Appropriation and Alienation. A concept of intercultural understanding

The question of the future shape of international and also national order and its durability depends fundamentally on the successful communication between state and private actors of different cultural backgrounds. Therefore we have to deal with the variety of communicative modes between actors from different cultural backgrounds. Constructing a model of intercultural communication faces two major challenges. First, it has to cope with the problem of understanding, and second, it has to develop a model that explains how shared meaning can emerge from interaction processes and in which ways. In order to answer these two questions I propose, in a first step, to identify, in the literature about post-colonialism and hermeneutics, different modes of communication, and in a second step to bring them together systematically. The Analysis of the works from Shmuel Eisenstadt, Homi Bhabha and Hans Georg Gadamer show, that we have to distinguish between at least two forms of interaction: monological and dialogical appropriation. Monological appropriation as an intentional and creative mode of changing meaning, refers to an action that takes a term or idea intentionally out of its former context, integrating it into one’s own horizon, life context, or narrative. This appropriation, similar to Bhabhas hybridity concept can lead to new meanings, but it does not include actors or authors of the “other” idea, term, or vocabulary into the communicative act. Dialogic appropriation, as Gadamer developed it rudimentary, on the contrary seeks to include the other into the communicative act. Habermas modified this concept of dialogical recognition as a point of departure for his communication theory. But his approach causes, talking about intercultural communication the problem, that the two concepts of understanding and judging or evaluating are too closely linked together. A concept of intercultural communication instead needs to explain, how understanding is possible without to judge instantaneously.