Hegemony and metaphilosophy: Critiquing Western universality through Non-Western thought

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Abstract: This study critically examines how Western philosophy constructs epistemic hegemony through historical, methodological, and terminological mechanisms, and explores how non-Western traditions such as Confucianism and Daoism can be recognized as complete and authentic without undergoing conceptual subordination. This research is significant as the discourse of global philosophy remains dominated by Western epistemic structures that limit the plurality of rational forms. Employing a qualitative, literature-based approach, this study analyzes key metaphilosophical texts, Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction, and Alain Badiou's ontology as conceptual tools to trace power relations embedded in the definitions and boundaries of philosophy. The findings reveal that Western philosophy has institutionalized a linear historical narrative, logical-deductive methodological standards, and a Greek-Latin vocabulary as prerequisites for philosophical validity—resulting in the systematic exclusion of non-Western thought. The study further proposes a conceptual framework of dialogical exclusive multiplicity as an alternative for recognizing truth procedures in non-Western traditions as autonomous and equal. The implications of this research open avenues for deconstructing philosophy as the sole legitimate mode of thinking and promote the formation of a more epistemically just global philosophical ecosystem. The originality of this study lies in its critical synthesis of metaphilosophy, deconstruction, and contemporary ontology to construct an alternative paradigm for cross-traditional philosophical inquiry—one based not on inclusion, but on recognition and articulative equality.

Keywords: hegemonic philosophy; cross-cultural metaphilosophy; decolonial epistemology; Badiou; Derrida.

1. Introduction

Amidst the increasingly intense currents of globalisation and cultural exchange in the 21st century, the question of the universality of knowledge has become increasingly pressing (Fedacko, 2018). One area of knowledge experiencing significant tension in this context is philosophy (Falckenberg, 2020). In the global academic landscape, philosophy remains dominated by the Western tradition, which has its own distinctive methodology, terminology, and systematic thinking (Pascah, 2022). This tradition places logical argumentation, individual writing, and conceptual systematization as the gold standard in defining what qualifies as philosophy (Strassfeld, 2020). On the other hand, various non-Western societies also have profound speculative and reflective thought practices, but these are not always expressed in forms and frameworks that conform to Western philosophical standards (Yu, 2017). This tension has given rise to an increasingly complex philosophical polemic: Can philosophy only be understood through a Western framework? Can non-

Western traditions of thought be categorized as philosophy, or are they simply called "local wisdom," "practical ethics," or even "non-philosophy"?

This phenomenon has broad social and epistemological implications. In many higher education institutions outside Europe and North America, philosophy curricula remain heavily focused on Western thought, while local traditions of thought are often positioned as objects of ethnography or cultural studies, rather than as equal philosophical subjects (Oppy, 2012). This creates an epistemic imbalance and makes philosophy an exclusive field, rather than an inclusive and multicultural one. In the Indonesian context, for example, local traditions of thought, such as the worldviews of indigenous communities, reflections on the spirituality of Nusantara Islam, or even the oral practices of certain ethnic groups, have not been academically recognized as part of legitimate philosophical discourse (Woodward, 2019). This imbalance is exacerbated by the dominance of English and Western academic structures that influence how we classify and recognize forms of knowledge as "philosophy" (Pascah, 2022; Rosero Morales, 2022). Thus, there is an urgency to revisit universal standards for defining philosophy and open up a more equitable space for intellectual expression from diverse cultural backgrounds.

A number of previous studies have raised the issue of exclusion of non-Western traditions in philosophy. Carine Defoort (2020) In his writing, The Exclusion of Chinese Philosophy, he highlights how Chinese philosophy was systematically excluded from the canon of Western philosophy because it was deemed not to meet the standards of formal logic and argumentation. Eric Nelson (2017) in Chinese and Buddhist Philosophy in Early Twentieth-Century German Thought shows the interest and influence of Eastern philosophy on German thinkers, but remains in a subordinate position as an "alternative" to Western rationalism. Rein Raud (2006) In "Philosophies versus Philosophy" he explicitly criticizes overly rigid definitions of philosophy and proposes a more flexible approach, distinguishing between "philosophy" as a hegemonic category and "philosophies" as forms of speculative thought from various cultures.

In addition, the development of comparative and intercultural philosophy studies also indicates an increasing awareness of the importance of a more inclusive approach. Lin Ma and Jaap van Brakel (2016) in *Fundamentals of Comparative and Intercultural Philosophy*, reject the dichotomy of universalism and relativism, and encourages the use of the "family resemblance" paradigm in building dialogue between traditions. Soldatenko (2015) emphasizes the importance of a decolonial approach in understanding non-Western philosophical traditions, by introducing the concept of coloniality of power to reveal the epistemic violence of colonialism. In the context of globalization, Townley (2011) notes that non-Western philosophical communities are increasingly contributing significantly to global philosophical discourse, including in global feminism, environmental ethics, and indigenous philosophy.

Camus (2013) and Davis (2022) also highlights the need for a redefinition of metaphysics to include the wisdom dimension found in traditions such as Confucianism and Buddhism. Westerhoff (2016) shows that Madhyamaka thought from India can be further developed through the analytical methods of Western philosophy without losing its essence. In terms of ethics, Wong and Wang (2021) and Abe et al. (2022) highlights how Confucian ethics offers an alternative framework for addressing contemporary technological and ecological challenges.

However, a number of challenges still arise. Espinoza (2025) noted a Eurocentric bias that hinders openness to non-Western ways of thinking, while Schepen (2018) shows that marginalization also occurs at the intersection of non-Western philosophy and feminism. On the other hand, affirmative action is beginning to be seen through virtue studies in comparative ethics, as Huang points out (2024) who compares Aristotle and Zhu Xi, as well as Singh (2021) which explores Sikh ethics in the context of moral virtue and human connectedness.

Thus, this literature demonstrates both epistemic tensions and opportunities for developing a more dialogical and multicultural approach to philosophy. However, most of these studies remain reactive—that is, they seek to dismantle Western epistemic dominance—and have not fully

developed a conceptual framework that frees non-Western traditions from their dependence on Western terms and structures. This research addresses this gap.

This research aims, first, to identify forms of hegemony in the definition of philosophy that have long been rooted in the Western academic tradition. Second, to analyze the methodological, historical, and terminological elements that constitute this hegemony, and its impact on non-Western philosophical traditions. Third, to offer a conceptual alternative that allows non-Western traditions of thought to express themselves authentically without having to be adapted or "forced" into a Western philosophical framework.

This research starts from the argument that philosophy, as practiced and defined in the Western context, is a historical and cultural construct that is not epistemically neutral. Thus, the standardization of the definition of philosophy has created a form of hegemony that hinders recognition of the diversity of speculative ways of thinking in the world. To overcome this, a redefinition of philosophy is needed that is not exclusive but rather able to embrace the plurality of forms of thought and knowledge structures from various cultural traditions. This research argues that only through a rereading of the paradigmatic prerequisites of philosophy can a dialogical meeting point be found that allows for equal interaction between traditions without subordinating one to the other.

2. Research Methods

The unit of analysis in this study is the philosophical discourse that emerges in the debate between Western philosophy and non-Western philosophical traditions. The main focus lies on the conceptual narratives and metaphilosophical arguments that emerge from the works of contemporary thinkers who discuss the limitations, exclusions, and potential redefinitions of what is called "philosophy." This study specifically examines the texts of thinkers such as Carine Defoort, Eric Nelson, Rein Raud, Lin Ma, and Jaap van Brakel as representatives of different positions in the polemic regarding the universality and particularity of philosophy.

This research uses a qualitative approach with a philosophical literature study design (Berg & Lune, 2004; Djunatan, Haq, Viktorahadi, & Samosir, 2024; Haq, Samosir, Arane, & Endrardewi, 2023). This approach was chosen because the topic addressed relates to conceptual and historical discourses that cannot be studied through quantitative data. The philosophical literature design allows the author to conduct an in-depth exploration of complex philosophical arguments and connect various perspectives across traditions. This research is also exploratory-critical, as it not only presents existing views but also offers an alternative reading framework through deconstructive and ontological analysis.

The primary sources of data in this study are academic and philosophical texts relevant to the debate between Western philosophy and non-Western philosophical traditions. Primary data consists of the works of figures such as Carine Defoort, Eric Nelson, Rein Raud, Lin Ma, Jaap van Brakel, Jacques Derrida, Alain Badiou, and Bertrand Russell. In addition, the author also uses secondary data in the form of journal articles, books, and essays that support the historical and conceptual context of the research, particularly those discussing metaphilosophy, the coloniality of knowledge, and intercultural philosophy.

Data collection was conducted through a literature review, systematically examining various texts that were the focus of the study. The author read and thematically recorded various arguments that emerged in metaphilosophical polemics regarding the definition of philosophy. Furthermore, the author also examined the historical structure and key terms of each text, then categorized them according to historical, methodological, and terminological dimensions. The main tools in this process were textual annotation and a thematic classification table to compare philosophical positions across thinkers.

The collected data were analyzed using a qualitative approach with two main techniques: diachronic and synchronic analysis (Shygal, 2019). A diachronic analysis is conducted to trace the historical development of Western philosophical concepts through Jacques Derrida's differance

approach, which helps uncover tensions and contradictions within the narrative of the history of philosophy. Synchronic analysis is used to evaluate philosophical terminology structurally and conceptually at a specific point in time. Furthermore, this study utilizes Alain Badiou's theory of voids to demonstrate how Western philosophy tends to neglect the "absent" dimension within its ontological framework. By combining these approaches, this study seeks to formulate an alternative reading that allows for a more comprehensive and equitable representation of non-Western philosophies.

3.   Results and Discussion

a.   Hegemony in Philosophical Definition

The hegemony in the definition of philosophy is most evident in the dominant tendency of the Western tradition to establish universal standards for what qualifies as "philosophy." These standards are not neutral, but are historically and culturally constructed, deeply rooted in Greek rationalism and developed through Western educational institutions. Carine Defoort (2020) In her article, "Is There Such a Thing as Chinese Philosophy?" explains that Chinese philosophy has historically been excluded from philosophical recognition because it does not meet formal requirements such as systematic deductive logic, individual writing, and divisions of fields such as metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics that are characteristic of Western philosophy.

Defoort points out that many Western academics view Chinese philosophy as too aphoristic, contextual, and insufficiently argumentative. Chinese thought, often presented in the form of conversations, parables, or short sayings, is considered to lack the systematic and argumentative framework that is a primary requirement for philosophy in the Western tradition. *"Chinese thought is often dismissed because it lacks the logical rigor and argumentative clarity typical of Western philosophy,"* Defoort wrote (Defoort, 2020). This statement underscores the subordinate position accorded to non-Western thought due to the essentialist and exclusive definition of philosophy.

This hegemony is also evident in the history of epistemic colonialism. Since the 19th century, classical Chinese thought has been replaced by Western philosophy curricula in modern Chinese universities. Previously, classical Chinese thinkers were called *"masters,"* however, after the influence of modernization and colonialism, they were reduced to specialists in classical thought (Oppy, 2012). In this process, classical thought could only survive if it was translated into Western philosophical formats—whether in structure, method, or language. As a result, Chinese thought lost its status as an independent system of thought and was accepted only to the extent that it could conform to Western criteria.

This transformation also occurs at the terminological level. Key terms in Chinese thought, such as Dao, Li, or Xin, are often forced to conform to Western philosophical equivalents like "logos," "order," or "reason." (Badiou, 2005, p. 210). This process is not simply a translation, but rather a transformation of meaning that forces a concept to leave its original epistemological and ontological context. This reflects what Derrida calls the violence of the proper—the epistemic violence against something foreign in order to fit into the dominant system of meaning. This kind of inclusion is not a form of neutral acceptance, but rather a domestication of the different.

A form of epistemic violence is also evident in the binary opposition of "philosophy" and "non-philosophy." The inclusion of non-Western thought into philosophy always occurs under conditions of subordination: they must first be shaped, filtered, and adapted in order to be recognized as "philosophy." In *Margins of Philosophy*, Derrida (1982) states that the boundary between philosophy and non-philosophy is not a neutral boundary, but rather a historical product of the operation of exclusion that maintains the epistemic center. Therefore, Chinese thought is referred to as "Chinese philosophy" and not as "philosophy" autonomously, making it merely a variant of the main form, not an equivalent entity.

Defoort (2020) notes four main positions in the debate on Chinese philosophy. The first position holds that Chinese philosophy is not philosophy because it does not meet the methodological and historical requirements set by Western philosophy. This position explicitly

questions the validity of Chinese thought as a form of rationality. The second position holds that Chinese philosophy can be called philosophy only if it is analyzed within a Western framework, which means maintaining Western philosophy as the primary lens. The third position proposes a redefinition of philosophy to be inclusive of non-Western thought, while still making philosophy its center and yardstick. Only the fourth position rejects the designation of Chinese thought as philosophy, in order to preserve the epistemic autonomy of non-Western traditions and prevent subtle cultural colonization.

Rein Raud (2006) He then simplified these four positions into two broad poles: the essentialist position and the postcolonial position. He criticized the essentialist position for assuming that philosophy has a fixed essence that has not changed since Ancient Greece. However, according to Raud, Western philosophy itself is very diverse and continues to develop. In fact, many major schools of thought within Western philosophy, such as Stoicism, Existentialism, or Phenomenology, emerged as critiques of previous philosophies. Therefore, using a single standard to judge non-Western thought is a misleading generalization. Raud emphasized that "philosophy itself is not fixed; it is shaped by power and institutional structures." (Raud, 2006).

This hegemony is reinforced by academic institutions that determine who is considered a philosopher and what is worthy of being called philosophy. As Pierre Bourdieu points out, (1991) In his theory of symbolic power, epistemic status is determined not by the quality of thought alone, but by position within the intellectual power field. Philosophy becomes a label assigned by institutions, not by the content of thought. This is why thinkers like Confucius must be called "philosophers" in order to be taught in philosophy faculties, and why local knowledge systems are only recognized if they can be mapped into Western categories like "metaphysics" or "epistemology."

At the formal level, the hegemony of Western philosophy is also evident in teaching patterns and scholarly publications. Philosophy curricula at many universities in Asia and Africa are still based on European philosophy syllabi: from Ancient Greece to existentialism and analytical philosophy (Peters & Mika, 2017). Non-Western philosophical studies, if any, are only positioned as "alternative" or "enrichment" subsections. Similarly, international academic philosophy publications are dominated by works that use Western language, methodology, and frameworks. Non-Western thought struggles to find its way into reputable journals unless it is first framed within Western argumentative structures and terminology.

Thus, hegemony in the definition of philosophy is not simply a semantic debate or methodological difference, but a historical, institutional, and epistemological configuration that limits other forms of thought from being legitimately recognized. Philosophy, as practiced in the Western tradition, has become the sole yardstick to which other forms of thought must conform. This process not only closes off the possibility of equal dialogue but also perpetuates epistemic inequality on a global scale. These data demonstrate that a critique of the definition of philosophy is not merely a theoretical proposal, but rather an urgent need to dismantle entrenched hegemonic structures.

Carine Defoort (2020) points out that many Western thinkers doubt the legitimacy of Chinese philosophy solely because it does not conform to the normative standards established by the Western philosophical tradition. These standards include deductive logic, argumentative individual writing, and the conceptual systematics characteristic of the Aristotelian heritage and European modernism. Within this framework, only forms of thought that meet certain methodological requirements are worthy of being called "philosophy." Consequently, Chinese thought, whose expression tends to be aphoristic, contextual, and conveyed orally or communally, is deemed to fall short of these requirements and is positioned outside the bounds of philosophy. Thus, definitions of philosophy based on Western precedents function not as neutral descriptions but as selective mechanisms that reinforce the dominance of one epistemic tradition over another. This standard serves as a single and hegemonic criterion for determining a tradition's

philosophical validity, while also providing a gateway to epistemic violence disguised as "conditional inclusiveness".

Table 1. Forms of Hegemony in Philosophical Definition

Aspect	Forms of Hegemony	Primary Source / Explanation
Formal Structure	Deductive, systematic, argumentative logic	Defoort: Chinese philosophy is considered not formally argumentative
Historical Method	Philosophy is considered to have been born in Greece, belonging to the Western tradition.	Defoort's position 1: non-Western thought is not part of the history of philosophy
Terminology	Non-Western concepts must be adapted: Knife, That, Ask for → "metaphysics", "ethics", etc.	Derrida: *violence of the proper* – the meaning of being forced into the Western structure
Institutionalization	Academics and curriculum dominate Western philosophy	Chinese curriculum replaced with Western philosophy; classical thinkers marginalized
Category Epistemic	The use of the binary opposition "philosophy vs. non-philosophy"	Derrida: binary opposition creates power, not neutrality
Labeling	"Chinese philosophy" as a subcategory, not a parallel entity	*Margins of Philosophy*: boundaries are created through exclusion
Institutional Recognition	Who is called a philosopher is determined by the institution	Bourdieu (via Raud): symbolic power — recognition is determined by position in the force field
Publication Standards	Non-Western writing is difficult to accept without adapting Western terminology.	Global philosophy articles are still dominated by Western writing styles.
Inclusion Model	Non-Western thought is only accepted if it is adapted	Defoort position 2–3: adaptation to Western standards still perpetuates hegemony
Universalism Narrative	Western philosophy disguised as universal	Derrida: *hegemonic universalism* — the particular is transformed into the general, then made into a norm of acceptance

Source: Research Results, 2025.

From the data presented, several patterns emerge that demonstrate how Western hegemony shapes and limits the definition of philosophy. First, the definition of philosophy tends to be exclusive and normative. It is not formulated as an open or multi-vocal category, but rather as a framework of thought that requires the fulfillment of certain methodologies born from the Western historical tradition. Second, non-Western traditions of thought such as Chinese, Indian, or African are often labeled as "pre-philosophy" or simply forms of "local wisdom" that are considered not yet at the stage of systematic reflection as claimed by Western philosophy. This labeling creates an epistemic hierarchy that considers Western philosophy as the culmination of human rationality, while other forms of thought are deemed immature or not yet philosophically valid.

Third, this approach perpetuates the unequal power relations between the West and non-West. Through academic institutions, scientific publications, and educational curricula, Western philosophy

not only maintains its position as the center but also defines the periphery. This process makes non-Western thought an object of study, rather than an equal philosophical subject. Fourth, the result of this power relationship is a global epistemic inequality, where thought not born of the Western tradition must undergo a process of adaptation, filtering, and normalization to be recognized. In other words, the field of philosophy is no longer a space for fair and equal dialogue, but rather a field of discourse strictly guarded by formal requirements inherited from a particular cultural tradition. This is what makes philosophy an exclusive field, not a cross-cultural one; an instrument of selection, not a space for exchange.

The findings of this study reveal that the definition of philosophy, which appears methodological and technical, is actually a product of a cultural construction that reflects and maintains Western epistemic power. Philosophy is positioned not merely as a way of thinking, but as the center of legitimacy of global knowledge. In this construction, Western philosophy appears not only as the dominant form of knowledge but also as a *gatekeeper* which determines which forms of thought are legitimate, valid, and entitled to be called "philosophy." This epistemic dominance is historical and institutional, but also occurs symbolically and linguistically.

As Sutherland (2023), notes, forms of communication in Western philosophy that emphasize discursive rationality, propositional structures, and distinctive argumentative styles have become instruments of exclusion against non-Western modes of thought. These languages and discursive structures function not as neutral media, but as mechanisms of selection. Philosophy becomes a closed space for forms of knowledge not conveyed in ways recognizable within Western frameworks. As a result, many traditions of thought, such as Chinese, Indian, or African philosophy, can only enter academic discourse if they are first "translated" and "reshaped" according to these norms.

This epistemic hegemony is further strengthened by the systemic structure of Eurocentrism. Major (2025) states that philosophy as a scientific discipline carries out...*boundary work*—boundary work—that actively shapes and maintains the dividing line between philosophy and "non-philosophy." This process occurs not only in definitions but also in academic structures, publishing processes, and higher education curricula. This has a direct impact on the delegitimization of local and non-Western knowledge as forms of philosophical thought. For example, Asakitikpi (2018) shows how African medical knowledge systems are dwarfed by Western epistemologies that demand validation through positivistic methodologies.

The consequences of this structure are particularly evident in the educational context. Peters and Mika (2017) and Kasiyan (2024) note that higher education in non-Western countries, including Indonesia, is still heavily dominated by Western philosophical frameworks—both in content and format. Curricula, textbooks, and assessment methods not only adopt Western philosophy but also establish it as the sole standard. Efforts to incorporate local or alternative thought are often confined to the rubric of "enrichment" or "addition," rather than as equivalent epistemologies. Thus, education becomes an instrument for extending Western epistemic power, operating systemically and symbolically.

This dominance not only ignores epistemic diversity but also reproduces subtle and veiled forms of epistemic violence. In this context, Defoort and Raud have shown that even attempts to incorporate Chinese philosophy into the Western canon operate within an unequal framework—non-Western thought must adapt the form, not the other way around. Derrida (1978) calls this *violence of the proper*, namely violence against others in order to be included in the dominant category. Inclusion, in this context, is not recognition, but rather the taming of difference.

Decolonial approaches also voice criticism of this hegemonic construct. Naicker (2023) and Scott (2019) argue that Western epistemology, which claims universality, is responsible for the marginalization of other forms of knowledge and for social crises such as patriarchy, racism, and ecological destruction. Decoloniality offers a pluriversal perspective that rejects a single center of knowledge and allows for diverse ways of knowing. In this view, the dominance of Western philosophy is not merely a matter of discourse but also concerns global power structures operating through academic institutions and educational systems.

The implication of these findings is the need for a radical redefinition of how philosophy is understood and practiced in a global context. The recognition of non-Western thought cannot stop at labeling it "Chinese philosophy" or "Indian philosophy," but must involve deconstructing the epistemic boundaries maintained by the Western tradition. As Futter (2023), argues, decolonizing philosophy does not mean eliminating Western philosophy, but rather opening up the field of knowledge so that other forms of thought can exist as themselves—not as adaptations, variations, or complements.

Thus, these findings suggest that the definition of philosophy is not simply a methodological preference, but a field of power that hierarchically filters forms of knowledge. In this situation, deconstructive approaches such as those offered by Derrida, and decolonial critiques such as those proposed by Naicker and Scott, are crucial for undermining the fundamental assumptions of philosophy and paving the way for a more just epistemology. Presenting philosophy as a field of plurality demands a fundamental shift—not only in the way we think, but also in the institutional and historical structures that have maintained the philosophical "canon".

b.   Historical, Methodological, and Terminological Elements in Building Hegemony

Historical research into the development of philosophy shows that the structure of Western thought is not merely a form of articulation of rationality, but has been positioned as a universal standard in determining the philosophical validity of a thought. Rein Raud (2006) critically notes that there is a tendency in the Western tradition to equate all forms of speculative thought as *"philosophy"*— That is, forms of thinking that must submit to dominant definitions derived from the history of Western philosophy. This process is not neutral, but rather a form of epistemic hegemony that occurs through three main elements: historical, methodological, and terminological.

Historically, Western philosophy has been constructed in a linear narrative that begins with Ancient Greece, continues through the Roman era, then to medieval Christian thinkers, and finally to the peak of European rationalism and modernity. This narrative not only structures the history of philosophy but also produces what is considered the "mainstream."*(mainstream)*in world intellectual history. Schools such as Stoicism, Scholasticism, Rationalism, Empiricism, and German Idealism are considered milestones in the development of human thought, while other forms of thought that developed outside these lines—such as in the Chinese, Indian, or African traditions—are not included in this historical map (Sofroniou, 2019). In this structure, what is referred to as "philosophy" refers to traces of thought that can be genealogically traced back to Plato and Aristotle, not to Laozi, Nagarjuna, or Ibn Arabi.

From a methodological perspective, the hegemony of Western philosophy was established through an emphasis on formal logic, systematic deduction, and propositional argumentation. Aristotle, the father of formal logic, became the starting point for the development of a philosophical methodology that emphasized syllogistic structure and the principle of non-contradiction (Golf-French, 2023). Over time, analytic philosophy strengthened this method by emphasizing clarity of definition, semantic analysis, and linear argumentation as the primary requirements for legitimate philosophizing. Consequently, other traditions of thought that employed paradoxical, analogical, aphoristic, or intuitive approaches were deemed insufficiently "rational" or "less systematic" to be recognized as philosophy. Traditions such as Confucianism or Daoism, which convey wisdom through parables or rituals, did not meet these methodological requirements and were therefore often positioned as "moral teachings," "culture," or "mysticism," rather than philosophy.

Terminological dominance also plays a crucial role in establishing the hegemony of Western philosophy. Key terms such as logos, epistēmē, ousia, physis, and tēkhnē, derived from Greek and Latin, form the foundation of the philosophical vocabulary adopted in almost all modern academic discourse. In colonial and postcolonial processes, these terms were then used as benchmarks for translating or evaluating concepts from other traditions. For example, the concept of Dao in Daoism is often forcibly associated with "Being" or "Truth" in Western philosophy, even though these concepts operate within completely different structures of meaning. This process not only complicates cross-

traditional understanding but also leads to systemic reductions and distortions of meaning (Heidegger, 2010).

Rein Raud (2021) calls this practice a form of "terminological consolidation" that ignores the diversity of philosophical expression. Within this framework, language is not merely a means of communication but also a mechanism for selecting what is considered philosophical and what is not. By recognizing only terms from Western vocabulary as "philosophy," all forms of thought that cannot be mapped into that vocabulary are automatically eliminated from the philosophical realm. This explains why many academic institutions still teach philosophy as a discipline almost exclusively confined to Europe and North America, while Eastern thought is considered supplementary or "alternative."

Furthermore, these three elements—historical, methodological, and terminological—mutually reinforce each other. The narrative of the history of philosophy reinforces the methodological criteria standardized in the higher education system. Meanwhile, the use of technical terms in Greek and Latin reinforces the epistemic boundaries that delimit what can be called philosophy. In this combination, philosophy becomes a kind of "closed discipline" that can only be entered by thought that can prove its connection to the Western heritage, both historically and conceptually.

Table 2. Elements Forming the Hegemony of Western Philosophy

Element	Forms of Hegemony	Examples/Implications
Historical	A linear narrative from Ancient Greece to European modernity	Only thought rooted in Plato–Aristotle is recognized as "philosophy"; Chinese/Indian thought is considered "outside history"
Methodological	Formal, deductive, systematic, and propositional logic as universal standards	Non-Western traditions that are intuitive, paradoxical, or performative (e.g., Daoism) are considered "not philosophical enough."
Terminology	The dominance of Greco–Latin terms as the foundation of modern philosophical discourse	Concepts such as *Knife* forced to be equated with "Being" or "Truth", which reduces its original meaning systematically
Interaction between elements	These three elements strengthen each other and form an exclusive system of Western philosophy.	Educational institutions and academic journals only accommodate thinking that can be mapped into Western narratives, methods, and terms.

Source: Research Results, 2025.

Rein Raud (2006) sharply emphasizes that Western philosophy's dominance in defining what constitutes "philosophy" does not rest on the strength of mere argument, but is supported by a series of structural elements that operate as tools of hegemony. He states that the linear historical narrative from Greece to modernity, the use of a strict rational systematics, and the dominance of technical terms from Greek and Latin have served as tools for maintaining a single definition of philosophy. These elements not only structure the landscape of academic philosophy but also serve as mechanisms of exclusion for forms of thought that cannot be mapped into these structures. Within this framework, the definition of philosophy is not descriptive or neutral, but rather normative and selective—delimiting what qualifies as philosophy, and who has the right to be called a philosopher. Therefore, the influence of historical, methodological, and terminological elements cannot be separated from the way Western philosophy produces and maintains its epistemic authority globally.

From the findings presented, several hegemonic patterns emerge that consistently shape the structure of exclusion within philosophy. First, the narrative of the history of philosophy is structured in an exclusive and eliminative manner. The history of philosophy is written as a series of figures and schools following the genealogical path of Greco-Roman-Scholastic-Modern-Analytic, with other traditions such as China, India, or the Islamic world rarely appearing as part of the "mainstream." Rather than being the subject of the history of philosophy, non-European thought often serves only as background or cultural complement.

Second, Western philosophical methodology—with its emphasis on formal logic, deductive argumentation, and rational systematics—has become the sole standard for assessing the philosophical validity of thought. Other methods, such as those found in Eastern traditions, are considered "less philosophical" or "not yet systematic." This places the entire spectrum of non-Western thought at risk of losing its philosophical status simply because it does not speak in a Western methodological idiom.

Third, the dominance of Western terminology is an equally serious obstacle. Key philosophical terms such as logos, being, truth, or epistēmē are often used as benchmarks for understanding and translating concepts from other traditions. As a result, concepts such as Dao, Mu, or Xin are forced into terminological equivalents that are not meaningfully equivalent, and this gives rise to epistemic distortions. This process not only hinders dialogue between traditions but also hinders the recognition of radically different ontological and epistemological structures.

Fourth, the tendency to represent non-Western philosophy in Western terms often leads to reduction and assimilation. Rather than being understood within its context and internal structure, thought from outside Europe is often positioned as "another form of philosophy" or "practical wisdom" that must be translated into a Western framework to be considered philosophical. Consequently, rather than affirming the diversity of forms of speculative thought, this practice actually reinforces the central position of Western philosophy as the only legitimate reference for assessing rationality.

Thus, these patterns show that historical, methodological, and terminological elements do not work in isolation, but rather reinforce each other in constructing a system of exclusion that affirms and preserves the dominance of Western philosophy in the global knowledge landscape.

Findings regarding the historical, methodological, and terminological elements in the construction of Western philosophy demonstrate that global philosophical discourse is not a neutral epistemic arena, but rather a space of power long controlled by Western hegemonic structures. This hegemony is constructed through a historical narrative that traces the roots of philosophy solely from Ancient Greece to European modernity, while simultaneously excluding the contributions of other traditions from global intellectual history. As Skirbekk and Gilje argue, (2017), This linear construction forms an exclusive way of thinking about the history of philosophy and creates a single epistemic center that is difficult to shake.

Methodologically, Western dominance is rooted in argumentative methods and deductive systematics introduced during the Greek era and reinforced through modern rationalism and analytical philosophy. These methods have become the primary reference in education and academic institutions, thus rendering non-Western speculative ways of thinking that rely on intuition, symbols, rituals, or performativity unphilosophical. This situation has been criticized by various scholars, including Korsakov and Sineokaya (2021), who notes that the history of modern philosophical institutions standardized European methodology as a global benchmark.

In the terminological dimension, the vocabulary of global philosophy is still heavily influenced by Greek and Latin terms such as logos, epistēmē, ousia, and telos. These terms are not merely technical terms, but also form the conceptual and semantic framework that defines what qualifies as philosophy. The absorption of concepts from outside the European tradition into this terminology, such as the equating of Dao with Being, not only simplifies the concept but also obscures its original meaning in different cultural and ontological contexts (Bunnin & Yu, 2007; Rakgogo, 2024).

This situation supports postcolonial critiques that argue that philosophy as a discipline has become an instrument of epistemic domination, rather than simply a reflective arena for universal truth. Harding (2009) suggests that the paradigm of modern rationality is shaped by Eurocentric assumptions that dismiss other forms of knowledge as irrational or illegitimate. This reinforces the position that Western philosophy has functioned as a language of power that regulates the structures of legitimacy in the realm of knowledge.

Therefore, the idea of decolonizing philosophy is not merely a rhetorical move or a desire to "represent" long-silenced voices, but a systematic effort to restructure the very fabric of philosophical discourse itself. As Sudah, Tusasiirwe, Mugumbate, and Gatwiri (2025), point out, African philosophy need not be read within a Western individualistic framework, as it embodies relational logic and collective responsibility as models of rationality.

Furthermore, Gerber (2018) emphasizes that the deconstruction of Western philosophy requires a dialogical cross-reading with other traditions, not simply assimilation or terminological adaptation. This means that traditions such as Confucianism, Daoism, or Ubuntu must be read from their own perspectives and not be forcibly translated into the dominant language of Western philosophy.

Thus, these findings suggest that if philosophy is to become a truly inclusive global arena, it must abandon its singular historical-methodological claims and open itself to a plurality of forms of rationality. Recognizing this difference is not a form of epistemic relativism, but rather a form of courage to acknowledge that dominant epistemic structures have been a barrier to the justice of global knowledge.

c.   **Conceptual Alternatives for the Recognition of Non-Western Philosophical Traditions**

Alternatives to the dominance of Western philosophy as the sole form of articulation of philosophical truth have emerged through two main channels in the contemporary philosophical landscape: non-hegemonic cross-cultural approaches, and metaphilosophical models that affirm a plurality of truth procedures. Lin Ma and Jaap van Brakel (2016) emphasize that comparisons of philosophy across traditions must be made with full awareness of differences in linguistic, ontological, and epistemological structures. They reject approaches that forcefully equate terms from non-Western traditions into a Western framework. "Equating Mu with Western notions of void or nothingness," they write, "flattens the unique ontological and experiential depth of the concept." (Ma & Van Brakel, 2016, p. 58). In this respect, traditions such as Daoism and Confucianism have legitimate forms of speculative articulation, but cannot be subsumed into the classification of philosophy as standardized in the Greco–European heritage.

One of the most radical proposals to open up a space of epistemic recognition for non-Western thought comes from Alain Badiou. In his ontological framework, Badiou (2005) He proposed the concept of void as a "fundamental emptiness" that serves as the starting point for the occurrence of events of truth. In Being and Event, he wrote: "The void is the foundational nothingness of a situation, which allows the emergence of the new." (Badiou, 2005). This concept of void functions as an emptiness that is not present in the situation, but instead allows the situation to be reshaped through interruption. In an epistemic context, non-Western thought that has been excluded by the structure of Western philosophy can be understood as void: an uncountable yet existing part, marking the potential for the birth of a new paradigm.

Model void Badiou (2005) This allows for a rereading of the positions of non-Western traditions such as Confucianism and Daoism. In Chinese thought, there is no clear separation between metaphysics, ethics, epistemology, and aesthetics as in the structure of Western philosophy. However, Confucian teachings articulate the form of truth through four pillars: zhèng (政), lǐ (禮), xué (學), and yuè (樂). These four are not simply moral or cultural principles, but rather articulate procedures that connect the subject to the world order ethically and cosmologically. Confucius stated that "Governing through virtue and governing through lǐ, the people will know shame and improve themselves," suggesting that truth exists in the form of fidelity to social and moral harmony (Ames & Rosemont Jr, 2010).

Zhèng as a form of political ethics, lǐ as ethical-ontological performativity, xué as character formation through learning, and yuè as a medium of aesthetic resonance—all demonstrate that truth in Confucianism is the result of fidelity to the practice of life, not a crisis or singular event as in Western philosophy. These procedures form what can be called local truth procedures, which display universality not in propositional form, but in the form of concrete transformations of everyday life (Vermander, 2023).

Similarly, within the framework of Daoism, four main articulations of truth are recognized: Mu (無), Gong'an (公案), Wuwei (無為), and Xin (心). Mu cannot be equated with nothingness in Western philosophy because it is not negation, but rather emptiness as potential. In the Dao De Jing it is stated, "三十輻共一轂，當其無，有車之用" – emptiness (Mu) is what allows all functions to arise. Gong'an and Wuwei reject the representational model of argumentation, and rather are a form of transcendence of propositional logic through paradox, spontaneity, and conceptually undefined connectedness (Chi-Tim, 2003).

Xin, or the heart-mind, is the center of intuition in Daoism. It is not simply the center of cognition, but rather the affective space where resonance with the Dao occurs. The Neiye text states that "quiet Xin is where the Dao resides," suggesting that truth does not come from rational representation, but from inner openness. All these procedures demonstrate that the Dao does not produce a speculative system in the style of Western philosophy, but rather a legitimate network of non-propositional speculative relationships (Margus, 2017).

When compared, the concept of Mu in Daoism and void in Badiou both mark emptiness as a source of transformation. However, ontologically, the two are very different. Void in Badiou is an empty set that opens the way for multiplicity, while Mu is an emptiness that rejects ontological binarity. Graham Parkes notes that "Mu is the refusal to affirm or negate, an opening beyond binary logic." In this context, the categorization of Mu into the category of "nothing" or void in the Western sense would actually reduce its speculative meaning.

The alternative model offered by this approach also avoids two pitfalls in world philosophical discourse: exclusivism and relativism. The concept of dialogical exclusive multiplicity, as formulated through Badiou and Raud's reading, offers a framework that treats each tradition as an autonomous yet open system. This concept rejects unification through hegemonic inclusivism and simultaneously rejects absolute separateness. Lin Ma and van Brakel call this model an "archipelagic model," a structure of knowledge composed of sovereign epistemic islands but interconnected through the flow of dialogue.

In this model, epistemic equivalence is not determined by a tradition's ability to conform to the framework of Western philosophy, but by its capacity to produce fidelity to its own truth procedures. Daoism need not be a "philosophy" to be recognized; it need only demonstrate that it is capable of producing universally resonant truths through its own language and structure. This aligns with Badiou's principle of compossibility, that multiple truth procedures can coexist without being unified in a single total logic.

The consequence of this approach is a redefinition of philosophy itself. Philosophy is no longer understood as a normative category that must encompass all forms of speculative thought, but as one of many articulate procedures born under specific historical conditions. In this sense, philosophy does not need to be expanded to be inclusive of non-Western thought, but rather needs to be limited so that it no longer monopolizes the representation of the speculative capacity of humanity as a whole.

Thus, the data presented demonstrates that Badiou's metaphilosophical approach and Lin Ma and van Brakel's cross-cultural approach form a new epistemic framework that is more just, pluralistic, and affirmative. Non-Western traditions are no longer positioned as shadows of philosophy, but as autonomous, equal forms of articulation of truth, and even capable of expanding the horizons of human speculation. This is the conceptual foundation for the radical recognition of non-Western philosophical traditions without subordination and without assimilation.

Table 3. Conceptual Alternatives for the Recognition of Non-Western Philosophical Traditions

Approach / Tradition	Key Concepts	Articulation of Truth	Special Notes
Badiou (Metaphilosophy)	Void, Event, Fidelity, Truth Procedure	Truth is born from the interruption of the situation; philosophy is conditional on art, science, politics, love	Philosophy is not a producer of truth, but rather a reflection on the procedures of truth from outside itself.
Daoism (China)	Mu (無), Gong'an (公案), Wuwei (無為), Xin (心)	Truth emerges through the release of representational logic, spontaneity, cosmic harmony, inner sensitivity.	Rejects binary logic and propositional systems; is non-conceptual and transformational
Confucianism (China)	Zhèng (政), Lǐ (禮), Xué (學), Yuè (樂)	Truth emerges through political ethics, ritual harmony, moral transformation, and aesthetic resonance.	Not crisis/event based, but rather a continuous and reflective practice of daily life
Lin Ma & Jaap van Brakel	Family resemblance paradigm, Archipelagic epistemology	Rejecting a single universalism; emphasizing pluralism of forms of articulation and interconnectedness across traditions.	Rejecting forced translation and reduction of local concepts into a Western framework
Mu vs Void Comparison	Emptiness in Daoism and Badiou's philosophy	Mu: co-productive relation between being and non-being; Void: structural emptiness in mathematical systems	Mu is not nihilism; it functions as an ontological and aesthetic basis that cannot be reduced to "nothingness"
Dialogical Transcultural Model	Dialogical Exclusive Multiplicity	Philosophical traditions stand as autonomous entities yet open to cross-reading.	Rejecting assimilation and relativism; emphasizing dialogue without losing each other's idiom and horizon of thought.

Source: Research results, 2025.

Lin Ma and Jaap van Brakel (2016) emphasize that encounters between philosophical traditions should not be conducted on the assumption of a common form, terminology, or logic that can be directly translated from one another. They advocate a model of cross-cultural dialogue based on family resemblance, rather than on a universal unity of language, system, or structure. This approach allows each tradition to speak through its own framework and terms, without being forced to conform to Western philosophical standards. Meanwhile, Alain Badiou (2005) warns that an overly closed and systematic ontological representation system actually excludes the existence of extensions that cannot be counted or recognized by the structure. In this context, non-Western thought often becomes a kind of epistemic void—existent, yet invisible; present, yet uncounted. Therefore, a rereading of philosophy as the sole form of speculative articulation needs to be replaced by an approach that recognizes the plurality of forms and procedures of truth.

From the data outlined above, several tendencies in contemporary philosophical discourse are being proposed to address the epistemic gap between Western philosophy and non-Western traditions of thought. First, there is the emerging proposal to use a "family resemblance" approach as the foundation for intertraditional dialogue. This approach rejects claims of a single, essential definition of philosophy and instead emphasizes loose, contextual functional similarities between

traditions. In this way, a tradition of thought such as Confucianism or Daoism need not be reduced to Greco-European philosophy to be considered equivalent.

Second, there is a serious effort to broaden the definition of philosophy so that it does not merely reflect Western characteristics such as deductive logic, formal argumentation, and propositional systematics. The definition of philosophy needs to be expanded into an open field that recognizes that speculative forms of articulation can emerge in forms that are not always systematic, but are still legitimate and philosophically valuable—for example, through ritual, poetry, paradox, intuition, or performative acts as often found in Eastern thought.

Third, it is also recognized that there are many elements within non-Western traditions that are systematically underrepresented in dominant conceptual frameworks. These elements are not absent or unimportant, but rather unrecognized or unclassifiable by the epistemic tools employed by Western philosophy. In this regard, concepts such as Mu, Xin, or Wuwei cannot be fully captured by Western ontological binaries or dichotomies, and instead offer new avenues for thinking about reality and truth.

Fourth, there is a growing awareness that deconstructive approaches (as proposed by Derrida) and ontological ones (as in Badiou's thinking) are necessary to truly open up a space of equal recognition for non-Western traditions. Deconstruction is necessary to dismantle hegemonic claims of universality in philosophy, while an ontological approach is needed to identify and affirm forms of truth that emerge from different contexts, practices, and horizons of thought. Through these two approaches, the path to epistemic plurality becomes more open, and non-Western traditions can be present as themselves—not as derivatives, variations, or objects of dominant philosophies.

These findings underscore the urgent need for the development of a new epistemic framework in the study of global philosophy—one that no longer relies on the singular and hegemonic criteria derived from the Western philosophical tradition. Until now, recognition of non-Western traditions of thought has often depended on their ability to adapt to the representational structures, formal logic, and argumentative systems standardized by the history of European philosophy. However, as demonstrated by the metaphilosophical approaches of Alain Badiou and the cross-cultural approaches of Lin Ma and Jaap van Brakel, recognition efforts should not be based on assimilation but rather on affirming the speculative forms characteristic of each tradition.

The recognition of non-Western thought as a whole and authentic philosophical tradition is not only possible, but also urgent. Soldatenko (2015) emphasizes that this approach must be framed within the context of a decolonized philosophy, recognizing the traces of colonial power that have long shaped Western epistemic dominance. In many cases, non-Western traditions have experienced epistemic violence—being objectified, reduced to practical wisdom, or defined from outside themselves. Therefore, a framework of epistemic justice requires a space for affirmation of the integrity and authenticity of thought born from different historical, linguistic, and cosmological contexts.

A dialogical cross-cultural approach has also become a central theme in contemporary discussions. Davis (2022) suggests that philosophy be understood as a field of dialogue between traditions, not as an exclusively Western identity. This includes recognizing Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism as forms of philosophy with legitimate articulate structures. Concepts such as zhèng, lǐ, xué, yuè, or mu and wuwei, cannot be reduced to Western equivalents such as "ethics," "logic," or "epistemology," but nonetheless speak to fundamental philosophical questions about the world, existence, relations, and transformation.

Furthermore, non-Western thought is not only philosophically valid, but also has the affirmative potential to expand the horizons of global thought. As Bamikole notes, (2012), Traditions like Rastafari in the Caribbean demonstrate the existence of an autonomous and reflective philosophical framework, rooted in a distinct cultural reality. This experience parallels Confucianism or Daoism in its capacity to shape ways of life, moral values, and cosmologies. These traditions do not require validation through a Western framework to be recognized as philosophies—they already produce truth within themselves.

The teaching aspect is also an important dimension in the recognition process. D'Ambrosio et al. (2021) demonstrates that teaching Chinese philosophy does not require exotic treatment or a different methodology than Western philosophy. The most important thing is to treat its content as philosophy—not as "Eastern culture"—and to read it with the same seriousness as Plato or Kant. In this way, non-Western philosophy can be positioned as an equal partner in global discourse.

However, challenges remain in the integration of non-Western philosophies into the Western academic system. Coquereau-Saouma (2018) and Chung (2018) notes the existence of obstacles in the acceptance of philosophical works from the non-Western world, caused by differences in style, approach, and even methodology. This reflects the existence of epistemic gatekeeping that is still inherent in the academic practice of philosophy, especially in journals, institutions, and curricula that unilaterally define philosophical "standards.".

However, there is a huge opportunity for change. Townley (2011) notes the growing trend of contributions from non-Western philosophical communities to global discourse. These contributions not only enrich our understanding of the diversity of philosophical traditions, but also challenge long-held assumptions about what constitutes philosophy. Schepen (2018) even underlining that this recognition has a direct impact on efforts to eliminate marginalization of marginalized groups—including women, indigenous communities, and oral traditions—which have not been accommodated in the structure of Western philosophy.

By recognizing non-Western traditions as autonomous procedures for truth, we not only equalize epistemology but also shift the orientation of philosophy from hegemonic universalism to substantive pluralism. This is not merely a symbolic inclusion, but an affirmation that forms of thought born of Confucianism, Daoism, or Rastafari have equal ontological and epistemological status. Each of these traditions speaks from a different horizon of experience, yet they share the same power in exploring questions of life, meaning, and existence.

Thus, the primary interpretation of these findings is that the move toward epistemic justice and philosophical pluralism cannot be achieved through the expansion of philosophy as a single category, but rather through the deconstruction of the boundaries of philosophy itself. Non-Western traditions should be recognized not because they resemble Western philosophy, but because they have succeeded in articulating forms of truth in unique logics, languages, and structures. Such recognition is a prerequisite for the formation of a truly global epistemology—one that is not only just and equitable, but also richer and more humane.

4. Conclusion

This study shows that the definition and structure of philosophy as standardized in the Western tradition are neither neutral nor universal, but rather are historical, methodological, and terminological constructions fraught with epistemic power. The main finding that can be drawn from this study is that the dominance of Western philosophy not only influences the content and methods of philosophical thinking, but also limits the representational space for non-Western philosophical traditions. Through an analysis of metaphilosophical polemics, Derrida's deconstructive approach, and Alain Badiou's ontological framework, this study reveals that efforts to include non-Western traditions in philosophy often result in distortion of meaning, cultural subordination, and forced adjustment to the dominant structure.

The main scholarly contribution of this research lies in the development of a new conceptual framework for recognizing non-Western traditions of thought as authentic and independent forms of articulation. This research proposes an exclusively dialogical multiplicity approach as a middle ground between relativism and hegemony, and introduces a cross-traditional reading that is not based on the unification of language or logic, but rather on fidelity to each other's epistemic horizons. Furthermore, by developing a reading of the concept of void in Badiou's philosophy and Mu in Chinese thought, this research offers an alternative ontological basis for rethinking rationality, universalism, and truth procedures beyond a Eurocentric framework.

However, this study has several limitations. It is theoretical and textual in nature, so it has not integrated empirical data such as the practice of philosophy education in non-Western institutions or a comparative study of global philosophy curricula. Furthermore, language limitations and access to original texts from non-Western traditions also hinder the exploration of broader horizons of meaning. Therefore, further research is recommended to combine interdisciplinary and intertextual approaches with more contextual field research to enrich understanding of the epistemic dynamics in cross-cultural philosophical practices.

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