

Wolfgang Welsch on Transdisciplinarity, the “Network-Design” of all Things and the Venice Biennale 2022/23

An interview conducted by Dagmar Reichardt

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While in Venice, the 59th International Art Exposition has opened its pavilions, the Centro Tedesco di Studi Veneziani celebrated its 50th anniversary. On May 6th, 2022, during a ceremony, the chapter house of the Franciscan Confraternity of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco opened its doors with its monumental, magnificent frescoes by Tintoretto. Dagmar Reichardt spoke with the official orator, Wolfgang Welsch – a prominent German philosopher and inventor of “transculturality” — about transdisciplinarity, the role of media, ecology, politics, and art during the era of late postmodernism.

Wolfgang Welsch, one of the most innovative, significant, and original contemporary German philosophers — from an aesthetic and philosophical point of view, regarding cultural and socio-cultural studies — has traveled to the lagoon city of Venice from Berlin. Upon the invitation and request made by Marita Liebermann, director of the *Centro Tedesco di Studi*, Welsch held a conference on the theme of transdisciplinarity in front of over one hundred guests, both international and Venetian.

After a suggestive performance of Johann Sebastian Bach’s Brandenburg Concerto n. 5 for flute, violin, harpsichord solo, and string orchestra by the Università Ca’ Foscari Orchestra and before the reception reserved to invited guests on the terrace of Palazzo Barbarigo, home to the *Centro Tedesco di Studi*, Welsch’s considerations awakened the curiosity and the spirit of the onlooking public. Some aspects of Welsch’s official address flowed into the interview that follows, carried out the next day at the *Centro Tedesco di Studi* with the author, publicista, and philosopher, with artistic and musical inclinations, born in the Bavarian city of Steinenhausen in 1946, who currently resides in the Dahlem neighborhood of Berlin.

The previous evening had ended with the theatrical cutting of a rum and cream cake, generously served, and with a friendly handshake with the German actor and Italophile Mario Adorf in front of the Institute’s doors, before the latter, accompanied by his French wife, Monique Faye, left for his nearby, stately guesthouse. The next morning, in the official hall of the *Centro Tedesco*, by then tidied up and free from saxophone music, from the buzz that filled the room and from the buffet leftovers, we met Welsch, the philosopher, in high spirits, elegantly dressed, vigilant, in the best sense of the word, and willing to

philosophize about modern art, the current Russian invasion of Ukraine, central issues regarding aesthetics, the ups and downs of life, great historical characters that have always struck him, and about his personal academic career.



Wolfgang Welsch interviewed on May 7th, 2022, at the Centro Tedesco di Studi Veneziani.

Photo: © Claus Friede

Dagmar Reichardt (DR): Good morning, Mr. Welsch! The 59th Venice Biennale is underway: have you already been, or do you still have to go?

Wolfgang Welsch (WW): Yes, I went, motivated by curiosity and hope, but little has been done. I found the last Biennale magnificent — I even wrote an essay about it (*Nach dem Ende des Anthropozäns. Künstlerische Vermutungen von Wolfgang Welsch*, which was published in «Kunstforum», *Digital. Virtuell. Posthuman?*, 265, Jan./Feb. 2020, pp. 174-191; as well as with the title *Nach dem Anthropozän: Künstlerische Vermutungen* in «Dritte Natur: Technik – Kapital – Umwelt», 4/2, 2021 [Ed.]) — but this year my attention was captured by just a few works!

DR: Where were you “captured”?

WW: In the Swiss Pavilion, in which I always place great hope. It was fantastic: *The Concert* by the Swiss artist of Moroccan origin, Latifa Echakhch. In the outdoor area, the artist presents sculptures in burnt wood, which in a few months will undergo significant changes thanks to erosion. Inside, other sculptures and light effects. We stayed inside for a long time and, suddenly, we made the same connection: it’s Wagner! This artist, sooner or later, should engage with Wagner’s *mise en scène*! Finally, we asked ourselves: why is the work precisely entitled *The Concert*?

DR: What conclusion did you reach?

WW: We turned to one of the kind people with the “Ask me!” sign. A young man explained that Echakhch employed a percussionist who composed the music, which then converted to pulses of light. It was no coincidence that it seemed like a concert!

Outside, the first large figure is as simple as it is striking. If on one side it seems to be an artichoke, on the other it is possible to see that it is a human face. One eye is broken but, thank God, the other is not. The artistic portrayal in its production remains ambivalent. The entirety is enigmatic in its allusions; it sparked many associations and strong emotions. This stays with you!

DR: How did you come up with Wagner?

WW: We quickly, unequivocally, thought of Wagner because, three days before, we had visited the *Basilica dei Frari* (*Basilica di Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari di Venezia*), where, at the moment, only a copy Titian’s *Assumption of the Virgin* (1516-1518 [Ed.]) (ca. 1488-1576 [Ed.]) can be seen — the original painting is being restored. For me, it is one of the most amazing paintings by far, for a number of reasons. How the Virgin draws back, frightened, before being taken up into heaven, is anything other than joyous, but darkly threatening! Wagner himself said that he had seen and admired this painting in Venice — at the time it was still at the *Accademia* (here intended as the *Gallerie dell’Accademia*, on the southern bank of the Grand Canal, a museum that hosts important collection of Venetian pictorial art [Ed.] — and this specific painting inspired him to compose *The Master-Singers of Nuremberg* (that is, the Wagnerian opera *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* of 1868 [Ed.]).

Despite this, it is a transfer that I do not understand at all: neither in terms of the impression of the painting, nor in terms of the subject. What should the (marvelous) *Assumption of the Virgin* have to do (in my rather mediocre opinion) with *The Master-Singers of Nuremberg*? Sometimes transfers are not at all understandable. In any case, with Wagner, you never really know — he was a great mystagogue — how much of what he says should be taken seriously. Wagner was a great at selling and advertising himself.

DR: Speaking of Wagner’s stay in Venice, the city known as the “Serenissima”, or the “most calm” or the “most relaxed” of all cities, or as “one of the most beautiful cities in the world”, as was stated last night during your conference on the topic of “Transdisciplinarity”. But, while we are sitting here, the war in Ukraine continues to rage on in Europe. In 1998, together with Gianni Vattimo, you published a book on *Medien – Welten – Wirklichkeiten* (Monaco: Fink, 1998). What can the media actually do, in this transcultural phase, in relation to “reality”?

WW: Very little, I think! As to common media — let’s say the “news media” — I have a growing feeling that we are not actually informed. We are all too informed in a unidirectional manner. For example, there is a linguistic convention, which has prevailed in German television media, which explains that there is “Putin’s war of aggression”. It does not simply state “war”, but promptly adds (in the information!) this evaluation (of aggression). And it continues to warn (justly so) that the news has not been confirmed: this is understandable, since verifying this information is not so simple during wartime. Overall, I have the feeling that we are not actually informed in the most objective manner possible.

In reference to the incident of the “Open letter” (sent to the German Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz that requested not to send arms to Ukraine, published in the magazine “Emma” on April 29th, 2022 [Ed.]), which I did not sign, in hindsight I found it interesting that the authors affirmed that the actual opinion of

the population was different from that of the media. The opinion of the media was said to support supplying heavy weaponry, while the signatories were, so to say, on the side of the silent majority of the population that did not support the supply of heavy weaponry. If this is true, it is probably because the population fears a third world war.

The second dividing line mentioned was: dear Ukrainians, you are taking on too much. You are taking on the extermination of people, an immeasurable destruction of infrastructure! This is a very problematic topic: if that is the case, the Ukrainians should be authorized to decide autonomously what to take on and what not to. I did not really like this German warning. That is why I did not sign the letter.

While I do not even want to remotely compare our German media to Russian media, it seems to me that in Germany things occur too much in unison: almost everywhere, the same mainstream opinion. All this applies even without having yet mentioned social networks: they also carry out an important role.

DR: This is true: considering this situation of contrasting information and shared feeling that you describe, from a philosophical point of view, it is impossible not to consider the future of human history, given these circumstances. And — at the same time, when you say that we are only unilaterally informed — what is the actual state of the ecology of our planet? In general, Germany — that is what was said a few days ago — already used up its natural resources in May, if it had to govern in a sustainable manner. This means that, starting immediately and until the end of the year, we will live at the expense of the planet. In your opinion, are we moving towards the end of the Anthropocene in a universal-cosmological dimension?

WW: To this point, there is an essay of mine that was published in two books (*Wohin treibt das Anthropozän?*, in: *Wer sind wir?*, Vienna: New Academic Press, 2018, and *Im Fluss: Leben in Bewegung*, Berlino: Matthes & Seitz, 2021 [Ed.]). My evaluation goes from grey to dark grey. In the Seventies, the Club of Rome put everything on the table. The “almost” U.S. president” Al Gore (Albert Arnold “Al” Gore Jr., 45th vice-president of the United States 1993-2001 with the democratic government of President Bill Clinton [Ed.]) received the Nobel Peace Prize (2007 [Ed.]) for his efforts in favor of ecology, and many other environmental conditions came to light...But nothing came of it! Or only everything that was wrong with it: air pollution, ocean warming, thawing permafrost, regional depopulation have all constantly increased. Despite all of the warnings, the valves have been opened in a catastrophic direction.

I fear that the situation will have to become very, very, very serious before humanity hits the breaks. There is no doubt that this is possible. Naturally, this would also entail social crises and changes in the entire economy, far from growth. Actually, there are only two possible conclusions of the Anthropocene, or two dividing lines: either we continue to deprive ourselves of our means of subsistence and humanity will disappear, or salvation will be a continuation of the Anthropocene in that we will move beyond the ecological crisis with the help of smart technology. And for “salvation”, that is, the second “dividing line”, I mean the reduction of emissions — not through absolute abstention, but finding technologies to save resources, starting with car sharing and so on, without returning to the state of the primordial forest or to the primordial man; a reduction in lifestyle needs will also be necessary. No one knows if this will occur — nor do I —, but my opinion is that it will happen at the last minute. Before then, nothing will happen.

When I talk with people of my generation, they are mainly openminded and they see the problems, but they are also lazy: at the end of their lives, they still want to take a trip on an airplane and take another

vacation. Younger people think about the world in a more ecological manner. This gives us hope. But the question is whether or not this is sufficient, and if this can be implemented in political structures... Who knows, for example, how the Green Party will evolve in the future: now they have gone from being a peaceful party to one of war. Who knows if they will change further! I voted often and eagerly for them, but what truly gives me hope at the moment regards BlackRock Inc., the greatest wealth management company in the world. In the end, the fact that the “bad guys” are adapting is a positive sign!

DR: Yes, this type of change can both cause a shift and create connections. For your conference, you chose the topic of transdisciplinarity: why? Why is transdisciplinarity so important, and why this topic now, at this moment?

WW: I had been asked to talk about interdisciplinarity, so I thought about a broader proposal, certainly regarding the sense of what the *Centro Tedesco di Studi Veneziani* actually practices. My proposal takes inspiration from ideas that I have examined since 1975 — at that time, the starting point was a seminar on “Philosophical Texts on Aesthetics”. At that time, I thought: if we talk about aesthetics, maybe we should ask an art historian. It would be grotesque if we limited ourselves to stewing in our own juices...

So we did it, but the philosophers suspiciously regarded the idea of doing something with colleagues from other disciplines. Later, it became more natural to discuss something, for example, with architects, but it became extremely difficult due to the Bologna Process (that is, the reform, on a European level, of higher education in order to adapt the degree courses and the contents of the courses and establish the European Credit Transfer Systems ECTS [Ed.]). In interdisciplinary courses, for these collaborations, I was only credited for half of the teaching load and the students did not even know for what it was credited. It is grotesque, but my opinion was that students had to experiment, learn, and practice as soon as possible, and that a thing is not simply “a thing” but is interconnected in many ways and its resonances must be accepted. The network-design of all things requires that interconnections must be addressed. In any case, this cannot ever be done completely, but it can be done to some extent! For me it was extremely important to break this mold, this limit of an apparently autonomous discipline.

Art historians have been very open in this sense, since they had long begun to reflect on the political dimension of iconography, thanks to Martin Warnke (1937-2019, ex-professor of art history at the University of Hamburg [Ed.]) and others. The idea of transdisciplinarity is much easier for young contemporaries as compared to those who are older — for those who are younger, it is almost understandable in a playful sense: they are open to different threads and different reticulations. They are less fixated on an insular character. It is possible that this was also favored using social media. They are used to looking in many different directions, following many threads.

During my last years of university, I received a lot of money from the Federal Ministry for Education and Research to establish something together with other scientists, psychologists, neurologists, sociologists, etc... Unfortunately, it was not a transdisciplinary operation, but only interdisciplinary. We were in different cities, and we met every three months, but we never actually met. Each person had prepared their own contribution and remained there at a standstill and, only when we started planning the final publication, an American friend, — Michael Forster — who had observed the event from afar, said: now I will write you a text that unites the individual contributions. And then, once again, we realized how

difficult it is to find a common denominator with people who work in the Max-Planck Institutes and other renowned institutes. It would have been easier with younger people.

DR: What is the essence of transdisciplinarity? What can it produce outside university institutions, considering the malfunctions that characterize our momentous turning point and that in this moment seem to be so numerous? If we think about the “communication problems” in politics — if that is what we want to call them (from Trump to Putin to Xi Jinping) —, then the idea that you confirmed yesterday at the *Scuola Grande di San Rocco* is formally imposed — San Rocco, one of your “favorite places” since fifty years ago, where you make a pilgrimage every time you visit Venice, as you recalled in your address. It is your view of transdisciplinary compenetration of transversal, non-autarchic connections, but rather “united” (as you said), “through” art, science, and disciplines, it is the idea of “cooperation” (also your words) — but in what manner?

WW: Transdisciplinarity is hard work. In the aforementioned book, *Interdisciplinary Anthropology: Continuing Evolution of Man* (edited by Wolfgang Welsch, Wolf J. Singer, and André Wunder, Heidelberg: Springer, 2011 [Ed.]), for which I was finally able to write the salvific and high-priority text, of conjunction, with Michael Forster, I noticed how much each author remains definitively connected to their discipline. If you have ever had the misfortune of participating in faculty council meetings, or those of the academic senate in a university, you know exactly how it works: each person fights for their own discipline and thinks that, when a teaching post is at stake, it is better not to award any, because this would entail limitations in their own field. This is also true within a single faculty, such as philosophy, where everyone should be playing on the same team. The disciplines are all very close to each other and would benefit from the presence of new and interested people. This narrow-mindedness was terrible during my last years of university!

DR: Why? According to your philosophical opinion, upon what does this inevitable fragmentation depend? After the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic and the current wartime situation, which risks escalating into a third world war, is it not possible, or even necessary, to rekindle a bit of altruism and a sense of unity, also outside the academic and university sphere of influence?

WW: Instead of freedom of intention, the system of sinecures dominates. Everyone wants to possess and protect their own empire. My impression is that, at the moment, things are simply moving in a different direction. We have again focused on what is our “own” against what is “foreign” — what occurs, not only in a general manner in the culture, but also in academic cultures — and this tendency becomes more intense in threatening situations. Currently, we are observing a sort of unification in Europe, and also in the United States. People unite, but they only do so in view of an external threat. It is a manner of moving closer to each other with a cause and with specific aims, nothing more.

DR: Actually, transculturality is only one aspect of your philosophical approach. You have also worked intensely on aesthetics, collaborating with Gianni Vattimo, amongst other things. How is the theoretical relationship between art, aesthetics, and transculturality structured? And, in the sphere of this triangulation, why did you also approach art in practical terms?

WW: My answer is going to be long...! – Art has been my great love since I was fortunate enough to move from the provinces (Upper Franconia [Ed.]) to a truly cultural city: Munich. I was seventeen years old then. I grew up in a province that was terrible from a cultural viewpoint. There was a theater, but there were only conferences with slide shows. My Latin teacher — the eminent Edgard Früchtel – thought that I should have known culture soon or later, so he gave me a ticket for the theater in Bayreuth. This was my first cultural revelation: Dürrenmatt, *The Physicists!* I was astounded. Then I arrived in Munich: at the *Haus der Kunst* there was an exhibition on French painting of the 19th century. It was then that I started painting and then frequenting all the art galleries, from Beuys to Warhol. After my diploma, I found myself having to make a difficult decision: art or philosophy? My art teachers said I had extraordinary talent and that I had to attend the academy of fine arts. I didn't have the confidence necessary to do so, though I had a bit more for philosophy. But my love of art stayed with me. Throughout the years, especially when I traveled, I at least sketched and I always thought that, once I had finished with philosophy, I would have started painting. That is what I did, and what I still do with great pleasure. Maybe one day there will be someone who wants to exhibit my paintings. Art has always fascinated me; besides philosophy I have also studied archaeology and art history. Archaeology, so to say, by mistake, since I did not ask for information from any university guidance center, I simply thought that it was not possible to study art history without having studied archaeology. Then, after six semesters, someone told me that archaeology was not necessary to study art history. I thought it was nonsense. I was and I am still very happy that I was able to learn about Greek and Egyptian art in a very thorough manner.

During my studies, my true joy and passion was for art. I visited all the possible exhibitions and watched movies of every kind (especially those by Godard). I found academic philosophy rather boring, and I was about to leave my philosophy studies. But then, one evening I came across Max Müller's (1906-1994 [Ed.]) evening class — there, suddenly and finally, I perceived great breadth of philosophy. So I continued to stay strong.

Art, though, has always been my nourishment. From the very beginning, I came into contact with artists, and I wrote texts for art catalogs. I dedicated myself to aesthetics intensely because it represents the link between philosophy and art.

Even my attempts in the field of aesthetics soon were discretely successful: my book *Ästhetisches Denken* (Stoccarda: Reclam, 1990 [Ed.]) was published more than thirty years ago and it had eight or nine editions. It is my most sold book today. Instead, the book on postmodernism, the one that made me famous, only had seven editions (*Unsere postmoderne Moderne*, Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1987 [Ed.]). So: the connection between philosophy and art — by way of aesthetics — has been essential for me. It also motivated me towards transdisciplinarity. It was necessary to verify the theories of art applied to their subject, that is, art itself, and the true experts in this sense were the art experts. Later, I extended this approach to music, and I also worked with musicologists.

DR: Would you say that there is a special relationship that connects art to transculturality? Have you followed this topic closely?

WW: Yes. In my opinion, art has always been particularly transcultural. Let's take the example of Dürer, who — in the 20th century and, above all, during the Nazi era — was defined as the “German artist” *par excellence*. But Dürer, who had received a good pictorial formation from Michael Wolgemut in Nuremberg,

soon felt the need to travel to broaden his horizons. In 1496 he went to the Netherlands, to Alsace, and to Basel. As soon as he returned from Nuremberg, he departed — just like that — for Italy: for Venice! There here was very successful — also in a transdisciplinary sense — as was stated yesterday. After his return to Nuremberg, Dürer painted the *Haller Madonna* (so named because the first owners were from the Haller family). This work is evidently modeled on the central panel of the triptych (*Madonna with Child and Saints*, 1488 [Ed.]) by Giovanni Bellini (a renowned Venetian painter of the Renaissance, 1437-1516 [Ed.]) in the la Basilica dei Frari — so much so that, for a long time, it was considered to be Bellini's work, whose Italian style was strongly imitated or absorbed by Dürer. Ten years later, Dürer became aware, thanks to the painter and engraver Jacopo de' Barbari (ca. 1460/1470-ca. 1516 [Ed.]) that, in Venice, someone had found a way to perfectly calculate the proportions of the human body. The mathematician Luca Pacioli (1445-1514 o 1517 [Ed.]) was able to do so. Dürer quickly left for Venice, where he stayed for two years. — It was thanks to that exchange in Venice that Dürer did not remain the small artist from Nuremberg that he was initially but became the great European artist that we know and appreciate today. Speaking of, even the famous *Four Apostles* from the *Alte Pinakothek* in Munich utilize the lateral panels of the triptych by Bellini in the *Basilica dei Frari* as a model. This also demonstrates how much Italy and how much Bellini have converged in Dürer. First, thanks to this transcultural impetus, he has become a great artist on a European level, and not just on a German one. At that time, artists were not national, but European. Dürer's colleague, Veit Stoß (1447-1533 [Ed.]), realized, in Cracow, his most important work. At the time, these things were common.

I have always closely followed this transculturality in art (to this regard, there is a longer essay: *Transkulturalität in der Geschichte – gezeigt an Beispielen der Kunst*, in: *Transkulturalität: Realität – Geschichte – Aufgabe*, Vienna: New Academic Press, 2017 [Ed.]). Even here, at the Biennale, I have focused my attention on these transcultural transfers. And, in fact: in today's artists, transculturality is omnipresent. In the American Pavilion of the Biennale, for example, Simone Leigh — a black, female, American artist — has presented sculptures of black women in hieratic forms (*Sovereignty* [Ed.]). I especially like the one in which a black woman is depicted as a sphinx: voluptuous curves and at the same time, a sphinx — a marvelous fusion of the strong black woman with the Egyptian figure of power and strength. Aesthetically, the work is very successful and is, at the same time, convincing from a conceptual viewpoint. Simone Leigh won the *Leone d'oro* at the Biennale.

I believe, especially in the artistic realm, that transculturality is almost a given. Male and female artists no longer worry about national schemes but, on the contrary, they draw inspiration from everywhere, from the history of European art to Asian or Japanese art. And it is a reciprocal exchange.

DR: Many thanks for these observations on art! — In this regard, I ask myself who your inspiring models are: which characters or figures inspire your philosophy of art — or your art of philosophy? Are they artists? Or, rather, philosophers — Wittgenstein, for example?

WW: Yes...and no! My great “philosophical saints”, after all, are not artists, and even Wittgenstein is no longer one — naturally he was very useful to me, at a certain point in time, to liberate myself from the pompous, metaphysical, German philosophy. Luckily, Wittgenstein did not recommend the great (but only the apparently grandiose) gesture, but exact analysis. “Don't think, observe!” was one of his most important recommendations (like in *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, published posthumously in 1953; Italian

translation *Ricerche filosofiche* [Ed.]). My irremovable divinities are and remain Aristotle and Hegel, and also Heraclitus (of whom, though, only little material has been passed on, of uncertain origin). I wrote my habilitation thesis on Aristotle (*Aisthesis: Grundzüge und Perspektiven der Aristotelischen Sinneslehre*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987 [Ed.]). I owe him almost everything. At the time, I wanted to write a history of sensuality as my habilitation project, but I became entangled with Aristotle. I had a feeling: Hell, I don't understand it well, but it is like a buried treasure. How was I only able to foretell it and not understand it? Because I had to rely on the translations: in German, English, French, Italian. At the time I still did not know Greek. So I reached the conclusion (late in life) that I should have learned Greek! I did, and I saw the light. Suddenly I understood Aristotle (said in an exaggerated manner) as if I had written his works myself — in a congenial manner.

And an astonishing side effect is that from that point on, I felt sure of myself in terms of philosophy, and I had the impression that no one could mislead me anymore. At the time, philosophy (at least in Munich) was influenced by Heidegger's epigones, and that meant: "the more incomprehensible, the more philosophical". I couldn't believe it; it truly disgusted me. Later on, also thanks to the didactic activity I carried out at Stanford, I realized that only if one truly understood something, could they state it in a simple and clear manner. I found the German thirst for creating mysteries and unrealistic approaches terrifying. Thank God I am no longer alone in this. Then, more than forty years ago, Aristotle offered me a liberation. With him, everything was clear. From that moment onward, the "fog-makers" (who, unfortunately, are in full expansion in the form of Sloterdijk or Agamben, and the like) could no longer mislead me. From that moment onward, I felt secure in the profession of philosophy.

DR: What do you say to critics who consider you an idealist? Or: how much utopia can be found in your view of transculturality (or transdisciplinarity)? If the current motto of the Vienna Biennale, which lasts until 2023 — *The Milk of Dreams* — was not carried out perfectly, as you pointed out at the beginning of the interview, what type of hope, aim, or "dream" — to stay within the metaphor of *The Milk of Dreams* — would you like to compare to these voices at the end of our conversation?

WW: I'm not sorry to be defined as an "idealist". Not only due to the great and outstanding tradition the word holds, but — beyond any sort of vanity — due to highly realistic motives. Tomorrow's reality will be today's exaggeration, it will be the spreading of the future seeds of today. Idealists are — this is how I would like to conceive this word — the visionaries of tomorrow and the day after. Not because they spread colorless ideas, but because they recognize the seeds that will grow and flourish tomorrow and the day after.

If I may, I would like to conclude with a personal observation. Due to the concept of transculturality, which I promoted more than thirty years ago, I had to take some of the most ferocious blows: for this reason, I was refused highly coveted positions. Not to mention receiving personal attacks, insults, and threats. But today everybody talks about "trasculturality" as if it were obvious. Sometimes idealists are the true realists.

DR: Thank you, dear Mr. Welsch, for this engaging conversation, so vivacious, "realistic" (in close to reality), and "idealistic" (meaning philosophically rewarding)!

About Wolfgang Welsch

Professor Wolfgang Welsch, born in 1946, is a German philosopher who has taught, at the Freie Universität and the Humboldt Universität in Berlin, the Universities of Bamberg and Jena, Stanford University and Emory University, amongst others. In 1992 he received the *Max-Planck-Forschungspreis* and in 2016 the *Premio Internazionale d'Estetica*. His research interests include anthropology and epistemology, as well as philosophical aesthetics. Welsch has published numerous books and lives in Berlin.