rational, and, in its practicality, particularising*’.⁴⁸

I submit that what distinguishes scientific knowledge from the knowledge of wisdom text, is primarily a matter of *procedure*. The truth of a scientific statement resides in the explicit, intersubjective procedure (method, in other words) through which that knowledge has been produced. This applies to all researchers currently involved in the study of expressions of traditional wisdom (however much they may, as humanities scholars, define their method as literary and intuitive rather than as rational, objective and universalising; and regardless of how much contempt or helplessness they may feel vis-à-vis the natural sciences).

But the same emphasis on intersubjective procedure as the decisive

⁴⁸ Niels Weidtmann (2007) shows a particular interest in the rationality aspect of African expressions of traditional wisdom. He stresses that vocal African writers on traditional wisdom, such as Wiredu (1980) and Odera Oruka (1990b), take such rationality to be a general human trait – in line with a long-standing anthropological tradition seeking to vindicate the rationality of Africans, specially during the late colonial period; cf. Gluckman 1955, 1967). Such insistence on universal rationality, however, may yet not be Weidtmann’s own position, for, as we have seen, he claims in the third thesis of his contribution that African traditional wisdom cannot be phrased in Western discourse.



basis for valid knowledge production is found, outside today's globalising scientific tradition, in the arts of the diviner and the healer, the astrologer, the metallurgist, the navigator etc. These trades are now found all over the world. The oldest texts at our disposal documenting these trades derive from the Ancient Near East over four thousand years ago. They are expressions, not so much of traditional wisdom, but of proto-science. The hallmark of such procedures is that *knowledge appears as the necessary implication attending an intersubjectively (professionally, often) recognised limiting condition whose occurrence is implied to be not unique but repetitive, so that a standard rule can be established:*

'if the lobe of the liver turns out to be darkened, then...', (Ancient Mesopotamia: Jeyes 1989; Bottéro 1974, 1992)

'if the goddess Aphrodite [the planet Venus] and the god Ares [the planet Mars] are in conjunction in the heavens, then...' (Ancient Greece: Bouché-Leclercq 1879, 1899)

'if the chick's intestine turns out to have black spots, then...' (Guinea-Bissau, author's fieldnotes 1983)

'if the patient displays a insuppressible urge to dance to the singing tune peculiar to Sidi Mhammad but remains indifferent to the tunes of other local saints, then...'. (Tunisia, author's fieldnotes 1968)

'if the throw of the *hakata* divination tablets brings up the tablets *Kwame* and *Shilume* face up , but the tablets *Lingwana* and *Ntakwala* face down , then...' (Botswana, author's fieldnotes 1989).

Although such expressions are likely to be informed by a traditional worldview, they cannot be *reduced* to such a worldview; they properly belong to a different mode of knowledge production – one that leads directly to today's science. By contrast, the expressions of traditional wisdom typically lack the reliance on standardised, hence repeatable and generally available intersubjective (e.g. professional) conditional procedures to underpin their truth claims. The underpinning of expressions of traditional wisdom lies in human (especially ancestral) or divine authority, fed by revelation, a past charter, or diffuse, life-long experience. Such underpinning cannot be summoned, at will, repetitively, and instantly, in

every specific situation as is the case for the limiting conditions underlying (proto-) science. As a result the *expression of traditional wisdom* is of the nature of a belief, or an exhortation, not of an empirical statement. Expressions of traditional wisdom tend to be concerned with the construction of a coherent worldview which endows everyday life and religious ritual with meaning. It is in this respect that expressions of traditional wisdom often are statements of myth – but here myth does not mean ‘collective representation constituting untruth’, but on the contrary, ‘collective representation which, although in narrative format, is implied (and sometimes explicitly claimed) to convey ultimate truth and meaning’. Thus, expressions of traditional wisdom are central statements of symbols, and they revolve on the construction and transmission of notions of continuity, connectedness, life force, and on the explanation and justification of illness, death and evil.

I take it that this emphasis on human or divine authority, rather than in abstract and repeatable intersubjective procedure, also suffices to illuminate the otherwise problematic term ‘traditional’, thus steering away from other less desirable usages of that term: *e.g.* ‘traditional’ as a euphemism for the distinction between that which belongs to the North Atlantic / Western region and that which does not – which given the crucial indebtedness of the West to the Ancient Near East and Africa is unhelpful; or ‘traditional’ as necessarily confined to that which is handed down by intergenerational cultural transmission – which does not apply to Mesopotamian, Egyptian and biblical wisdom texts, nor to many other situations where we would yet like to be able to speak of ‘traditional wisdom’.

What is the format of our encounter with such expressions of traditional wisdom? Scholarship consists in the production of texts, and therefore our scholarly encounter with expressions of traditional wisdom usually takes a written textual format – the scholar introduces and describes the expression of tradition wisdom in question, and meditates, in discursive academic prose, on the scope, relevance, meaning and shortcomings of such expressions of traditional wisdom, in the light of current, North Atlantic scientific or otherwise dominant worldview. Written tex-

tual strategies of disclosure, representation, hermeneutics and global re-circulation in an academic format, such as make up modern humanities scholarship, also prevail when we deal with ‘wisdom texts’ from a provenance that is remote in time or space, or both. Such scholarly strategies take a particular, highly specialised (and contested) form in archaeology,⁴⁹ when, in stead of being written, the expressions of traditional wisdom appear also, or exclusively, in an iconographic format and (especially when all accompanying contemporary commentary is lacking) need to be interpreted by analogies and other comparative models derived from contexts that either have such contemporary commentary or that open to direct research in real time, through the medium of interviews and participation in fieldwork.

The tantalising attraction of such iconographic reconstruction of traditional wisdom on the basis of primarily images lies in the following paradox:

- On the one hand one is confronted, over vast expanses of space and time, with recurrent patterns to which one would like to attribute a convergent meaning (for instance, the mytheme of the separation of heaven and earth in many myths from all over the world after the Upper Palaeolithic; or the proliferation of patterns – such as dots, granulation / speckledness, spirals, undulations – suggestive of ‘entoptic’ or psychedelic, trance-related phenomena and their imagery).⁵⁰
- But on the other hand, how do we find an intersubjective scientific method that protects us from wishful thinking, from the amateurish habit (from the early anthropologist James Frazer – 1911f, 1918, 1968 – to today’s New Age) of lumping of phenomena from patently incomparable and historically unrelated provenances, and from the similarities that spring, not from historical interrelatedness based on cultural transfer and a shared

⁴⁹ Cf. Hodder 1986, 1987; Renfrew & Zubrow 1994.

⁵⁰ Cf. Lewis-Williams & Dowson 1988.

cultural origin, but from simply the parallel effects engendered by the identical make-up of the minds of Anatomically Modern Humans⁵¹ whenever and wherever during the 200,000 years of their existence, of which the first 120,000 years exclusively in the African continent?

Such iconographic interpretation is still based on texts (albeit pictorial ones) that have a tangible and lasting material record. However, the great majority of expressions of traditional wisdom, ever since the emergence of humankind⁵² have been not written but oral, and the main way to capture these directly is through personal fieldwork, in which one engages profoundly and for a prolonged period with the community owning and managing such traditional wisdom, so that both in formal research settings and in more informal personal participation in everyday and ritual life, the expressions of myths, worldviews, moral codes and practical ethics may be picked up, understood, committed to writing in a modern language, and committed to academic or popularising global circulation.

From the late 1960s, it is particularly in such fieldwork encounters that I have personally engaged with, learned, and internalised expressions of traditional wisdom in Africa:

1. Initially primarily as an academic ethnographer and ethnohistorian,
2. Then, from 1990 on, also and increasingly as someone who is taking a critical distance from the appropriating and distancing ethnographic stance inherent in mainstream global (but essentially North Atlantic) anthropology, and who instead has committed him-

⁵¹ The variety of humankind to which all humans on earth have belonged (ever since the extinction of Neanderthals less than 25,000 years ago), i.e. equipped with articulate speech, symbolism and comparatively advanced tools and weapons made of stone, wood and bone.

⁵² I write *humankind*, and not *Anatomically Modern Humans*, because there is accumulating evidence to suggest that traditional wisdom is older even than the emergence of Anatomically Modern Humans – that a certain amount of self-reflexive symbolising went on among Neanderthaloids and older human forms from the Middle and even Lower Palaeolithic; cf. Bednarik 1990; d’Errico et al. 2003.

self to local expressions of traditional wisdom as a certified and practising diviner-spirit medium-healer in the Southern African sangoma tradition (cf. van Binsbergen 1991, 2003), in other words as someone who (both in Africa and worldwide) extends existential counselling and pastoral work on the basis of African wisdom principles

3. And finally, from the late 1990s, as an intercultural philosopher calling to question the foundations and the politics of intercultural knowledge construction particularly where expressions of traditional wisdom are concerned; it is at this stage that I complemented my radical criticism of anthropology with an equally radical (self-) criticism of the adoptive strategy of ‘going native’ – for the latter is inherently problematic as a form of intercultural appropriation and as a movement that obscures, rather than illuminates, the problems of rationality, representation, instrumentality, hegemony, existential encounter and identity, in intercultural knowledge formation.

This personal development in the course of my career has put me in a position from which I can appreciate the way in which modern scholars both dissect and feel strangely attracted to traditional expressions of wisdom, and in which I have realised that the ‘nostalgia’ implied in such attraction, is in fact an epistemological critique of the hegemonic and totalising pretensions of modern science. It is also a recognition of the fact that much of what ‘other cultures’, outside the North Atlantic, have achieved in the way of expressions of traditional wisdom, must not be ignored or slighted as invalid or obsolete. On the contrary, such achievements deserve to be acknowledged as genuine knowledge in their own right, as essential elements in the global knowledge heritage of humankind, based on an epistemology of its own, capable of solving some of the dilemmas of the human conditions as well as, or better than, dominant global / North Atlantic science.

This is claiming far more than I can substantiate in the present paper. All I can do here is offer some brief illustrations of what I mean. Let me therefore conclude by briefly discussing four forms of African tradi-

tional wisdom which I find particularly convincing as complements or alternatives to modern science, and capable of being reformulated in a global format, and globally circulated.

7. Four examples of viable African traditional wisdom with potentially global applicability

I refer to my four examples of ‘tacit modern unwisdom’ set out in section 4 above, and contrast them with African traditional wisdom.

1. The human body

Much traditional wisdom in Africa is concentrated on the human body,⁵³ whose life cycle and fertility are celebrated. Thus death may become the highest, and with all its sense of bereavement yet essentially festive, culmination of life; and puberty rites (especially female ones) appear as a vital resource of meaning spilling over to the other fields of the entire culture. Symbolic parallelism between the body and the land, and between the body and the structure of socio-political organisation, makes macrocosmic phenomena understandable at a human scale. Frequently the body is marked and covered with substances derived from other bodies, from surrounding nature, and from humans’ local artefact production – yet the celebration of the undressed, and of the cleaned and cleansed body is an implicit articulation of purity and trans-moral innocence in the face of the continuity of life force (locally often conceptualised as the ancestors, or the spirits of the wild). The movement of the body in space and time confirms dance and music as the most obvious way of situating the individual in its social and cosmological position, and of re-finding that position after illness, crisis and bereavement. Orifices are points of transformation between the cosmological, the social and the individual,

⁵³ From the very extensive literature on African corporality I mention: Ngubane 1977; Kubik 1977; Devisch 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000; Rasing 2001; Jacobson-Widding 1991; Maw & Picton 1992; Fernandez 1990; Kimmerle 1989; Fédry 1976; Turner 1969b; de Boeck 1995.

articulating life as a constant flow of life force in and out the individual human body, and between individuals – *e.g.* in a sexual context. Especially healing practices reconstitute the connections between worldview, social organisation, and body; they not only redress and restore, but effectively *create* the human individual. Most importantly, it is the body that situates individuals in a chain of continuity across generations and even (through possession, hunting, consumption, totemic representations etc) across species, whose perpetuation is implied to be the true meaning of life. The African traditional wisdom of the body, expressed and mobilised in every ritual and every act of therapy, contrasts forcefully and convincingly with the alienating body practices of the North Atlantic region today, as evoked in section 4 above; as well as with the time-honoured bodily conceptions and practices (often far more restrictive and rigid than their African counterparts) of the world religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc.) which have become increasingly dominant in the Old World over the past three millennia. In African systems of corporality we find a wisdom which not only has remained vitally important to African people today, but which has also proved to be capable of reformulation into a global format, and of being globally transmitted in the form of African-inspired musical practices, dancing, healing, and sexual practices; ever renewed and increasingly amalgamated with globalising practices from elsewhere, African corporeal wisdom continues to conquer the world.

2. Conflict regulation

African local-level practices of conflict regulation constitute an important expression of traditional wisdom, to be shared with the wider world. The relatively old and exhausted state of many African soils and eco-systems has been an important factor in the vulnerable and ephemeral nature that has been a recurrent feature of African state systems both in the past millennia and today, well after the end of colonial rule. Therefore, the grand logic of formal organisation (elsewhere the hub of political and economic expansion and innovation in the last few millennia and especially since the 19th century CE) has often remained an imported dream

in Africa – repeatedly turned nightmare in postcolonial-state contexts. But on the basis of such principles as the complementarity of oppositions, and the awareness of sharing a fundamental humanity in the face of which *total* social exclusion of particular individuals and groups is literally unthinkable, African small-scale communities have managed to persist and to renew themselves by virtue of a particularly effective mode of conflict management. African local-level traditions of conflict resolution are typically based on the recognition of plural truth, of plural positions of integrity, and the symbolically creative invention of real or pretended common grounds that would allow the parties involved to yield and be reconciled – for if two opponents are both right then there can be no logical road to reconciliation except via the ternary logic of sleight-of-hand. However, because the binary logic of the excluded third is central to the imported forms of the modern social organisation, the modern state, and their official language expressions, these time-honoured African mechanisms of conflict regulation have turned out to be surprisingly ineffective at the national and international level (although post-apartheid South Africa may yet prove us wrong on this point), and as a result Africa has stood out, during the last half century, as a place of state collapse, civil war and genocide. Yet great African statesmen of the last few decades, such as Julius Nyerere, Nelson Mandela, Desmond Tutu, and Kofi Annan, seem to have been able to effectively transmit some of this traditional wisdom of conflict regulation to a level beyond the local community. A closer, comparative and theoretical study⁵⁴ of these African modes of conflict regulation as forms of traditional wisdom may help to reformulate them into a globally receptive format, which may also prove more effect at the national and international level in Africa.

In the discussion following my oral presentation on which the present argument is based, Niels Weidmann stressed (rightly) that these African modes of conflict regulation do *not* spring from any exceptionally powerful sense of community in African societies – on the contrary, such a sense is often surprisingly weak. I totally agree, having stressed in various publications on the

⁵⁴ Cf. Norbeck 1963; Gluckman 1955; Simonse 1992; Assefa 1996; Ngwane 1996; van Binsbergen 2003c.

Nkoya people of Zambia how their villages are really communities of strangers, people who were not born together and who will not die together, but whose lives are temporarily intermeshing in the context of a particular small village and / or kin group, whilst each individual is personally and uniquely involved in a life-long merry-go-round of rural and rural-urban geographical mobility, marrying, divorcing, and serially exploiting a whole range of potential kin alliances in the process. Other Africanist studies, for instance those from the Manchester School context (cf. van Binsbergen 2007a and extensive references cited there), show that such a setup is not peculiar to the Nkoya people but has a much wider African applicability. Given the loose and vulnerable sense of community in many African contexts, conflict resolution, just like marriage, *rather than being predicated on an already existing sense of community*, is an attempt to actively *create* community in the first place, because it articulates people into complementary opposing groups, and formulates an idiom in terms of which their opposition can be negotiated with minimum social and symbolic destructiveness. Conflict regulation can do this, not by virtue of any fixed, well-defined and well-sanctioned politico-legal system of clearly allocated individual and collective rights, prerogatives and obligations, but precisely by virtue of the inchoate nature (Mitchell 1971; van Velsen 1971) of African socio-political organisation, in other words by virtue of the existence of a complex web of conflicting ties which each potentially lay a total claim on the groups and individuals involved (Gluckman 1955, 1965; Colson 1960). In such a situation where one may typically belong to more than one conflicting group at the same time, and where more than one party in conflict may have an equally justified claim to truth, honour, compensation, bride-wealth, and other scarce resources, conflict regulation can only be through creative sleight-of-hand, invoking a ternary logic that allows one to have one's cake and eat it at the same time – in other words, the wisdom of negotiation, symbolic rhetoric, and finitude.

3. The accessible individual mind

As a third example of African traditional wisdom I would cite African elements of a philosophy of mind, such as articulated by Gyekye and Wiredu, for instance, in their rendering of the ontology of the Akan ethnic and linguistic cluster in West Africa⁵⁵. In the Western philosophical tradition, the philosophy of mind has faced aporias for a number of reasons:

- the heritage of Platonic / early Christian / Cartesian body-mind

⁵⁵ Cf. Wiredu & Gyekye 1992; Gyekye 1995; Wiredu 1980. The accounts of these two philosophers of the Akan system do not completely match. Cf. Müller 2002.

- dualism (critiqued by, for instance, Ryle 1949),
- well-known pitfalls of the ‘other minds’ problem;⁵⁶
- the Western stress on the concept of the individual, undivided self – conceived not as a socio-cultural construct peculiar to a particular time and place, but as a self-evident given of the human condition in general – as the central cosmological and ontological entity.

The latter point claims that it is impossible for minds to communicate directly with one another, leaving only the indirect transmission of mental contents via material signs (including speech) received through the senses. Such an individualistic and atomistic conception of the mind, whilst a basic tenet underlying most world religions today, leads us into great difficulty, since the actual direct communication between minds (as implied in the ideas of telepathy and precognition)⁵⁷ is simply an everyday experience to many people from all cultural orientations and all times. Anthropologists working on African divination and trance have similar phenomena to report which seem to go against the dominant, ‘Sceptical’ natural-science paradigms of today. It must be admitted that there are huge epistemological and methodological difficulties inherent in such claims (Olivier de Sardan 1988). On the other hand, contrary to what most modernist Sceptics, and their lay parrots, seem to realise, the theory of *non-locality as an aspect of main-stream quantum mechanics* does provide an excellent theoretical basis for the possibility of such paranor-

⁵⁶ Bilgrami 1993 and references cited there.

⁵⁷ Philosophical problems of (the claim of the existence of) paranormal phenomena are discussed in, *e.g.*, Eisenbud 1982; Brier 1974; Mundle 1964; Grim 1990. I discuss these themes in connection with African divinatory practices in van Binsbergen 2003b. An authoritative synthetic overview of the empirical evidence for paranormal phenomena, in the face of the ill-informed and entrenched modern Sceptics movement, is Radin 1997, with extensive bibliography. Dean Radin holds a PhD in physics; one of his own contributions to this field was that, together with R.D. Nelson, he managed to have an authoritative, mainstream physics journal publish a discussion of nearly a thousand cases of consciousness-related anomalies in random physical systems, *e.g.* computers being demonstrably and instantly influenced by deliberate human thought (Radin & Nelson 1989).

mal phenomena.⁵⁸ Since such insights, in locally encoded cultural forms, are common-place in many African contexts but repressed from public circulation (especially among non-specialists) in the post-Enlightenment North Atlantic region, paranormal phenomena may be argued (cf. Hebga 1988; van Binsbergen 2003b) to constitute a domain where the truth claims of African wisdom are not just valid within the local African space of culturally created self-evidence, but may deserve to be globally mediated as a statement of a transcultural truth, and hence superior to current collective representations in the West. Yet most anthropologists with such experiences hide in psychological rationalisations that make the diviner merely a skilful manipulator of plain sensory information and an articulator of, essentially widely circulating, village rumour. Of course, there is no denying the ordinary psychology of the interpersonal information flow, by virtue of which clients often sensorily transmit information to diviner-healers without the client being aware of this, thus allowing the diviner-healer to spuriously claim paranormal sources of knowledge. However, my own two decades as an African diviner have absolutely convinced me that these normal processes of communication and impression management, coupled with the trance-like techniques of trans-individual sensitivity that one learns as an African wisdom specialist, create fertile grounds also for genuine non-sensory forms of knowledge transmission. Such transmission can hardly be explained by the publicly dominant, global / North Atlantic scientific ontology, but is eminently accounted for in the worldview of African wisdom. In the Southern African divinatory idiom, extrasensory production of what appears to be valid knowledge is explained by the (in that cultural context) self-evident intercession of possessing or guiding ancestors. In the Akan version, by contrast, individual minds are, as forms of what is locally called *sunsum*, considered to be semi-autonomously subsumed in a universal World Soul, *okra*, and it is this interconnectedness which eminently accounts for telepathy, precognition and veridical divination. Of course, the idea of the World Soul is not limited to African worldviews as recorded in historical

⁵⁸ Cf. Einstein et al. 1931, 1935; Bell 1964; Walker 1977; Bohm & Hiley 1993.

times. It is found in the literate, specialist traditions of the East⁵⁹ and the West.⁶⁰ Considerable correspondences between Akan and classical Greek culture have been pointed out (cf. Graves 1964: I, 22f), and it is not impossible that one is indebted to the other, or that both partially derive from a common African source (cf. Arnaiz-Villena *et al.* 2001). But whereas in the Western tradition the idea of the World Soul has become a specialist and minority idea without vital anchorage in popular collective representations, in West Africa it has been an expression of widely held traditional wisdom as recorded in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Meanwhile there is an important point to be appreciated here, which throws further light on the peculiar rationality of divination and healing as a wisdom practice. True enough, the art of the diviner-healer includes specific technical procedures, which are well-defined, managed and transmitted among the specialist owners of such wisdom. We have seen how these largely seem to be forms of knowledge production based on procedures, guided by the specific conventionalised interpretations of conditions defined by explicit limiting conditions, of the type ‘if the lob of the liver turns out to be darkened, then...’. If this were truly the case, such formal procedures would in principle produce (proto-) scientific knowledge, not wisdom; and to the extent to which the implication triggered by the limiting condition (for instance: ‘...then the king will die’) in reality – under the regime of truth construction that informs our present-day science – can only be said to be totally unrelated to the limiting condition, such implications are false and such science can, from our present viewpoint, only be called pseudo-science.⁶¹ On the other hand, if the diviner-healer’s lay client (and often the diviner-healer himself) consciously finds that

⁵⁹ The idea of the World Soul is associated with the concept of Ātman आत्म / Brahman ब्रह्म of in South Asian Advaita Vedanta अद्वैत वेदान्त philosophy as formulated by Ādi Śankara आदि शङ्कर (c. 800 CE).

⁶⁰ In the Western philosophical tradition the idea of the World Soul is associated with such names as Heraclitus (*e.g.* fragment D. 22, A, 17), Plato (*Timaeus* 29f), the Stoics, Plotinus, the early St Augustine, the alchemical tradition from Late Antiquity onward, to re-surface with Spinoza, Leibniz, Newton, Lessing, the Theosophical movement around 1900, and (on the borderland between philosophy, the life sciences and New Age) most recently with Lovelock’s *Gaia* hypothesis.

⁶¹ As today’s astrology is justifiably called pseudo-science today (for instance by Popper (1959), although 3,000 years ago it was in the forefront of (proto-)science. Probably, and hopefully, the paroxysms of today’s science (the theory of relativity, quantum mechanisms, and neurobiology) will end up as pseudo-sciences within a few centuries, to be replaced by better science...

he believes in the diviner-healer's pronouncements, this is so not only on the basis of the latter's authority (as in wisdom), but also and particularly because of the objective infallibility attributed to the – often fairly complicated and standardised, i.e. repetitive – divinatory procedures followed, as patent truth-producing techniques of an objectifying, technical nature. We are left with a puzzle, an aporia, for if the material instruments of divination (e.g. four tablets, a collection of bones or figurines, the chance traces left by nocturnal visitors from the animal kingdom, the painstakingly calculated chart of the position of planets at a particular place and time) are strictly applied in accordance with the rules, which formally do not leave any degrees of freedom, they could not – under today's global scientific assumptions – possibly produce veridical divination. Yet they do, in my extensive experience. My solution is that in fact the procedures are not strictly followed, and cannot be. Every divinatory outcome displays what the divination specialist Werbner (1973) has called 'the superabundance of understanding': there is never just one clue but there are always several, and these are always more or less incompatible and contradictory. For instance, in Southern African four-tablet divination,⁶² every fall of the four tablets (and with back and front of each tablet being marked as different there are $2^4 = 16$ different falls possible) can be interpreted along nine different dimension: ancestral, witchcraft, social, health, economic, etc. Moreover, each fall has its specific conventionalised praise text – which is ambiguous and dark, just like the pronouncements of the Delphi oracle in Ancient Greece (Fontenrose 1978), or those of the *yì jīng* 易經 ('I Ching') oracle and wisdom text of classical China (Legge 1993). By the same token, a full astrological theme ('horoscope'), analysed with all the possible aspects (in degrees, with each cohort of degrees having its own conventional *benefic* or *malefic* connotations), with very specific meanings and elaborate correspondences – of colour, musical tone, geographical location, gender, mood, moral quality, etc. – very specific to each of the various planets and secondary astrological points) is an array of immense complexity, a bunch of contradictions and incompatible associations from which simply not one unequivocal outcome can ever result, *unless through drastic selection and weighing i.e. by sleight-of-hand (regardless of whether this is done consciously and cynically, or in good faith)*. As I have stressed in earlier accounts (e.g. 2003b), the diviner-healer may use this complexity to enter into a trance-like state in which he may be argued to become particularly receptive for extrasensory perception. But even regardless of the possibility of such an extrasensory contribution, the diviner simply engages in *wisdom*: juggling the abundance of clues, many of them mutually contradictory, which the oracular procedures provide in combination with the diviner's background knowledge of the client and of the latter's situation, and pressing all the loose ends into an increasingly coherent complex narrative, which (due to the intensive interaction between diviner and client during the session) the client will increasingly recognise as revealing and as relevant. Thus the diviner engages in wisdom as

⁶² Cf. van Binsbergen 1995, 1996, 2003a: chs. 5-8.

practical knowledge, – along lines that are not essentially different from the creative skills (of selective synthesis and massaging over contradictions, and rhetorical persuasiveness) that allow a scholar to produce a convincing and publishable argument. In doing so, the diviner makes intensive use of the multi-interpretability and of the degrees of freedom which the oracular apparatus in fact provides (although the local belief is usually that it is totally deterministic as an expression of divine will, and does not allow for any leeway or freedom of interpretation.) The diviner derives his own authority from the fact that he can nonetheless let this sleight-of-hand pass as the immutable, unequivocal, authoritative outcome of technical oracular procedures. The conclusion seems inescapable that the authority attributed to such divination is already predicated upon a proto-scientific wider context, where (even in the eyes of the individual lay client, having somehow adopted the specialists' proto-scientific outlook) it is procedures rather than divine authority that produces truth. But even though the diviner and the client believe that the oracular pronouncements are compellingly determined by the strict application of the intersubjective, standard oracular procedures, *is fact they are not*. From complexity and contradiction, via techniques of negotiation, weighing and selection, to meaningful pronouncement – this is what above we have identified as the path of wisdom, not of science. *What the diviner does, is the production of unique, bricolaged practical wisdom under the disguise of the production of systematic and unassailable knowledge by means of repetitive standard procedures that enhance the authority of his pronouncements.*

4. Mythology

My final example of expressions of African traditional wisdom derives from a field on which I have concentrated over the last few years, comparative mythology, in a project whose rationale was to establish the empirical basis for my thesis of the fundamental cultural unity of humankind, in particular of Anatomically Modern Humans – a complement therefore to my hyperbolically challenging adage 'cultures do not exist'.⁶³ Here I will concentrate, not on meaning and content, but on formal processes in the global history of mythology, which spans at least 200,000 years. Myths are expressions of traditional wisdom in the sense that they articulate and support a culture's view of the world and of man; offering aetiological explanation of specific natural phenomena, human institutions, and names; and providing models for emulation and edification in real life. Many expressions of traditional wisdom are in the format of

⁶³ van Binsbergen 2003e, 2006, 2008.

myth, not in the modernist pejorative sense as collective representation constituting untruth, but as collective representation in narrative format, *tout court* (cf. van Binsbergen 2003d). Although Ancient Egypt, one of the earliest, most powerful and enduring civilisations of the ancient world, was located in Africa and displayed many African traits, and although the African continent contained major sites of early Christianity and of medieval Islam, yet prior to the 19th century CE writing remained peripheral to most of African life, and African cultures have excelled in orality including story-telling. Anatomically Modern Humans emerged in Africa c. 200,000 years ago, and only began to trickle to other continents c. 80,000 years ago in the context of the Out-of-Africa Exodus. Genetically and culturally the African continent still contains some identifiable traces of the long pre-Exodus period. Such traces are also to be found everywhere outside Africa – it is these traces that allowed us to discover the Out-of-Africa Exodus in the first place. So before we fall into the trap of hegemonically inventing Africa (Mudimbe 1988) as the ultimate domain of primordially (Conrad's *Heart of darkness*, as Africa has so often appeared in North Atlantic colonial and postcolonial stereotyping), let us consider the following points which are particularly important for an appreciation of the global importance of the traditional wisdom contained in myths:

1. While we must acknowledge the possibility of parallel invention due to the common structure of the mind of Anatomically Modern Humans, and recently the converging effects of cultural globalisation, still an important partial explanation of the very many universals and near-universals of human cultures worldwide (Wiredu 1990, 1996; Brown 1991; Oruka 1990a) is the following: these universals may be seen as elements (surprisingly constant and persistent over tens of thousands of years, as if deeply programmed into human culture) of our common cultural heritage long pioneered inside Africa before the Out-of-Africa Exodus, and subsequently spread all over the globe. I have called this heritage 'Pandora's Box', freeing the image from the negative connotations

it has had since Hesiod⁶⁴ and going back to the original meaning of the Greek name Pandora, ‘the All-giving’. Considering the incomparable importance of narrative for creating and perpetuating human groups, and acknowledging articulate language as one of Anatomically Modern Humans’ principal distinctive traits, Pandora’s Box must have contained a basic mythological repertoire which the Out-of-Africa Exodus caused to spread all over the world, and which painstaking comparative research is now beginning to reconstruct – around such themes as the moon, the trickster, the fire, the rainbow snake, the tree of life, the reptile erroneously announcing death etc.

2. However, much of the development of world mythology took place after the Out-of-Africa Exodus, in the course of tens of millennia of ecological, cultural and cosmological development outside Africa, especially in Asia. Here, as transformations and innovations upon the mythological contents of Pandora’s Box, and also linked, in identifiable ways, with the emergence of new modes of production and new linguistic macro-families, some of the major cosmologico-mythological themes emerged, such as (c. 30,000 years ago in Central Asia) the cosmogony based on the separation of Land and Water (with the Flood as cataclysmic annihilation of that separation, requiring world order to be restored by a second creation); and the alternative and somewhat later cosmogony revolving on the separation of Heaven and Earth,⁶⁵ which made possible the idea of the demiurge and other forms of re-connection (tree, mountain, bird, pyramid, ladder, stairway, rainbow, demiurge, shaman, king, twin) between Heaven and Earth – which have constituted

⁶⁴ Hesiod, *Opera et Dies*, 42-105.

⁶⁵ Hilde Link (2007) referred to the stage preceding such separation in the narrative, the tight embrace of heaven and earth, in South Asia and in Ambon, Indonesia. This mytheme has extensive further attestations (*e.g.* in Nigeria, Oceania, and Ancient Greece) which in the light of the theory presented here must be considered historically related, however distantly.

central themes in the theological and iconographic repertoire of civilisations from the Neolithic onwards. Much of the familiar mythological repertoire of Eurasia (faintly echoed in the Americas, more clearly so in recently populated Oceania) emerged in this phase along lines that we are now beginning to make out.

3. As these themes proliferated, mainly in Asia, a Back-into-Africa population movement made for what recent genetic research has discovered to be a feed-back migration from Central and West Asia into Africa, from c. 15,000 ago,⁶⁶ which on its way also had a major impact on Europe. In the process, relatively new Asian narrative themes entered Africa and dominantly installed themselves onto the pre-Exodus mythologies that had continued to transform and innovate there. As a result, sub-Saharan Africa now has the paradoxical combination of relatively new mythologies (largely continuous with those of Eurasia) told by people with relatively ancient genes.

So much for the essentialisation and alterisation, in the hands of scholars, of the traditional wisdom as expressed in African narratives: *modern transcultural othering by North Atlantic social scientists turns out – at least in this case – to impose a difference where in fact there was none, thus hegemonically obscuring the fundamental transcontinental historic continuity of cultures.* The North Atlantic culture (which in recent centuries has largely informed the scholar's perspective) and the cultures of sub-Saharan Africa turn out to be relatively closely related and to share highly important prehistoric substrates. What tends to be invoked as signs of Western difference and superiority, is in fact part of a worldwide process of cultural history, in which the places of initiative and the flows of cultural indebtedness have shifted (from Africa to Asia to Europe), as they will in the future, and in which a common, transcontinental repertoire of meaning and image is being managed by the whole of

⁶⁶ Cf. Hammer *et al.* 1998; Cruciani 2002; Coia 2005.

humankind –, in myriad fragmented, transformed and innovated yet more or less continuous, local forms, that were subjected to localising transformation when travelling beyond their initial cultural bedding, and whose underlying continuity we could scarcely have suspected until, in the most recent times, globalisation created a framework for the recognition of pan-human difference in unity.

8. Situating intercultural philosophy from a wisdom perspective

Our discussion of traditional wisdom in the context of the multifarious wisdom revival today, promises to deliver a boon we had not bargained for. I have mentioned intercultural philosophy among the globalising strategies

that have driven home the irreducible potential of modes of knowing (often designated as ‘wisdom’) outside the Western mainstream tradition;

and I have characterised wisdom as

creative practical knowledge that allows one to negotiate the pitfalls and contradictions of human life (especially in those domains of which we might say today that they are not tightly rule-governed and thus carry considerable uncertainty, ambivalence and incompatible multiple truths), and to accept both the social nature of human life, and its finitude.

It is time to make one final step, and to point out that intercultural philosophy, whatever the pretences implied in its name,⁶⁷ cannot be philoso-

⁶⁷ Another such pretence is the existence of a plurality of cultures, between which interaction and even dialogue is supposed to take place as if they were ontologically distinct, and even conscious and articulate, entities. I have confronted this aspect of the term ‘intercultural philosophy’ (van Binsbergen 2003e), arguing that instead of the concept of ‘cultures’ (plural), the term ‘cultural orientation’ is more suitable to cope with the overlap, the situationality, the optionality, the plural allegiance, and the temporal dynamics of such patterns of collective programming – without denying, however, that part of this programming, especially in infancy, is effected so deeply as to become indelible, resulting in the production of self-evident truth which yet is merely a collective representation having no validity outside the collectivity owning and managing that representation.

phy in the accepted contemporary academic sense largely informed by the Kantian tradition. On the contrary, intercultural philosophy has to be some form of *wisdom* – not in the essentialist sense of incomparably wise and eternal truths, but rather in the technical sense of such intimations on the state and nature of Being as are not based on systematic, replicable and objectifying procedures of knowledge formation. If we agree that a cultural orientation is a machine for the production of self-evident truth which yet is merely a collective representation having no validity outside the collectivity owning and managing that representation, then the encounter between cultural orientations inevitably produces ‘considerable uncertainty, ambivalence and incompatible multiple truths’, reminding us of the social constructedness of all truth, and of a very special type of finitude notably the intrinsically finite applicability of cultural truths to only a subset of humanity (in other words, cultural relativism). In such an intercultural situation, the very notion of *knowledge* as ‘*justified true belief*’ (even if rephrased to accommodate Gettier) becomes impossible, for strictly speaking (i.e. in the Kantian philosophical academic tradition) *justification*, *truth* and *belief* can only mean anything *within* one and the same language-based cultural orientation – they mean nothing *between* cultural orientations, where they must lack the self-evident validation they would derive from the context of just one unique cultural orientation.

This can easily be seen from the following example. A common justification for belief, found in many cultures, is: ‘because our ancestors told us so’. But this appeal to particularist, local authority figures, although fully effective for valid knowledge in the local domain, carries no authority in other cultures that have other ancestors of their own and do not accept the authority of foreign ancestors, or that have deconstructed the very notion of ancestors and their authority. By the same token, ‘true’ and especially ‘belief’ (whose relative, perspectival nature tends to render an analysis like the present one, recursive and circular anyway) can be demonstrated to be culture-specific, and hence incapable of generating valid knowledge (in the sense of the above definition) across cultural boundaries. Our only way out seems to be: to take a relative and situational view of such boundaries – like in the *flip-flop* behaviour of the

membrane evoked in footnote 45 above. However, if we wish to think about a cultural boundary as a semi-permeable membrane, we must admit that the membrane, while permeable for sociable and nutritional exchanges, generalised forms of shared joy and commiseration, perhaps ritual, perhaps sex, yet closes shut and becomes impermeable, precisely under conditions of emphatic verbal articulation – which are also the conditions under which the very detailed, specific and precise local cultural knowledge are most adequately stored and managed. It seems as if there is no way out, for the transcultural transmission of highly specific knowledge, than becoming a member of the other culture – and that is an investment few people can make, for constraints of time, talent, language skills, and sanity. However, if we resign ourselves that we cannot get to the real thing without a huge and painful investment (that moreover will substantially change our own life forever), we may yet hope to acquire a measure of watered-down transcultural knowledge, as long as we keep the semi-permeable membrane open. We can do that if we do not rely heavily on explicit articulation in language, but instead – and I realise how provocative such an admonition must be to positivistic social scientists and philosophers – try to rely on other encodings (e.g. in bodily contact and rhythms, song, dance, ritual), and on the following recognised admissions of epistemological poverty and humility: silence, empathy, introspection, and love. These are, in fact, the time-honoured strategies of wisdom: acceptance of finitude; silence; retreat into bodily practices (from caring for the sick and dying to dancing and drinking) that allow us to celebrate the human body as transcultural common given.

The present argument, and my other attempts at the production of intercultural philosophical texts bring out the unmistakable fact that I am not a philosopher steeped in, and exclusively identifying with, the mainstream academic philosophical tradition of Western thought. Contrary to my highly distinguished predecessor in the Rotterdam chair of intercultural philosophy Heinz Kimmerle, I spend the first quarter of a century of my academic life, not in a monocultural reserve of philosophical textuality (in Kimmerle's case the Hegel archive – with afforded him a masterly

understanding of modern and post-modern philosophy), but in messy and conceptually naïve anthropological fieldwork in African villages, royal courts, and urban slums. The wisdom of intercultural mediation and negotiation which I learned there (partly on the basis of such practical wisdom as I brought from my own society, but mainly on the basis of what wisdom I was privileged to learn from my African hosts) makes up, for better or worse, the substance of my intercultural philosophy. Here mainstream philosophy has functioned mainly secondarily, as a major source of inspiration; as a critical touchstone for the well-formedness, plausibility, originality and profundity– if any – of my thought; and occasionally, merely as a strategy of textual embellishment and impression management. This downplaying of mainstream philosophy has been out of personal choice, and *not* because I do not know better or cannot do better – I had extensively engaged with philosophy before I had even read any social science, or had experienced any transcultural exposure to speak of. I deliberately play down mainstream Western philosophy (whilst using it eclectically), because I realise that *in the face of the uncertainties and incompatibilities of intercultural situations, academic philosophy (especially in its Analytical variant), outside the specialist language-based domain of North Atlantic specialist thought, has no option but to simply rest its case.* Here wisdom reigns supreme, with – in the absence of rules that can be culturally supported by all parties involved – all the unpredictable capriciousness of the divine trickster (so that it often becomes unwisdom – as Continental approaches appear so often from an Analytical point of view); whereas a painstaking, sustained study of expressions of traditional wisdom worldwide (and the admission that this is what – *e.g.* as the Pre-Socratic inspiration – lies at the origin of mainstream academic philosophy, and is still to a considerable extent continuous with the Continental variant) can help us to come to terms with interculturality as one of the few greatest, and potentially most explosive, challenges of our time.

Here we can also pinpoint more precisely what cultural globalisation means: forging the multiplicity of disparate cultural orientations into a more coherent whole so that the various parties involved in a concrete

situation (of the type we are used to call ‘intercultural’) may increasingly tend to apply convergent worldviews, recognise convergent rules, and thus produce convergent truths. However, the promise of equality and equal access inherent in such a definition, in practice is usually defeated by hegemonic imposition, of the worldview, rules and truth of one of the parties involved. Over the past two centuries, such hegemonic imposition was the privilege of the North Atlantic region (which allowed the Western mainstream tradition in philosophy to assume universal pretensions), but that condition is changing rapidly, in a bitter and bloody contest over the right to define reality. Here only wisdom, not science nor the logic of the excluded third, can save humankind.

9. Conclusion

Our argument has oscillated between two extreme positions, both of them wrong if taken literally and in isolation, yet in combination suggestive of an ulterior truth. On the one hand, we are tempted to declare that other people’s wisdom is largely in the eye of the beholder as equipped with his distinctive cultural orientation; on the other hand, all wisdom seems to flow from a common source, which we as Anatomically Modern Humans belonging to widely divergent cultural orientations, may each call by different names; yet we are equipped to recognise such wisdom as, perhaps, closeness to the essence of Being.

Modern intercontinental scholarship is one aspect of globalisation. It is our task to respectfully record, interpret, compare, and recirculate in a globalising, more or less accessible format with various degrees of specialist scholarly rigour, and thus celebrate both the beauty and wisdom of individual local human cultural products, and the underlying connections that bring us all together.

References

Achenbaum, A.W., & Orwoll, L., 1991, ‘Becoming wise: A psycho-gerontological inter-

- pretation of the Book of Job', *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 32, 21-39.
- Adler, M.J., 1992, '101: Wisdom', in: Adler, M.J.. ed., *The great ideas: One hundred two essays*, New York: Macmillan, pp. 938-945.
- Agarwal, A., & Narain, S., 1997, 'Dying wisdom. The decline and revival of traditional water harvesting systems in India', *Ecologist*, 27, 3: 112-116.
- Albright, William Foxwell, 1955, *Some Canaanite-Phoenician sources of Hebrew wisdom*, Leiden: Brill.
- Ames, Roger T., & Hall, David L., 2003, *Dao de jing: 'Making this life significant': A philosophical translation: Featuring the recently discovered bamboo texts*, New York: Ballantine.
- Ameve K., 1989, *The sacred ancient wisdom*, Accra: Afrikaania Publications.
- Angoff, A., & Barth, D., 1974, *Parapsychology and anthropology*, New York: Parapsychology Foundation.
- Ardelt, M., 2000, 'Intellectual versus wisdom-related knowledge: The case for a different kind of learning in the later years of life', *Educational Gerontology: An International Journal of Research and Practice*, 26: 771-789.
- Ardelt, M., 2004, 'Wisdom as expert knowledge system: A critical review of a contemporary operationalization of an ancient concept', *Human Development*, 47:257-285.
- Arnaiz-Villena, A., Dimitroski, K., Pacho, A., Moscoso, J., Gómez-Casado, E., Silvera-Redondo, C., Varela, P., Blagoevska, M., Zdravkovska, V., & Martínez-Laso, J., 2001, 'HLA genes in Macedonians and the sub-Saharan origin of the Greeks', *Tissue Antigens*, 57, 2: 118-127.
- Arthur, R.H., 1984, *The wisdom goddess: Feminine motifs in eight Nag Hammadi documents*, Lanham, New York & London: University Press of America.
- Assefa, H., 1996, 'Peace and reconciliation as a paradigm: A philosophy of peace and its implications for conflict, governance and economic growth in Africa', in: Assefa, H., & Wachira, G., eds., *Peacemaking and democratisation in Africa: Theoretical perspectives and church initiatives*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, pp. 42-71.
- Assmann. A., 1994, 'Wholesome knowledge: Concepts of wisdom in a historical and cross-cultural perspective', in: Featherman, D.L., Lerner, R.M., & Perlmutter, M., eds., *Life-span development and behavior*, 12, Hillsdale (N.J.): Erlbaum, pp. 187-224.
- Atchley, Robert C., 1993, 'Spiritual development and wisdom: A Vedantic perspective', in: Kastenbaum, Robert, ed., *Encyclopedia of adult development*, Phoenix (AZ): Oryx, pp. 479-483.
- Bakhtiar, L., 1991, *Sufi: Expressions of the mystic quest*, London: Thames & Hudson, first published 1976.
- Balick, M.J., 2006, 'Ethnomedicine ancient wisdom and modern science', *Explore: The Journal of Science and Healing*, 2, 3: 238-248.
- Baltes, P.B., Glueck, J., & Kunzmann, U., 2002, 'Wisdom: Its structure and function in regulating successful life span development', in: Snyder, C.R., & Lopez, S.J., eds., *Handbook of positive psychology*, London: Oxford University Press, pp. 327-347.
- Baltes, P.B., Smith, J., Staudinger, U.M., & Sowarka, D., 1990, 'Wisdom: One facet of successful aging?', in: Perlmutter, M., ed., *Late-life potential*, Washington (DC): Gerontological Society of America, pp. 63-81.
- Baltes. P.B., & Freund, A.M., 2003, 'The intermarriage of wisdom and selective optimization with compensation: Two meta-heuristics guiding the conduct of life', in: Keyes, C.L.M., & Haidt, J., eds., *Flourishing: Positive psychology and the life*

- well-lived*, Washington (DC): American Psychological Association, pp. 249-273.
- Barber K., & Farias, P.F. de M., 1989, eds. *Discourse and its disguises: the interpretation of African oral texts*, Birmingham: Centre of West African Studies.
- Bednarik, Robert G., 1990, 'On the cognitive development of hominids', *Man and Environment*, 15, 2: 1-7.
- Bell, J.S., 1964, 'On the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen paradox', *Physics*, 1: 195-200.
- Berkes, F., Colding, J., & Folke, C., 2000, 'Rediscovery of traditional ecological knowledge as adaptive management', *Ecological Applications*, 10, 5: 1251-1262.
- Bernabé, Alberto, 2002, 'Orphisme et Présocratiques : Bilan et perspectives d'un dialogue complexe', in: Laks, A., & Louguet, C., eds., *Qu'est-ce que la philosophie présocratique / What is presocratic philosophy?*, Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses universitaires du Septentrion, pp. 205-247.
- Bernal, M., 1987, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic roots of classical civilization, Vol. I, The fabrication of Ancient Greece 1787-1987*, London: Free Association Books / New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Bernal, M., 1991, *Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic roots of classical civilization. II, The archaeological and documentary evidence*. London: Free Association Books / New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press..
- Bernal, M., 2006, *Black Athena: The Afro-Asiatic Roots of Classical Civilization. III, The Linguistic Evidence*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press.
- Bernasconi, Robert, 1989, 'Heidegger's destruction of phronesis,' *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 28 supp.: 127-47.
- Betegh, Gábor, 2001, 'Empédocle, Orphée et le papyrus de Derveni', in: Morel, Pierre-Marie, & Pradeau, Jean-François, eds., *Les anciens savants: Études sur les philosophies préplatoniciennes, Les Cahiers philosophiques de Strasbourg, 12*, Strasbourg: Université Marc Bloch, pp. 47-70.
- Bethe, C.W., 1968, *Science: A road to wisdom*, transl. from Dutch, Dordrecht: Riedel.
- Bilgrami, A., 1993, 'Other minds', in: Dancy, J., & Sosa, E., eds., *A companion to epistemology*, Oxford/ Cambridge (MA): Blackwell, first published 1992, pp. 317-323.
- Blanchard-Fields, F., Brannan, J.R., & Camp, C.J., 1987, 'Alternative conceptions of wisdom: An onion-peeling exercise', *Educational Gerontology*, 13, 6: 497-503.
- Bohm, D., & Hiley, B.J., 1993, *The undivided universe: An ontological interpretation of quantum theory*, London: Routledge.
- Bouché-Leclercq, A., 1879, *Histoire de la divination dans l'antiquité*, Paris: Leroux, 4 vols.
- Bouché-Leclercq, A., 1899, *L'astrologie grecque*, Paris: Leroux.
- Bottéro, J., 1974, 'Symptômes, signes, écritures: En Mésopotamie ancienne', in: *Divination et rationalité*, Paris: Seuil, pp. 70-195.
- Bottéro, J., 1992, 'Divination and the scientific spirit', ch. 8 in: J. Bottéro, *Mesopotamia: Writing, reasoning, and the Gods*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, pp. 125-137.
- Bowles, Samuel, & Gintis, Herbert, 1993, 'The revenge of Homo Economicus: Contested exchange and the revival of political economy', *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 7, 1: 83-102.
- Brier, B., 1974, *Precognition and the philosophy of science: An essay on backward causation*, New York: Humanities Press.
- Brown, W.P., 1996, *Character in crisis: A fresh approach to the wisdom literature of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Brown, Alexandra R., 2005, 'Wisdom literature: Theoretical perspectives', in: Jones, Lindsay, ed., *Encyclopedia of religion*, 2nd ed. Detroit: Thomson Gale / Macmillan, 14: 9762-9766.

- Brown, B., 1923, *The wisdom of the Egyptians*, New York: Brentano.
- Brown, D.E., 1991, *Human universals*, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Brown, Warren S., 2000a, 'Wisdom and human neurocognitive systems: Perceiving and practicing the laws of life', in: Brown 2000b: 193-213.
- Brown, Warren S., 2000b, ed. *Understanding wisdom: Sources, science, and society*, Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press.
- Brunner, H., 1988, *Altägyptische Weisheit: Lehren für das Leben*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Bryant M.D., 1995, 'African wisdom and the recovery of the earth', *Orita*, 27: 49-58.
- Burkert, W., 1962, *Weisheit und Wissenschaft: Studien zu Pythagoras, Philolaos und Platon*, Nürnberg: Carl Burkert, W., 1968, 'Orpheus und die Vorsokratiker: Bemerkungen zum Derveni-Papyrus und zur pythagoreischen Zahlenlehre', *Antike und Abendland*, 14: 93-114.
- Burkert, W., 1987, *Ancient mystery cults*, Cambridge (MA) / London: Harvard University Press
- Burton, R.F., 1865, *Wit and wisdom from West Africa*, London: Tinsley.
- Butterworth, E.A.S., 1970, *The tree at the navel of the earth*, Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Camp, C.V., 1985, *Wisdom and the feminine in the Book of Proverbs*, Sheffield: Almond Press.
- Cannuyer, Christian, 2007, 'Les sagesses égyptiennes et l'éminente dignité de l'homme', paper, Symposium 2007.
- Capra, F., 1978, *The Tao of physics*, no place: Fontana / Collins, 3rd impr; 1st impr. 1975.
- Carruthers, Jacob H., 1986, 'The wisdom of governance in Kemet', in: Karenga, Maulana, & Carruthers, Jacob, eds., *Kemet and the African worldview: Research, rescue and restoration*, Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press.
- Celano, A.J., 1995, 'The end of practical wisdom: Ethics as science in the thirteenth century', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 33: 225-243.
- Chittick, W.C., 1989, *The Sufi path of knowledge: Ibn al-'Arabî's metaphysics of imagination*, Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Choudhury, Enamul, 2001, 'Virtue ethics and the wisdom tradition: Exploring the inclusive guidance of the Qur'an', *Global Virtue Ethics Review*, 3, 1: 26f.
- Coia, Valentina, Destro-Bisol, Verginelli, Giovanni, Battaglia, Cinzia, Boschi, Ilaria, Cruciani, Fulvio, Spedini, Gabriella, Comas, David, Calafell, Francesc, 2005, 'Brief communication: MtDNA variation in North Cameroon: Lack of Asian lineages and implications for back migration from Asia to sub-Saharan Africa', *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 128, 3: 678-681.
- Colson, E., 1960, 'Social control of vengeance in Plateau Tonga society', in: Colson, E., *The Plateau Tonga*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 102-121.
- Colson, E., 1966, 'The alien diviner and local politics among the Tonga of Zambia', in: Swartz, M., Turner, V.W., & Tuden, A., eds., *Political anthropology*, New York: Aldine, pp. 221-228.
- Conrad, J., 1899, *Heart of Darkness*, New York: Norton Critical Editions, reprinted 1971.
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda K., 1943, 'Eastern wisdom and western knowledge', *Isis*, 34, 4: 359-363.
- Cramer, C., 2002, 'Homo Economicus goes to war: Methodological individualism, rational choice and the political economy of war', *World Development*, 30, 11: 1845-1864.
- Crenshaw, J.L., 1969, 'Method in determining wisdom influence upon "historical literature"', *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 88: 129-142.
- Crenshaw, J.L., 1995, *Urgent advice and probing questions: Collected writings on Old Testament wisdom*, Macon (GA): Mercer University Press.

- Cruciani, F., Santolamazza, P., Shen, P., Macaulay, V., Moral, P., Olckers, A., Modiano, D., Holmes, S., Destro-Bisol, G., Coia, V., Wallace, D.C., Oefner, P.J., Torrioni, A., Cavalli-Sforza, L.L., Scozzari, R., Underhill, P.A., 2002, 'A back migration from Asia to sub-Saharan Africa is supported by high-resolution analysis of human Y-chromosome haplotypes', *American Journal of Human Genetics*, 70: 1197-1214.
- Curnow, Trevor, 1999, *Wisdom, Intuition and Ethics*, Aldershot (UK) & Brookfield (VT): Ashgate.
- d'Errico, F., Henshilwood, C., Lawson, G., Vanhaeren, M., Tillier, A.-M., Soressi, M., Bresson, F., Maureille, B., Nowell, A., Lakarra, J., Backwell, L., & Julien, M., 2003, 'Archeological evidence for the emergence of language, symbolism, and music: An alternative multidisciplinary perspective', *Journal of World Prehistory*, 17, 1: 1-70.
- de Boeck, F., 1993, 'Symbolic and diachronic study of intercultural therapeutic and divinatory roles among aLuund and Cokwe in the Upper Kwango (Southwestern Zaire)', in: van Binsbergen, W.M.J., & Schilders, K., eds., *Ethnicity in Africa*, theme issue, *Afrika Focus*, 9: 73-104.
- de Boeck, F., 1995, 'Bodies of remembrance: knowledge, experience and the growing of memory in Luunda ritual performance', in: Thinès, G., & de Heusch, L., eds., *Rites et ritualisation*, Paris / Lyon: Vrin / Institut Interdisciplinaire d'Etudes Epistémologiques, pp. 113-138.
- de Jong, Ferdinand, 2007, *Masquerades of modernity: Power and secrecy in Casamance, Senegal*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press for the International Africa Institute.
- de la Mettrie, O., 1999, *L'Homme-Machine*, Paris: Denoël-Gonthier, this edition first published 1981; first published 1747.
- de Mul, J., 1993, *De tragedie van de eindigheid: Dilthey's hermeneutiek van het leven*, Kampen: Kok Agora; Engl. tr.: 2004, *The Tragedy of Finitude. Dilthey's Hermeneutics of Life*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- de Veyrières, P., & de Méritens, G., 1967, *Le livre de la sagesse malgache: Proverbes, dictons, sentences, expressions figurées et curieuses*, Paris: Éditions Maritimes et d'Outre-mer.
- Dell, K.J., 1994, 'Ecclesiastes as wisdom: Consulting early interpreters', *Vetus Testamentum*, 44, 3: 301-329.
- Dennett, D.C., 1991, *Consciousness explained*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Derrida, J., 1967, *L'écriture et la différence*, Paris: Seuil.
- Derrida, J., 1972, *Marges de la philosophie*, Paris: Minuit.
- Derrida, J., 1996, 'Foi et savoir: Les deux sources de la "religion" aux limites de la simple raison', in: Derrida, J., & Vattimo, G., eds., *La religion*, Paris / Rome: Seuil / Laterza, pp. 9-86.
- Derrida, J., 1999, 'Responsabilité et hospitalité', in: Seffahi, M. ed., *Manifeste pour l'hospitalité*, Paris: Paroles l'Aube, pp. 121-124.
- Devisch, R., 1985, 'La complicité entre le socio-culturel et le corps total chez les Yaka du Zaïre', in: Jeddi, E., red., *Psychose, famille et culture*, Paris: L'Harmattan, pp. 82-114.
- Devisch, R., 1990, 'The human body as a vehicle for emotions among the Yaka of Zaïre', in: Jackson, M., & Karp, I., eds., *Personhood and agency: The experience of self and other in African cultures*, Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, pp. 115-133.
- Devisch, R., 1995, 'Des forces aux symboles dans le rite bantou: l'Interanimation entre corps, groupe et monde', in: Devisch R., Perrot C., Voyé L., & Chauvet L., eds., *Le rite: Source et ressources*, Bruxelles: Facultés Universitaires Saint-Louis, pp 11-83.
- Devisch, René., 2000, 'The slit-drum and body imagery in mediumistic divination among

- the Yaka', in: Pemberton, J., ed., *Insight and artistry in African divination*, Washington: Smithsonian institution press, pp. 116-133.
- Dodds, E.R., 1951, *The Greeks and the irrational*, Berkeley / Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Doke, C.M., 1947, 'Bantu wisdom-lore', *African Studies*, 6, 3: 101-120.
- Duerr, H.P., ed., 1981, *Der Wissenschaftler und das Irrationale, I*, Frankfurt am Main: Syndikat.
- Duintjer, Otto Dirk, 1966, *De vraag naar het transcendentale: Vooral in verband met Heidegger en Kant*, Leiden: Universitaire Pers.
- Durkheim, E., 1897, *Les Règles de la méthode sociologique*, Paris: Alcan; first published 1895.
- Einstein, A., Podolsky, B., & Rosen, N., 1935, 'Can quantum-mechanical description of physical reality be considered complete?', *Physical Review*, 47: 777-780.
- Einstein, A., Tolman, R.C., & Podolsky, B., 1931, 'Knowledge of past and future in quantum mechanics', *Physical Review*, 37: 780-781.
- Eisenbud, J., 1982, *Paranormal foreknowledge: Problems and perplexities*, New York: Human Sciences Press.
- Eliade, M., 1951, *Le chamanisme: Et les techniques archaïques de l'extase*, Paris: Payot.
- Epstein, Ron., 1985, '“The transformation of consciousness into wisdom”: The path of the Bodhisattva according to the Ch'eng Wei-shih Lun,' *Vajra Bodhi Sea: A Monthly Journal of Orthodox Buddhism*, Part One: vol. 15, No. 176 (Jan. 1985), pp. 22-23. Part Two: vol. 15, No. 177 (Feb. 1985), pp 15-17. Part Three: vol. 15, No. 178 (March 1985). 14-15.
- Erikson, E.H., 1963, *Childhood and society*, New York: Norton.
- Erikson, E.H., 1982, *The life cycle completed: A review*, New York: Norton.
- Ess, Charles, 2003, 'Liberal arts and distance education: Can Socratic virtue (*aretē* [ἀρετή]) and Confucius' exemplary person (*junzi* [君子]) be taught online?', *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 2, 2: 117-137.
- Fabian, J., 1990, *Power and performance: Ethnographic explorations through proverbial wisdom and theatre in Shaba, Zaire*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Fahd, T., 1966, *La divination arabe*, Leiden: Brill.
- Fédry, J., 1976, 'L'expérience du corps comme structure du langage: Essai sur la langue sàr (Tchad)', *L'Homme*, 16: 64-107.
- Fernandez, James W., 1982, *Bwiti: An ethnography of the religious imagination in Africa*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Fernandez, James W., 1990, 'The body in Bwiti: Variations on a theme by Richard Werbner', *Journal of African Religion*, 20, 1: 92-111.
- Fernandez, James W., 2000, 'Peripheral wisdom', in: Cohen, Anthony P., ed., *Signifying Identities, Anthropological perspectives on boundaries and contested values*, London / New York: Routledge, pp. 117-147.
- Flyvbjerg, Bent, 1993, 'Aristotle, Foucault and progressive phronesis: Outline of an applied ethics for sustainable development', in: Winkler, Earl R., & Coombs, Jerrold R., eds., *Applied ethics: A reader*, Cambridge (MA) / Oxford (UK): Blackwell, pp. 11-27.
- Fontenrose, J., 1978, *The Delphic oracle: Its responses and operations, with a catalogue of responses*, Berkeley / Los Angeles / London: University of California Press.
- Foster, B.R., 1974, 'Wisdom and the Gods in Ancient Mesopotamia', *Orientalia*, Nova Series, 43: 344-354.
- Foucault, M., 1966, *Les mots et les choses: Une archéologie des sciences humaines*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Foucault, M., 1969, *L'Archéologie du savoir*, Paris: Gallimard.

- Fowers, Blaine J., 2003, 'Reason and human finitude: In praise of practical wisdom', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47, 4: 415-426.
- Frazer, J.G., 1911-1915, *The golden bough: A study in magic and religion*, 8 vols in 12, 3rd ed., rev. and enlarged, London: Macmillan.
- Frazer, J.G., 1918, *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*, London: Macmillan.
- Frazer, J.G., 1968, *The belief in immortality and the worship of the dead*, 3 vols, London: Dawsons; first published 1913-1924.
- Gadamer, H.-G., 1960, *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, Tübingen: Mohr (Siebeck).
- Gallagher, Shaun, 1997, 'The place of phronesis in postmodern hermeneutics', in: Martinez, Ray, ed., *The very idea of radical hermeneutics*, Atlantic Highland (NJ): Humanities Press, pp. 22-31.
- García, L., & Pelechano, V., 2004, 'Western traditional wisdom philosophies and personality: A preliminary study', *Análisis y modificación de conducta*, 30, Nº. 134: 949-962.
- Gardiner, A.H., 1994, *Egyptian grammar: Being an introduction to the study of hieroglyphs*, rev. 3rd ed., Oxford: Griffith Institute / Ashmolean Museum, this edition first published 1957, first edition published 1927.
- Gettier, E., 1963, 'Is justified true belief knowledge?', *Analysis*, 23: 121-123.
- Geyer, Carl-Friedrich, 1989, 'Philosophie im Spannungsfeld von Weisheit und Wissenschaft', in: Oelmüller 1989: 54-64.
- Gluckman, H.M., 1955, *Custom and conflict in Africa*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gluckman, H.M., 1965, *Politics, law and ritual in tribal society*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gluckman, H.M., 1967, *The judicial process among the Barotse of Northern Rhodesia*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2nd edition, first ed. 1957.
- Godlovitch, Stanley, 1981, 'On wisdom', *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, 11, 1: 137-155.
- Götze, A., 1923, 'Persische Weisheit in griechischem Gewande: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Mikrokosmos-Idee', *Zeitschrift für Indologie und Iranistik*, 2: 60-98 and 167-77.
- Graf, Fritz, 1974, *Eleusis und die orphische Dichtung Athens in vorhellenistischer Zeit*, Berlin / New York: de Gruyter.
- Graves, R., 1964, *The Greek myths*, 2 vols., Harmondsworth: Penguin, first published 1955.
- Griaule, Marcel., 1948, *Dieu d'eau: Entretiens avec Ogotemmêli*, Paris: Editions du Chêne.
- Grim, P., 1990, ed., *Philosophy of science and the occult*, 2nd edn, Albany: State University of New York Press, first published 1982.
- Gundlach, R., 1996, 'Ägyptische Weisheit in der politischen "Lebenslehre" König Amenemhets I.', in: Diesel, Anja A., ed., *Jedes Ding hat seine Zeit: Studien zur israelitischen und altorientalischen Weisheit* [Festschrift D. Michel], Berlin / New York: de Gruyter, pp. 91-105.
- Guorong, Yang, 2002, 'Transforming knowledge into wisdom: A contemporary Chinese philosophers investigation', *Philosophy East & West*, 52, 4: 441-458.
- Gyekye, K., 1995, *An essay on African philosophical thought: The Akan conceptual scheme*, revised edition, Philadelphia; Temple University Press, first published Cambridge University Press 1987.
- Hadot, P., 1995, *Philosophy as a way of life: Spiritual exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, New York: Blackwell.
- Halliwell, S., 2000, 'The subjection of muthos to logos: Plato's citations of the poets', *The Classical Quarterly*, New Series, 50, 1: 94-112.

- Halverson, Richard, 2004, 'Accessing, documenting, and communicating practical wisdom: The phronesis of school leadership practice', *American Journal of Education*, Vol. 111, 1: 90-121.
- Hammer, M.F., Karafet, T., Rasanayagam, A., Wood, E.T., Altheide, T.K., Jenkins, T., Griffiths, R.C., Templeton, A.R., & Zegura, S.L., 1998, 'Out of Africa and back again: nested cladistic analysis of human Y chromosome variation', *Molecular Biology and Evolution*, vol. 15, 4: 427-441.
- Hanna, Fred J., & Ottens, Allen J., 1995, 'The role of wisdom in psychotherapy', *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 5, 3: 195-219.
- Harding, S., 1997, 'Is modern science an ethnoscience? Rethinking epistemological assumptions', in: Eze, Emmanuel Chukwudi, ed., *Postcolonial African philosophy: A critical reader*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 45-70.
- Hartshorne, Charles, 1987, *Wisdom as moderation: A philosophy of the middle way*, Albany (NY): State University of New York Press.
- Haverkort, B., & Hiemstra, W., 1999, eds., *Food for thought: Ancient visions and new experiments of rural people*, Leusden: Compas / Bangalore: Books for Change. London: Zed.
- Hebga, M., 1998, *La rationalité d'un discours africain sur le phénomènes paranormaux*, Paris/Montréal: L'Harmattan.
- Heidegger, Martin., 1977, *Sein und Zeit (1927)*, *Gesamtausgabe*, XIV, 583, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin., 1982, *Parmenides (WS 1942-1943)*, *Gesamtausgabe*, 252, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Heidegger, Martin., 1983, *Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik: Welt, Endlichkeit, Einsamkeit (WS 1929-1930)*, *Gesamtausgabe*, 544, Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann.
- Hobsbawm, E., & Ranger, T.O., 1983, eds., *The invention of tradition*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; reprinted 1993.
- Hodder, I., 1987, ed., *The archaeology of contextual meanings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hodder, I., & Hutson, Scott, 2003, *Reading the past: Current approaches to interpretation in archaeology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, third edition, first published 1986.
- Hopkins, Jasper, 1996, *Nicholas of Cusa on wisdom and knowledge*, Minneapolis (MN): Banning.
- Horn, John L., & Masunaga, Hiromi, 2000, 'On the emergence of wisdom: Expertise development', in: Brown 2000b: 245-276.
- Horton, R., & Finnegan, R., 1973, eds., *Modes of thought*, London: Faber.
- Humphreys, Christmas, 1987, ed., *The wisdom of Buddhism*, 2nd ed. Atlantic Highlands (NJ): Humanities Press International; London: Curzon Press.
- Hyland, D.A., 1995, *Finitude and transcendence in the Platonic dialogues*, Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Jacobs, J., 1989, 'Practical wisdom, objectivity and relativism', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 26: 199-209.
- Jacobson-Widding A., 1991, ed., *Body and space: Symbolic models of unity and division in African cosmology and experience*, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell.
- Jacoby, Russell, 1994, *Dogmatic wisdom: How the culture wars divert education and distract America*, New York: Doubleday.
- Jamal, Tazim 2004, 'Virtue ethics and sustainable tourism pedagogy: Phronesis, principles and practice', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 12, 6: 530-545.
- Janaway, Christopher, 1999, 'Introduction', in: *idem*, ed., *The Cambridge companion to*

- Schopenhauer*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-17.
- Jeyes, U., 1989, *Old Babylonian extispicy: Omen texts in the British Museum*, Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut.
- Jiang, W.Y., 2005, 'Therapeutic wisdom in traditional Chinese medicine: A perspective from modern science', *Trends in Pharmacological Sciences*, 24: 558-663.
- Jones, David, & Culliney, John, 1998, 'Confucian order at the edge of chaos: The science of complexity and ancient wisdom', *Zygon*, 33, 3: 395-404.
- Kaplony, P., 1968, 'Eine Neue Weisheitslehre aus dem Alten Reich', *Orientalia*, NS, 37: 1-62.
- Kekes, J., 1983, 'Wisdom', *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 20: 277-286.
- Kekes, J., 1995, *Moral wisdom and good lives*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Kenyon, Gary M., 2003, 'Telling and listening to stories: Creating a wisdom environment for older people', *Generations*, 27, 3: 30-33.
- Kern, Otto, 1888, 'Empedokles und die Orphiker', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, 1: 498-508.
- Kimmerle, H., 1989, ed., *We, I and body: First joint symposium of philosophers from Africa and the Netherlands*, Amsterdam: Grüner.
- Kimmerle, H., 1993, 'Afrikanische Philosophie als Weisheitslehre? ', in: Mall, R.A., & Lohmar, D., eds., *Philosophische Grundlagen der Interkulturalität*, Amsterdam / Atlanta: Rodopi, pp. 159-180.
- Kimmerle, Heinz. 1997, 'Philosophy in Gikuyu and in Venda Proverbs (Review)', *Quest: Philosophical Discussions*, 11: 162 -168.
- Kingsley, Peter, 1995a, *Ancient philosophy, mystery, and magic: Empedocles and Pythagorean tradition*, Oxford: Clarendon.
- Kingsley, Peter, 1995b, 'Meetings with Magi: Iranian themes among the Greeks, from Xanthus of Lydia to Plato's Academy', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 5: 173-209.
- Kingsley, Peter, 1999, *In the dark places of wisdom*, Inverness: Golden Sufi.
- Kirk, A., 1999, 'Crossing the boundary: Liminality and transformative wisdom in Q', *New Testament Studies*, 45: 1-18.
- Koutsoumpou, Leonidas, & Zhuang, Yue, 2007, 'The way of phronesis: Revisiting traditional wisdom in architecture', paper, Symposium 2007 (see there).
- Kramer, Deirdre A., 1990, 'Conceptualizing wisdom: the primacy of affect-cognition relations', in Sternberg 1990: 279-313.
- Kramer, Deirdre A., 2000, 'Wisdom as a classical source of human strength: Conceptualization and empirical inquiry', *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 19: 83-101.
- Kubik, G., 1977, 'Patterns of body movement in the music of boys' initiation in South-east Angola', in: Blacking, J., ed., *The anthropology of the body*, London: Academic Press, pp. 253-274.
- Kuczyński, Janusz, 2001, 'Metaphilosophy, science, and art as foundation of wisdom, the co-creation of a rational and ethical universal society', *Dialogue and Universalism*, No. 7-8: 45-61.
- Kunzmann, U., & Baltes, P.B., 2003, 'Beyond the traditional scope of intelligence: Wisdom in action', in: Sternberg, R.J., Lautry, J., & Lubart, T.I., eds., *Models of intelligence for the next millennium*, Washington (DC): American Psychological Association, pp. 329-343.
- Lambert, W.G., 1960, *Babylonian wisdom literature*, Oxford: Clarendon.
- Lange, H.O., 1925, *Das Weisheitsbuch des Amonope aus dem Pap. 10474 des British Museums*, Kopenhagen: Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, hist.-filol. Meddelelser 11 / 2.

- Lebram, J.C.H., 1965, 'Nachbiblische Weisheitstraditionen', *Vetus Testamentus*, 15: 167-237.
- Lefkowitz, M.R., & MacLean Rogers, G., 1996, eds., *Black Athena revisited*, Chapel Hill & London: University of North Carolina Press.
- Legge, J., translator & editor, 1993, *I Ching / Book of changes*, The Chinese-English bilingual series of Chinese classics, Beijing: Hunan Publishing House.
- Leibniz, Gottfried Wilhelm, 1994, *Writing on China*, ed. and tr. Daniel J. Cook & Henry Rosemont Jr, Chicago & LaSalle: Open Court.
- Levinas, E., 1976. *Difficile liberté: Essais sur le judaïsme*, 2nd ed. Paris: Albin Michel.
- Levitt, H.M., 1999, 'The development of wisdom: An analysis of Tibetan Buddhist experience', *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 39: 86-105.
- Lewin, Fereshteh Ahmadi, 2000, 'Development towards wisdom and maturity: Sufi Conception of Self', *Journal of Aging and Identity*, 5, 3: 137-149.
- Lewis-Williams, J.D., & Dowson, T. A., 1988, 'The signs of all times: Entoptic phenomena in Upper Paleolithic art', *Current Anthropology*, 29, 2: 201-217, with comments up to p. 245.
- Lichtheim, M., 1973-1976-1980, *Ancient Egyptian literature, 3 vols*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Link, Hilde, 2007, '5 + 5 = 9: Numeric classification systems in Southern India and Eastern Indonesia as part of man's world view', paper, Symposium 2007 (see there).
- Lloyd, G.E.R., 1987, *The revolutions of wisdom: Studies in the claims and practices of Ancient Greek science*, Berkeley / Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Liotard, J.-F., 1983, *Le différend*, Paris: Minuit.
- MacIntyre, A., 1981, *After virtue: A study in moral theory*, London: Duckworth.
- MacLennan, B.J., 2006, 'Individual soul and World Soul: The process of individuation in Neoplatonism & Jung', in: Arzt, Thomas, & Holm, Axel, eds., *Wegmarken der Individuation*, Studienreihe zur Analytischen Psychologie Band 1 Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, pp. 25-48.
- Madu, R.O., 1996, *African symbols, proverbs and myths: The hermeneutics of destiny*, New York: Lang.
- Maercker, A., Bohmig-Krumhaar, S.A., & Staudinger, U.M., 1998, 'Existentielle Konfrontation als Zugang zu weisheitsbezogenem Wissen und Urteilen: Eine Untersuchung von Weisheitsnominierten', *Zeitschrift für Entwicklungspsychologie und Pädagogische Psychologie*, 30: 2-11.
- Mamre, Mechon, ed., 2005, 'A Hebrew-English Bible according to the Masoretic text and the JPS 1917 edition', at: <http://www.mechon-mamre.org/p/pt/pt0.htm>.
- Manheimer, R.J., 1992, 'Wisdom and method: Philosophical contributions to gerontology', in: Cole, T.R., van Tassel, D.D., & Kastenbaum, R., eds. *Handbook of the humanities and aging*, New York: Springer, pp. 426-440.
- Maritain, Jacques, 1940, *Science and wisdom*, New York: Charles Scribners Sons.
- Marquard, Odo, 1989, 'Drei Betrachtungen zum Thema Philosophie und Weisheit', in: Oelmüller 1989: 275-308.
- Maslow, Abraham H., 1968, *Toward a psychology of being*, rev. ed. New York: van Nostrand, first published 1962.
- Maslow, Abraham H., 1971, *The farther reaches of human nature*, New York: The Viking Press.
- Massignon, L., 1922, *La passion d'al-Husayn Ibn Mansour al-Hallaj: Martyr mystique de l'Islam, exécuté à Bagdad le 26 mars 922: Une étude d'histoire religieuse*, I-II, Paris: Geuthner.
- Maw, J. & Picton, J., 1992, eds., *Concepts of the body / self in Africa*. Veröffentlichungen der Institute für Afrikanistik und Ägyptologie der Universität Wien, no., 60, Bei-

- trage zur Afrikanistik, band 43. Wien: Afro-Pub.
- Maxwell, Nicholas, 1984, *From knowledge to wisdom*, Oxford (UK) / New York: Blackwell.
- Maxwell, Nicholas, 2004, 'In defence of seeking wisdom', *Metaphilosophy*, 35, 5: 733-743.
- Maybury-Lewis, D., 1992, *Millennium: Tribal wisdom and the modern world*, New York: Viking Press.
- Meacham, John A., 1983, 'Wisdom and the context of knowledge: Knowing that one doesn't know', in: Kuhn, Deanna, & Meacham, John A., eds., *On the development of developmental psychology*, Basel / New York: Karger, pp. 111-134.
- Mehlig, Johannes, 1987, *Weisheit des alten Indien. Band 1: Vorbuddhistische und nicht-buddhistische Texte*, München: Beck.
- Mitchell, J.C., 1971, 'Foreword', in: van Velsen 1971: v-xiv.
- Momigliano, A.D., 1975, *Alien wisdom: The limits of hellenization*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mudimbe, V.Y., 1988, *The invention of Africa: Gnosis, philosophy, and the order of knowledge*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press / London: Currey.
- Müller, H.-R., 1977-78, 'Die weisheitliche Lehrerzahlung im Alten Testament und seiner Umwelt', *Welt des Orients*, 9: 77-98.
- Müller, L.F., 2002, 'Een intercultureel filosofische studie naar het bewustzijn van de Ashanti in Ghana', drs. thesis intercultural philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam.
- Müller, Max, 1875-1910, ed., *Sacred books of the East*, 51 vols., Oxford: Clarendon, reprinted, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1988.
- Mundle, C.W.K., 1964, 'Is "paranormal precognition" a coherent concept?', *Journal of Parapsychology*, 6: 179-94.
- Murithi, T., 2006, 'Practical peacemaking wisdom from Africa: Reflections on Ubuntu', *Journal of Pan African Studies*, 1, 4: 25-37.
- Murphy, R.E., 1981, *Wisdom literature: Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Esther*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Murphy, R.E., 2002, *The tree of life: An exploration of Biblical wisdom literature*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- Mve Ondo B., 1991, *Sagesse et initiation a travers les contes, mythes et légendes fang*, Libreville; reprinted 2007, Paris: l'Harmattan.
- Ngubane, [Sibisi] H., 1977, *Body and mind in Zulu medicine: An ethnography of health and disease in Nyuswa-Zulu thought and practice*, Londen / New York / San Francisco: Academic Press.
- Ngwane, George, 1996, *Settling disputes in Africa: Traditional bases for conflict resolution*, Yaounde: Buma Kor.
- Nielsen, Kai, 1993, 'Philosophy and the search for wisdom', *Teaching Philosophy*, 16, 1: 5-20.
- Njoku, Ndu Life, 2007, 'Amamihe? The wisdom behind the phenomenon of the evil forest in traditional Igboland, Nigeria', paper, Symposium 2007 (see there).
- Noel, Jana, 1999, 'On the varieties of phronesis', *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 31, 3: 273-289.
- Norbeck, Edward., 1963, 'African rituals of conflict', *American Anthropologist*, 65: 1254-1279.
- Norton, M.B., 2004, 'An interview with Seyyed Hossein Nasr: "Scripture, society, and traditional wisdom"', *Journal of Philosophy & Scripture*, 2, 1: 39-43.
- Noth, Martin, & Thomas, D.W., 1955, eds., *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East* [H.H. Rowley Festschrift]Leiden: Brill.
- Ntekim-Rex, Yewande, 2007, 'Proverbs as vehicle of traditional wisdom in Yoruba culture', paper, Symposium 2007 (see there).
- Odera Oruka, H.O., 1990a, 'Cultural fundamentals in philosophy: Obstacles in philoso-

- phical dialogues', *Quest – Philosophical discussions*, 4, 2: 20-37.
- Odera Oruka, H.O., 1990b, ed., *Sage philosophy: Indigenous thinkers and modern debate on African philosophy*, Leiden: Brill.
- Oelmueller, W., 1989, ed., *Philosophie und Weisheit*, Paderborn etc.: Schoeningh.
- Olivier de Sardan, J.-P., 1988, 'Jeu de la croyance et "je" ethnologique: Exotisme religieux et ethno-égocentrisme', *Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines*, 28, 3-4: 527-540.
- Oosterling, H., 1996, *Door schijn bewogen: Naar een hyperkritiek van de xenofobe rede*, Kampen: Kok Agora.
- Opoku, Kofi A., 1987, 'Ancient wisdom in the African heritage', *Christian Jewish Relations*, 20: 45-61.
- Parsons, T., 1949, *The structure of social action*, Glencoe: Free Press, first published 1937.
- Pasupathi, M., & Staudinger, U.M., 2001, 'Do advanced moral reasoners also show wisdom? Linking moral reasoning and wisdom-related knowledge and judgement', *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 25: 401-415.
- Patterson, C.B., 1991, 'Plutarch's "Advice on marriage": Traditional wisdom through a philosophical lens', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, II 33.5: 4709-4723.
- Perdue, Leo G., & Turner, V.W., 1978, 'Communitas, poverty, and the ethics of James', paper prepared for the Seminary-Religion Study Colloquium, April 3, 1978, Enid (Ok.): Phillips University.
- Petrie, W.M.Flinders, 1940, *The wisdom of the Egyptians*, London: Egyptian Research Account / British School of Archaeology in Egypt No. 63.
- Popper, K.R., 1959, *The logic of scientific discovery*, New York: Basic Books; first published in German in 1935, *Logik der Forschung: Zur Erkenntnistheorie der modernen Naturwissenschaft*, Vienna: Springer.
- Presbey, Gail M., 1999, 'The wisdom of African sages', *New Political Science*, 21, 1: 89-102.
- Ptah-Hotep, 1917 [actual date c. 2200 BCE], 'The precepts of Ptah-Hotep', in: Horne, Charles F., *The sacred books and early literature of the East, Vol. II: Egypt*, New York: Parke, Austin, & Lipscomb, pp. 62-78.
- Quanchi, M., 2004, 'Indigenous epistemology, wisdom and tradition; changing and challenging dominant paradigms in Oceania', Paper presented to the Social Change in the 21st Century Conference Centre for Social Change Research, Queensland University of Technology, 29 October 2004.
- Quine, W.V., 1960, *Word and object*, Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.
- Quine, W.V.O., 1970, 'On the reasons for the indeterminacy of translation', *Journal of Philosophy*, 67: 178-183.
- Radin, D.I., 1997, *The conscious universe: The scientific truth of psychic phenomena*, San Francisco: Harper.
- Radin, D.I., & Nelson, R.D., 1989, 'Evidence for consciousness-related anomalies in random physical systems', *Foundations of Physics*, 19, 12: 1499-1514.
- Razafintsalama, A., 1988, 'Les ancêtres au coeur de la vie et de la sagesse: Jalons pour une théologie en terre malgache', *Telema*, 53: 11-29.
- Renfrew, C., & Zubrow, E.B.W., 1994, eds., *The ancient mind: Elements of cognitive archaeology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rhodes, James M., 2003, *Eros, wisdom, and silence: Plato's erotic dialogues*, Columbia: University of Missouri Press.
- Rice, Eugene F., 1958, *The Renaissance idea of wisdom*, Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
- Ricoeur, P., 1960, *Finitude et culpabilité*, Paris: Aubier.

- Riedweg, Christoph, 1995, 'Orphisches bei Empedokles', *Antike und Abendland*, 41: 34-59.
- Rogers, A.D., 1985, 'Human prudence and implied divine sanctions in Malagasy proverbial wisdom', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 15, 3: 216-226.
- Römer, W.H.Ph., von Soden, W., & Kaiser, O., 1990, eds, *Weisheitstexte, I (Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments, III, 1)*, Gütersloh: Mohn, pp. 48-67.
- Rosen, Stanley, 2000, *G.W.F. Hegel, An Introduction to the Science of Wisdom*, South Bend (IN): St. Augustines Press, first published 1974.
- Ryle, G., 1949, *The concept of mind*, London: Hutchinsons.
- Said, E.W., 1978, *Orientalism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Samoff, Joel, & Stromquist, Nelly P., 'Managing knowledge and storing wisdom? New forms of foreign aid?' *Development & Change*, 32, 4: 631-656.
- Sarkio, P., 1994, *Die Weisheit und Macht Salomos in der israelitischen Historiographie*, Helsinki / Göttingen: S[chriften der JF[innischen JE[xegetischen] G[esellschaft] 60.
- Sartre, J.P., 1943, *L'être et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*, Paris: Gallimard.
- Scheub, Harold, 1985, 'A review of African oral traditions and literature', *The African Studies Review*, 28, 2-3: 1-72.
- Scheub, Harold., 1977, *African oral narratives, proverbs, riddles, poetry, and song*, Boston: Hall; first published in 1971 as : *Bibliography of African oral narratives*.
- Schloss, Jeffrey P., 2000, 'Wisdom traditions as mechanisms for organismal integration: Evolutionary perspectives on homeostatic laws of life', in: Brown 2000b: 153-191..
- Schwaller de Lubicz, I., 1955-1956, *Her-bak, pois chiche, visage vivant de l'Ancienne Egypte, Her-bak, disciple de la sagesse égyptienne, I-II*, Paris: Flammarion.
- Scott, R.B.Y., 1971, *The way of wisdom in the Old Testament*, New York / London: Macmillan.
- Sedley, David, 1998, *Lucretius and the transformation of Greek wisdom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sen, Amartya, 1999, *Development as freedom*, New York: Random House-Anchor.
- Shah, I., 1971, *The Sufis*, Garden City (NY): Doubleday, first published 1964.
- Shapiro, S.O., 2000, 'Proverbial wisdom in Herodotus', *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, 130: 89-118.
- Sharp, Lesley A., 2000, 'The commodification of the body and its parts', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 29: 287-328.
- Simonse, S., 1992, *Kings of disaster: Dualism, centralism and the scapegoat king in southeastern Sudan*, Leiden: Brill.
- Simpson, W.K., 1973, *The Literature of Ancient Egypt*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Small, MW., 2004, 'Wisdom and now managerial wisdom: Do they have a place in management development programs?', *Journal of Management Development*, 23, 8: 751-764.
- Smith, Barry, Munn, Katherine, & Papakin, Igor, 2004, 'Bodily systems and the spatial-functional structure of the human body', in: Pisanelli, D., ed., *Medical ontologies*, Amsterdam: IOS, pp. 39-63.
- Smith, Nicholas D., 1998, 'Wisdom', in: Craig, Edward, ed., *Routledge encyclopedia of philosophy*, London & New York: Routledge, pp. 752-755.
- Smith, P. Christopher, 1991, *Hermeneutics and Human Finitude: Toward a Theory of Ethical Understanding*, New York: Fordham University Press
- Somé, Malidoma Patrice, 1998, *The healing wisdom of Africa: Finding life purpose through nature, ritual, and community*, New York: Tarcher / Putnam.
- Staudinger, U.M., & Baltes, P.B., 1996, 'Interactive minds: A facilitative setting for

- wisdom-related performance', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77: 746-762.
- Stemberg, R.J., 1990, ed., *Wisdom: Its nature, origins, and development*, Cambridge . U.K.: Cambridge University Press.
- Stern, Paul, 1997, 'The Rule of wisdom and the rule of law in Platos Statesman', *American Political Science Review*, June 1997, v. 91 n. 2: 264-276.
- Sternberg, Robert J., 2004, 'Why smart people can be so foolish', *European Psychologist*, 9, 3: 145-150.
- Sternberg, Robert J., ed., 1990, *Wisdom: Its nature, origins, and development*, Cambridge (UK): Cambridge University Press.
- Strijbos, S., 1995, 'How can systems thinking help us in bridging the gap between science and wisdom?', *Systems Practice*, 8, 361-376.
- Strong, J.H., 1989, *Strong's exhaustive concordance: Compact edition*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, reprint of the unspecified late-19th century edition.
- Sumner, C., 1999, ed., *Living springs of wisdom and philosophy, vol. 1: Problematics of an African philosophy*, Addis-Ababa: Addis-Ababa University.
- Symposium 2007, International Symposium 'Expressions of tradition wisdom', The Royal Academy for Overseas Sciences, The Royal museum for Central Africa & The Royal Museums of Art and History, Friday 28 September, 2007, Palais des Académies, Brussels, Belgium.
- Takahashi, Masami & Bordia, Prashant, 2000, 'The concept of wisdom: A cross-cultural comparison', *International Journal of Psychology*, 35, 1: 1-9.
- Takahashi, Masami, 2000, 'Toward a culturally inclusive understanding of wisdom: Historical roots in the East and West', *The International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 51, 3: 217-230.
- Talmon, S., 1963, '“Wisdom” in the Book of Esther', *Vetus Testamentum*, 13, 4: 419-455.
- Tanret, Michel, 2007, '“When walking about, keep your feet on the ground!”: Traditional wisdom from Mesopotamia', paper, Symposium 2007 (see there).
- Taranto, M.A., 1989, 'Facets of wisdom: A theoretical synthesis', *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 29, 1-21.
- Terofal, F., 1975, 'Orde Kwastvinnigen', in: Grzimek, B., ed., *Het leven der dieren: Encyclopedie van het dierenrijk, V. Vissen 2 en Amfibieën*, Utrecht / Antwerpen: Het Spectrum, pp. V 307-310, Dutch tr. of Grzimek, B., *Grzimek's Tierleben: Enzyklopädie des Tierreiches*, Zürich: Kindler, 1970.
- Thieme, Hartmut, 1997, 'Lower Palaeolithic hunting spears from Germany', *Nature*, 385, 6619: 807-810.
- Trowbridge, Richard Hawley, 2005, 'The scientific approach of wisdom', PhD thesis, Union Institute & University, Cincinnati, Ohio.
- Tschiamalenga Ntumba, M., 1989, 'Afrikanische Weisheit', in: Oelmueller 1989: 24-38..
- Turner, V.W., 1967a, 'Muchona the hornet, interpreter of religion', in: Turner 1967b: 131-150.
- Turner, V.W., 1967b, *The forest of symbols: Aspects of Ndembu ritual*, Ithaca (N.Y.): Cornell University Press.
- Ullman, M., 1972, *Die Natur- und Geheimwissenschaft im Islam, Handbuch der Orientalistik, Erste Abteilung: Der Nahe und der Mittlere Osten, Ergänzungsband vi, 2. Abschnitt*, Leiden: Brill.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 1981, *Religious change in Zambia: Exploratory studies*, London / Boston: Kegan Paul.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 1991, 'Becoming a sangoma: Religious anthropological field-work in Francistown, Botswana', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 21, 4: 309-344.

- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 1995, 'Four-tablet divination as trans-regional medical technology in Southern Africa', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 25, 2: 114-140.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 1996, 'Transregional and historical connections of four-tablet divination in Southern Africa', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 26, 1: 2-29.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 1997, ed., *Black Athena: Ten Years After*, Hoofddorp: Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society, special issue, *Talanta: Proceedings of the Dutch Archaeological and Historical Society*, vols. 28-29, 1996-97; updated version in press as: *Black Athena Twenty Years Later*, Berlin / Boston / Munster: LIT.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2001, 'Ubuntu and the globalisation of Southern African thought and society', in: Boele van Hensbroek, P., ed., *African Renaissance and Ubuntu Philosophy*, special issue of: *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy*, 15, 1-2, 2001: 53-89.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2003a, *Intercultural encounters: African and anthropological towards a philosophy of interculturality*, Berlin / Boston / Muenster: LIT.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2003b, 'The translation of Southern African sangoma divination towards a global format, and the validity of the knowledge it produces', paper read at the symposium 'World views, Science and Us', Brussels, Centre Leo Apostel, Free University Brussels, Belgium, 10 June 2003; published in: van Binsbergen 2003a: ch. 7, pp. 235-297.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2003c, 'Reconciliation: Ideas and procedures constituting the African social technology of shared and recognised humanity', in: van Binsbergen 2003a, ch. 11 pp. 349-374.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2003d, 'Rupture and fusion in the approach to myth (Situating myth analysis between philosophy, poetics, and long-range historical reconstruction, with an application to the ancient and world-wide mythical complex of leopard-skin symbolism)', paper read at the International Conference 'Myth: Theory and the Disciplines', 12 December 2003, University of Leiden; in the press in: Merolla, D., Schipper, M., and Segal, R., eds., *Myth and the disciplines*, special issue of *Religion Compass*; prepublication PDF at: http://www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/Myth_shorter_for_journal.pdf.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2003e, 'Cultures do not exist: Exploding self-evidences in the investigation of interculturality', in: van Binsbergen 2003a: ch. 15, pp. 459-524; Dutch version, 1999, *Culturen bestaan niet*, inaugural lecture chair of foundations of intercultural philosophy, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam: Rotterdam Filosofische Studies.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2006, 'Mythological archaeology: Situating sub-Saharan cosmogonic myths within a long-range intercontinental comparative perspective', in: Osada, Toshiki, with the assistance of Hase, Noriko, eds., *Proceedings of the Pre-symposium of RIHN and 7th ESCA Harvard-Kyoto Roundtable*, Kyoto: Research Institute for Humanity and Nature (RIHN), pp. 319-349.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2007a, 'Manchester as the birth place of modern agency research: The Manchester School explained from the perspective of Evans-Pritchard's book *The Nuer*', in: de Bruijn, M., Rijk van Dijk and Jan-Bart Gewald, eds., *Strength beyond structure: Social and historical trajectories of agency in Africa*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 16-61.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2007b, 'The underpinning of scientific knowledge systems: Epistemology or hegemonic power? The implications of Sandra Harding's critique of North Atlantic science for the appreciation of African knowledge systems', in: Hountondji, Paulin J., ed., *La rationalité, une ou plurielle*, Dakar: CODESRIA [Conseil pour le développement de la recherche en sciences sociales

- en Afrique] / UNESCO [Organisation des Nations Unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture], pp. 294-327.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., 2008, 'Further steps towards an aggregative diachronic approach to world mythology, starting from the African continent', in press in: Duan Qing, M. Witzel and Shi Yang, eds., *Proceedings of the 2006 Peking / Harvard International Conference on Comparative Mythology*, Beijing: Peking University; pre-publication PDF at: http://www.shikanda.net/ancient_models/Further%20steps%20def.pdf.
- van Binsbergen, Wim M.J., & Geschiere, Peter L., 2005, eds., *Commodification: Things, Agency and Identities: The social life of Things revisited*, Berlin / Boston / Muenster: LIT.
- van den Dungen, Wim, 2002-2004, 'The maxims of good discourse or the wisdom of Ptahhotep, ca.2200 BCE', at: <http://www.maat.sofiatopia.org/ptahhotep.htm>.
- van Os, C.H., n.d. [ca. 1955], *Moa-Moa: Het moderne denken en de primitieve wijsheid*, Amsterdam: Meulenhoff.
- van Velsen, J., 1971, *The politics of kinship: A study of social manipulation among the Lakeside Tonga of Malawi*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, reprint of the 1964 edition..
- Vico, G., 1988, *De antiquissima Italorum sapientia ex linguae latinae originibus eruenda* [originally published Naples: 1710]; trans. L.M. Palmer *On the most ancient wisdom of the Italians* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988).
- Vitebsky, Piers, 1995, *The shaman: Voyages of the soul - Trance, ecstasy and healing from Siberia to the Amazon*, (Living Wisdom Series). London: Macmillan Publishers Limited / Duncan Baird.
- Vokey, Daniel, 1999, 'MacIntyre, moral value, and Mahayana Buddhism: Embracing the unthinkable in moral education', *Educational Theory*, 49, 1: 91-106.
- von Rad, G., 1971, *Weisheit im alten Israel*, Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag / Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker.
- von Schlegel, F., 1808, *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier*, Heidelberg: Mohr & Zimmer.
- Waaijman, Kees, 2002, *Spirituality: Forms, foundations, methods*, Louvain / Paris / Dudley (MA): Peeters.
- Walker, E.H., 1977, 'The compleat [sic] quantum mechanical anthropologist', in: J.K. Long, ed., *Extrasensory ecology: Parapsychology and anthropology*, Metuchen (N.J.) & London: Scarecrow Press, pp. 53-95.
- Weidtmann, Niels, 2007, 'Traditional wisdom in sub-Saharan Africa: An African origin of philosophy', paper, Symposium 2007 (see there).
- Weiping, Chen, 2005, 'Metaphysical wisdom and lifeworld: Tendencies in research on the history of Chinese philosophy at the juncture of the twentieth and twenty-first Centuries', *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, 37, 1: 24-33.
- Werbner, R.P., 1973, 'The superabundance of understanding: Kalanga rhetoric and domestic divination', *American Anthropologist*, 75: 414-440.
- Werbner, R.P., 1989, 'Making the hidden seen: Tswapong wisdom divination', in: Werbner, R.P., 1989, *Ritual passage sacred journey: The process and organization of religious movement*, Washington / Manchester: Smithsonian Institution Press / Manchester University Press, ch. 1, pp. 19-60.
- West, John Anthony, 1987, *Serpent in the sky: The high wisdom of Ancient Egypt*, New York: Julian Press.
- West, M.L., 1983, *The Orphic poems*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Whybray, R.N., 1989, 'The social world of the wisdom writers', in: Clemens, R.E., ed.,

- The world of Ancient Israel: Sociological, anthropological and political perspectives*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 227-250.
- Wilhelm, R., 1931, *Wandlung und Dauer: Die Weisheit des I Ging*, Jena / Düsseldorf / Köln: Diederichs.
- Winkelman, M., 1982, 'Magic: A theoretical reassessment', *Current Anthropology*, 23, 1: 37-66.
- Winkelman, M., & Peek, P., 2004, eds., *Divination and healing: Potent vision*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Wiredu, K., 1980, *Philosophy and an African culture: The case of the Akan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1980.
- Wiredu, K., 1990, 'Are there cultural universals', *Quest: Philosophical discussions*, 4, 2: 4-19.
- Wiredu, K., 1996, *Cultural universals and particulars. An African perspective*, Bloomington et Indianapolis, Indiana University Press.
- Wiredu, K., & Gyekye, K., 1992, eds., *Person and community: Ghanaian philosophical studies*, Washington, (DC): Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
- Wittgenstein, L., 1964, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus: Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung*, Frankfurt a / Main: Suhrkamp, first published 1921.
- Wittgenstein, L., 1967, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, first published 1953.
- Yang, Shih-Ying, 2001, 'Conceptions of wisdom among Taiwanese Chinese', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 32, 6: 662-680.
- Yutang, Lin, 1942, *The wisdom of China and India*, New York: Random House.
- Yutang, Lin, 1943, *The wisdom of Confucius*, New York: The Modern Library.
- Yutang, Lin, 1986, ed., *The wisdom of Laotse*, New York: Random House, first published 1958.
- Zukav, G., 1979, *The dancing Wu-Li masters: An overview of the new physics*, New York: Morrow.

most of the author's publications can also be retrieved from: <http://www.shikanda.net>