



EDITORIAL:

The *Other* and Intercultural Communication

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Without a doubt the world as we know it today has been through various phases of evolution and devolution. Cultures and the societies imbedded in it are made of a matrix which is usually identified as tradition or identity. In a process of self-reference every cultural system sustains itself by comparing itself to its tradition in order to distinguish itself from other cultural systems. But what appears as a unique culture among other deviating cultures is the result of a communication process which includes and excludes various cultural elements which originally were foreign.

The aspect of the Other as being a variable —an unfamiliar factor and disturbance — contrary to the known constants of a familiar cultural environment or a mentality connected with a certain cultural programming is examined primarily in the difficult realtions between the East and the West. When different mentalities and systems of thought meet problems arise. Throughout history cross-cultural communication has been difficult and prone to failure. Indeed, this tendency to go wrong due to different cultural backgrounds is still a current problem of the globalized world at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The Other is still viewed as the Other. Although multi-culturalism is a popular term frequently used in the media and an ideal(ist) concept of the globalized (or globalizing) world, the old dilemma of failed cross-cultural communication has not disappeared. On the contrary, the fact that even more different cultures than ever before are now living next to each other makes the problem of cross-culturalism and inter-cultural communication a very acute issue.

INTERFACE

This third issue of **INTERFACE** is accordingly titled *The Aesthetic of the Other –Critical Thoughts on Intercultural Communication*. It includes papers on a variety of topics connected with representations of unknown cultural elements in art, music, and literature in East and West. The papers focus on the critical discourse in cross-cultural communication. The papers presented here cover a wide range of cross-cultural communication problems in various epochs of human civilization in a variety of different cultural systems. Although the focus is on Europe and Asia, it will become obvious that the issues discussed in the papers are not limited to certain regions of the world but mark analyses of matters that can be applied to every aspect of cross-cultural communication. It does not matter in this context where and when cross-cultural communication is attempted. The problems which arise have been an underlying matter of human civilization from its beginnings until present day. The papers collected in this issue can be seen as case studies of cross-cultural communication that are able to shed light on the basic mechanisms of dealing with different cultures through representations of the Other in art, music, and literature as well as the role of the Other in the process of cross-cultural communication in general.

