

# Paths to Dialogue

Interactions between  
eastern and western cultures



Ed. H.-C. Günther

***East and West***

*Band 1*

Verlag Traugott Bautz

Paths to Dialogue:  
Interactions of Eastern and Western Cultures

Ed. H.-C. Günther

**East and West.**  
**Philosophy, ethics, politics**  
**and human rights**

**Band 1**

ed. by H.-C. Günther and Li Yong

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## Preface of the Editor

The present volume contains a selection of lectures focusing on the dialogue of Asian and Western cultures, which were given at two conferences in the PR of China, which I co-organized. The first was held in Beijing in 2013 (De Gennaro, Gu, Günther, *Enlightenment ...*), the second in Changsha in 2015 (Cheng, Yamaguchi). Moreover, the volume includes an individual lecture by myself (*Crisis ...*) and an external contribution by Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach.

Müllheim, October 2016

H.-C. Günther





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Ivo De Gennaro

The Way We Speak\*

Preparatory Considerations on the Colloquy of  
European and East Asian Thinking

[...] einiges, das immer noch zu fragen oder zu  
bemerken bleibt bei diesem wunderbarsten worte  
unsrer sprache.\*\*

*Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob und  
Wilhelm Grimm, entry "GE-"*

### *1. Setting the Theme*

A comparative study requires that what is to be compared should  
previously be put on a level with each other. Putting on a level that

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\* This is a substantially revised and expanded version of a paper given at the  
„First International Conference of Comparative Study of China and the West”,  
held at Peking University, Beijing, in July 2013. Thanks to Sara Bassighini for  
copy editing this text.

\*\* “A few things that are still to be asked or remarked with respect to this most  
wonderful word of our language.”

which is to be compared is the presupposition of the comparison. Only what is already in this sense levelled can subsequently be found to be similar or dissimilar. The act of levelling consists in identifying the terms of the comparison so as to constitute these terms as such, that is, as comparable items. The identification itself is achieved by means of an implicit or explicit assumption, or hypothesis. For instance, in order to compare East Asian and European culture, we must first assume a certain concept of culture, thanks to which we can identify, respectively, an “East Asian culture” and a “European culture”. The phenomena that eventually enter the comparison can do so only thanks to the assumption that identifies them as “cultural” phenomena in the first place. While providing the identity of what it determines, and thus laying the ground for a comparison, the identifying term itself (in our example: culture) is not interrogated in its sense, but rather taken as given as the comparison proceeds.

An identifying assumption is the condition of possibility of a comparative study. The identity assures, for the purpose of comparison, that what is to be compared be identical both with itself and with what it is to be compared to. In this manner the identity assures the operative possibility of comparison. An identity that assures an operative possibility is itself an operative identity. The latter is a derivative concept. In fact, it derives from