



Whether it be between cultures, disciplines, religions or nations: dialogue usually plays a decisive role in their delimitation and acts as a key component in successful communication. Its frequent and almost stereotyped postulation implies the expectation of a method determined by a designated set of rules – a static understanding of dialogue as a procedure which purposefully and efficiently provides results or even tacitly presupposes a consensus as its final product. Only on rare occasions can such a predefined dialogue escape the expectations it is shaped by. When it does, it has the potential to become a dynamic, creative and also fragile entity which changes constantly or can even break off abruptly. After all it is impossible to predetermine the specific form of a dialogue or even to ensure that one of the dialogue partners does not remain silent or simply leave.

Literary examples show the complexity and diversity of dialogic constellations. They range from a refusal to participate in a dialogue at all and an irremediable opposition via seemingly monologic utterances to irritation and the abandonment of preconceived opinions. These dialogues take place in intersystemic spaces where they create mutual interpenetration and response to specific impulses. The intensity of such effects indicates to what extent an altered concept of the other emerges and accordingly reacts upon the concept of the self without annihilating its autonomy. In contrast to actual encounters, literary dialogues take place within the framework of the text as a whole, and it is on this macro-level that the various positions are connected and lead to a new awareness irrespective of the mutual influence the characters may or may not have on each other.

A differentiated and critical consideration of various cultures of dialogue is indispensable if the continually postulated dialogue between the cultures is to indeed create altered insights into other cultures and thereby modify the concept of the self. This especially includes an extensive examination of language as it is ineluctably interrelated with the contents it refers to and cannot be separated from them. Hence the dialogue's functional equivalents in extra- and intra-European cultures allow for a new perspective on diverse realizations of dialogue. For this reason, dialogue and its literary and linguistic modes as essential instruments for a discussion of culturally determined value systems constitute the field of attention of the first colloquium in the project "Wertewelten".

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