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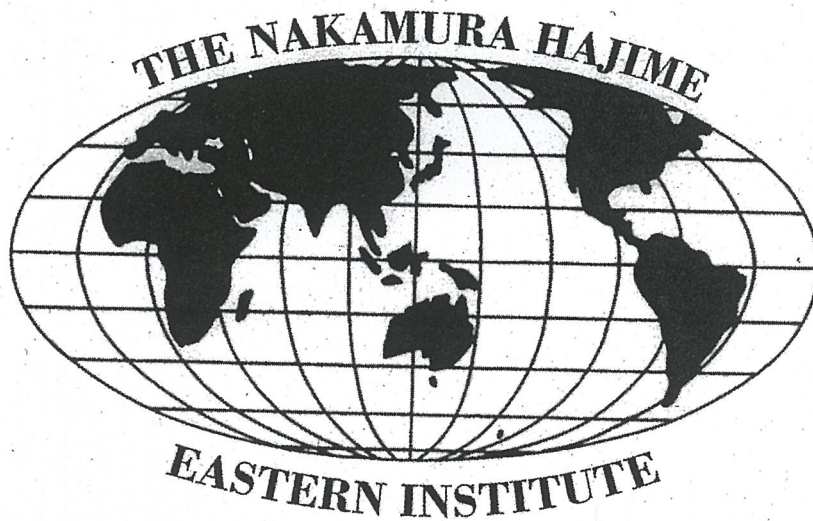
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Hayo B.E.D Krombach

**CULTURAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CONDITIONS
OF
DIALOGICAL COEXISTENCE**



Tokyo 2017

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Cultural and Philosophical Conditions of Dialogical Coexistence

Hayo B.E.D. KROMBACH

【Summary】

Never has there been a greater need for deeper listening and more open intercultural dialogue to cope with the complex problems mankind faces. This philosophical inquiry places the theme of coexistential verbal communication into a fourfold context.

It discusses, firstly, the cultural problematic of dialogue as an educational condition for the possibility of creating norms of international coexistence. This section also critically focuses on the socio-psychological mentality of the Japanese as it impacts on their communicative relations with others inside and outside their country and culture. The essay then considers some chapters of the Mahāyāna Lotus Sūtra as an idealistic Eastern Buddhist philosophy of coexistence and thus as a cultural background scripture for understanding the holistic thinking of bodhisattvas or, what we would call today ‘global citizens’. The urgency to think in broader dimensions is taken up with reference to contemporary international security and development issues. The third part of the article concentrates on the communicative means of the coexistential dialogue itself understood philosophically as the art of thinking together. As examples we mention social and community theories and also highlight ancient and modern thoughts on war. With reference to Plato the final section analyses a Western philosophical

reading of both the subjective conditions that underlie a conduct of dialogical coexistence but also of the dialectical structure of the development of a dialogue. Although all four parts are interrelated and each contains aspects of the others, the overall progression of the narrative follows from the culturally general and specific towards more philosophically general and specific reflections on dialogue.

The sobering argument that accompanies our ruminations is that in order to meet the cultural and philosophical conditions of coexistential relations among human beings and their communities for the purpose of safeguarding the well-being of mankind, we have to learn how to practice and accomplish the dialogue in the full knowledge, however, that its outcome will always be uncertain and never final. To have such a puzzling experience, yet never to despair but instead to repeat the perennial task of communicating with one another is the hallmark of humanity's maturity.

1 Introduction

In 2005 UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, established World Philosophy Day. It thereby highlighted the significance of this discipline, underlining that philosophy is a field in the humanities that promotes critical and independent thinking and that is capable of working towards a better understanding of the world and teaching not only tolerance of otherness but also the mutual recognition of values in otherness, and not only *intra*-cultural but also - and more importantly in a pluralistic world - *inter*-cultural peaceful coexistence.

By celebrating World Philosophy Day each year and on the third Thursday of November, UNESCO thus emphasises the perennial educational

value of philosophy for the coexistential development of human thought for each culture and for each individual. World Philosophy Day will promote and honour philosophical reflection in the entire world by opening up free and accessible spaces. Its objective is to encourage the peoples to share their philosophical heritage and to expand their minds to new ideas, as well as to inspire a public debate between intellectuals and civil society on the challenges confronting our countries and humanity at large.

To this effect UNESCO's Director-General Irina Bokova adds that 'there is no genuine philosophy without dialogue, and in a globalised world dialogue must embrace the diverse strands of wisdom that have influenced people throughout history'. And she clarifies further that 'faced with the complexity of today's world, philosophical reflection is above all a call to humility, to take a step back and engage in reasoned dialogue, to build together the solutions to challenges that are beyond our control. This is the best way to educate enlightened citizens, equipped to fight stupidity and prejudice. The greater the difficulties encountered the greater the need for philosophy to make sense of questions of peace and sustainable development' (Google: World Philosophy Day at UNESCO – 20.11.2014).

Around the middle of the last century the German existentialist philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) published his seminal book *The Origin and Goal of History* (2010) in which he argues that during the event of the so-called first 'Axial Age' around the middle centuries of the first millennium BCE individuals appeared in regions like China and India in the East, and Greece and Israel in the West who all experienced quite independently of one another the emergence of a human consciousness that had begun to free itself from erstwhile all-knowing muses and divinities. This example of historical 'synchronicity' Jaspers also describes as a 'parallelism that follows no general law but constitutes rather a specifically historical, unique fact of an all-embracing character which includes within itself all spiritual phenomena' (2010: 11). It didn't take long though and

shortly afterwards routes of dialogue and intercultural communication were opened up first and in particular between India and Greek and Christian antiquity (Basham 2004: 486-489; Smith 1979: 7f.; Stunkel 1979). Following on from Jaspers' work, we shall in a related study speak of the event of a repeated or second axial age ever since the middle of the twentieth century and thus of the hope that humanity in times of planetary crises can nonetheless give its origin at least the possibility of a future (Krombach 2014). To speak of an event is to speak of a future still to come (event/e-vent = *l'avenir* = future = *à venir* = to come). An event can be an occurrence that shatters the present and ordinary life. After an event, nothing remains the same. An event leads to a future which is a promise and a threat. It springs from the hope that the future is always better, but since there are no guarantees of this, it simultaneously exposes itself to the threat that the future may be worse. Events are risky (Žižek 2014). But our reaction must not be to deprive events of their future, to close it down, to lock it inside a body of rigid rules, fixed limits and powerful dogmas – iron-clad truths, where truth is allowed to assume a definitive form. Instead, we must with Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) learn to repeat or retrieve the possible rather than the actual (1996: 350-362); we must learn to remain free and open to the possibility of a future rather than pretend that we can seal off the present from its further unfolding.

What these empirical observations suggest is that while parallel lines in geometry are forever separated and cannot merge into one another, in socio-historical and intercultural relations the space between parallel developments can serve as a dialectical medium for the possibility of human interaction and the hope of reciprocal exchanges of goods and values in and through which a consciousness-transforming and humanising dialogue between interlocutors of different cultures can be coexistentially mediated and unfold in existentially always recontextualised futures. If cultural fusion were possible, there would remain no 'in-between', critical verbal

communication would be unnecessary and all talk of intercultural dialogue would be redundant and reduced to ramble, to *intra*-cultural monologue and in-group inconsequential polite conversation. But cultures do not change. And so only what is socially in space and time differentiated can meaningfully engage in coexistential dialogue. To put it in more broadly anthropological terms: human nature is a product of social evolution that makes coexistence possible whereby coexistence refers to the art not only of living together or at the same time but to living in peace with another or others despite differences. Just as wars are fought *between* adversaries, so the conditions of peace have to be negotiated *between* enemies for the purpose of becoming friends.

The founder of the Eastern Institute in Tokyo, Nakamura Hajime (1912-1999), formerly University of Tokyo, is known worldwide for his scholarship on Indian thought and the ways of thinking of Eastern peoples generally (1968), but beyond that and seeking new horizons for experiencing world reality his field of research has been exceedingly vast encompassing in fact both Eastern and Western cultural developments, ancient and modern. Comparative studies of this kind are testimonies that frontiers are fading out. But the permeability of boundaries means that we live in a world which is moving more towards a shared rather than towards a unified earth. We have to be citizens of this earth sharing the planet's habitat with one another. Here Nakamura's work becomes crucial in our effort to comprehend how sharing has taken place in different periods of history between various countries and cultures (Bhatt 2005: 128). In his magnificent and groundbreaking book, *Parallel Developments: a Comparative History of Ideas*, Nakamura himself echoes Jaspers' reading of synchronisms in history when he writes that 'even the process of development of philosophical thought has shown itself to be more or less the same throughout different traditions. That is, many of the philosophical problems that arose in various cultures could be discussed synchronically' (1975: 565). In appreciating Nakamura's academic

achievements in the area of international and thus coexistential philosophical communication, it therefore has for good reasons also been said that a systematic study of cultures and civilisations of the world in their interactions and mutual relations will certainly be helpful not only in self-awareness but also in forging universal solidarity and in bringing about world peace (Bhatt, S. 2005: viii). Policies of and towards peace can be effected only if *inter*-locutors in an *inter*-national forum feel motivated enough and are able and willing to give their respective cultures mutually comprehensible expression.

There is only one mankind, but this is not to argue that its myriad historical experiences, political and economic systems, religions and social structures are for that reason also unified into a homogeneous agent called mankind. Mankind does not govern itself; its states' representatives do (Krombach 1991: 253). They do this gratefully not through an undesirable because inevitably dictatorial world government, but merely through their no less problematic membership in the United Nations with all the ambiguous voluntarisms and dubious national and self-interested caveats that membership entails. If it were otherwise, there would be no need to think through philosophical and work out practical coexistential structures between the about 200 legally sovereign states. These entities are at present not only the most complex form of modern negotiated contractual social organisations into which mankind has gradually differentiated or evolved itself into over many millennia, but are moreover also the ultimate arbiters of all other kinds and levels of relations between cultures, economies, religions, etc. The *genus* or the whole of mankind depends for its flourishing and ultimate survival on its *differentiae specificae* or its different states and cultures. It appears, therefore, that the idea of world peace is based on an intercultural sharing of humanity's diverse existential conditions (Fox 2014) rather than on mankind's fictitious and merely presumed unity. For thinking of and towards mankind and humanity to be in any way meaningful at all, it must be

accompanied by a praxis and global awakening and activism that are commensurate to and which seek to fulfil the expectations of this thinking. It is not that mankind is responsible for the survival of individual states or cultures; it is rather these plural evolutionary phenomena that are responsible for the survival of the one and only one mankind on earth. It is therefore also the thinking of and about mankind that justifies the coexistential dialogue between cultures and the states of the world.

But if global peace or peace within the *genus* mankind can be approached only on pragmatic considerations and on what is actually possible to accomplish and not on idealistic principles that are removed and remote from and have no bearing on planetary realities, this sharing needs to prove itself first of all in dialogical coexistence in and through which the interests of the cultural *differentiae specifica*e are reconciled and mediated towards the continuous safeguarding of mankind's existence. That is to say that the conditions of deepening mutual understanding and thus also of amicable contacts between people and among nations must be created through the acknowledgement that the coexistential framework of such conditions is the result of the always uncertain willingness to engage in a coherent dialogue about the concerns and problems that in a globalised world all human beings and their national and cultural environs share as a whole and that do not only affect particular countries and regions of the world. International law prescribes that all peaceful means must first be exhausted before states can resort to violence and war. And the first and foremost means to secure peace is verbal communication. There is admittedly a glaring contradiction between what ought to be done to cope with global problems and what actually is being done about them. But there is also the realisation that the cognitive connection between the 'ought' and the 'is' is itself not necessarily or logically settled in favour of a presumed objective metaphysical let alone faith-dependent world-transcendent divine *ought* nor on subjective transcendental categorical imperatives and precepts of

behaviour that carry with them axiomatically-held truth claims. It is more likely that the resolution of global concerns is continuously contingent upon irreducible dialogically arrived at but never final socio-historical outcomes of the coexistential relations between states. To risk life is to risk not to lose it. Nobody possesses *the* truth, but all – if motivated – share in the search for it, that is, in the search for an answer to the question of how best to live in dialogical coexistence.

While our inquiries do not thematise Nakamura's work directly, we recognise that the desideratum of dialogue is what underlies his sensitivity to what it means to be human. Bearing this in mind, the following reflections have been pursued in the spirit of his lifelong intellectual endeavours towards coexistence and intercultural understanding. In adopting such inspiring aspirations, this article has therefore been written in appreciation of Nakamura Hajime's contribution to East-West philosophical reconciliation.

Following these introductory remarks, the purpose of this exploratory study is to cast a thematically wide net and to take a philosophical approach to understanding the conditions of dialogical coexistence across the borders of countries and cultures, religions and political ideologies seriously. Philosophy is about courageous and constructively critical thinking; it is about questioning with candour oneself and others. It is not pursued in order to pacify troubled minds or please the galleries of patriots. By philosophy moreover and here is not meant an imperialistic theological, metaphysical and ontological plan towards ascertaining a unitary propositional and logical truth. Rather, our philosophical pursuit describes an open and free, responsible and caring or dialectical and phenomenological method that is based on experiential and pluralistic and therefore also problematised modes of epistemological thinking. More specifically, though, and in the context of this essay, dialectic (*dia-logos*) - from which the word 'dialogue' is derived - means that individual or collective human identities (*logos*) are never given static mirror images but as a task can only be socio-historically and thus

dynamically mediated in and through (*dia*) or across any experience of border, while phenomenology states that no sentient or insentient object ever appears or can be represented as a pre-established whole and at once but always only presents itself self-creatively as a phenomenon, that is, in parts or perspectives. In both cases, the fundamental epistemological determination is the middle ground or the medium in and through which the subject-object or seer-seen division is sublated and identity can be found. But here again, it is always only a temporary experience and one in which physical mobility, too, is of course for phenomenological reasons continuously fluid and never fixed in space and time. The truth of identity and the freedom of its selfhood can never be passively expected but have to be actively won over and over again in the socio-historical coexistential relationship with another, that is, with another self. It is not that I *am*, but that I continuously *become* who I am only through another self, and *vice versa*, the other becomes him- or herself only through the encounter with me, the other self.

It is these latter occidental contextual terms that suggest affinities with the oriental experience of the nonduality of reality and cultural self-understanding (Krombach 2015). ‘Nonduality’ (Skt. *advaya*; Ch. *bu’er*; Jp. *funi*) refers to the definitive awareness achieved through awakening which overcomes all the conventional dichotomies, such as good and bad, right and wrong, etc. and which, in particular, transcends the subject-object or seer-seen bifurcation that governs our normal consciousness. These similarities in grasping dynamic symbiotic part-whole relations lead to the responsibility of the philosopher to be irreverent to dualistic formal logic and to say farewell to the kind of divisive truth as preached and taught by much of our Western traditions of thought that all too often infiltrate Asian civilisations and are superimposed upon their understandings of humanity and its place in world reality: West is West and East is not. And, of course, the reverse must be avoided as well, namely, to say that: East is East and

West is not. Instead, we need to recognise the socio-historical nature of multiple or plural truths as they are hermeneutically or interpretively created and communicated in dialogical coexistence (Caputo 2013; Vattimo 2012, 2014).

These remarks, finally, point to the related question of who is a philosopher and why we philosophise at all. For Plato (427-348 BCE) it is the ‘sense of wonder’ that is ‘the mark of the philosopher. Philosophy indeed has no other origin’, he says (Theaet. 155d2-3). And Aristotle (384-322 BCE) likewise writes that ‘it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophise’ (Met. 982b12-13). But while the ancients were firm believers in the firmament and marvelled at the cosmic unity of all that is, the moderns ever since the inception of the Enlightenment period in the seventeenth century and after many traditions of wondering about anomalies in wonderment began to realise that this sense of unity has broken up and thus led to a questioning of what used to be taken for granted as ‘essence’. It is therefore Hegel (1770-1831) who teaches us a new and *existential* reason for philosophising. ‘When the might of union vanishes from the life of men and the antitheses lose their living connection and reciprocity and gain independence, the need of philosophy arises’; in other words: ‘dichotomy is the source of *the need of philosophy*’ (1977a: 91, 89; italics in the original).

It is this loss of unity, which we used to study as *theoria* and *theologia* that drives us to philosophise as *praxis* and that creates in us the desire to reconstitute it (Lyotard 2013: 12, 66). Yet we also need to bear in mind all the same that while we can share in this desire for unity, unity itself remains elusive, except in heaven, but there is no heaven on earth, only reality or, more precisely, *act-uality*, the acts of human beings. Whether it is Plato’s demiurge or Aristotle’s unmoved mover, whether it is Abrahamic monotheism, that is, the Jewish Jahweh, the Christian Father, or the Muslim Allah – all these divine transcendences and all metaphysical forms of

allegedly pure reasons are no longer affirmed but are now subject to severe criticism and to be brought back into this world of man with its multiplicity of socio-historical and natural contexts and conditions (Kant 1965). In this world dialogic coexistence towards peace either thrives or else civilisations may clash and together even perish in their wars because and as ever we will again not have learned from the slaughter benches of history (Huntington 1996). The desire for unity and order is an abstract desideratum which is necessary though for coherent thinking, speaking and acting and for concretely wanting to live together in peace. But it is a regulative desire and never constitutive. And this means that there is no guarantee that we will ever live in peace. Peace is never a given; it is a perennial task. Or to argue with Nietzsche and the ancient Greek birth of tragedy at the historical beginning of humanity's self-awareness: Dionysian history always breaks through Apollonian ideals (1967).

Peace is never perpetual, for this would mean the end of history and thus the worst purgatory state of boredom for humanity having to languish in (Fukuyama 2012). It may come as no surprise therefore that it is the experience of different cultures and their often uneasy coexistential relations that is not only the origin of our reflections in this inquiry but that also brings the absence of the idea of mankind to sobering presence in the dialogue. When couched in the language of intercultural philosophy, dialogical coexistence implies an open and pluralist attitude that consists of the philosophical conviction that the *philosophia perennis* is – to repeat – the possession of no single cultural tradition, no matter how universalistic it may claim to be. Such an attitude of freedom towards others is in a position to change cultural encounters into cultural reciprocal contacts (Jullien 2014: 157-172; Mall 2000: 9, 30). The following pages are intended to reflect this sense of mutuality. To this effect they will offer an eclectic array of ideas and ruminations which, while by no means exhaustive or being a smooth and comfortable narrative, may nonetheless help to open up questions as to the

importance and implications of the cultural and philosophical conditions of dialogical coexistence. They are not meant to be a cultural reassurance but an intercultural challenge.

In order to highlight but also unravel some of the complexities involved, we shall accordingly place the theme of coexistential verbal communication into a fourfold context. Firstly, we will discuss the cultural problematic of dialogue as an educational condition for the possibility of creating norms of international coexistence. This section will also critically focus on the socio-psychological mentality of the Japanese as it impacts on their communicative relations with others inside and outside their country and culture. Next, some chapters of the Mahāyāna Lotus Sūtra will be considered as an idealistic Eastern Buddhist philosophy of coexistence and thus as a cultural background scripture for understanding the holistic thinking of bodhisattvas or, what we would call today and perhaps more appropriately, 'global citizens'. The urgency to think in broader dimensions will be taken up with reference to some contemporary international security and development issues. The third part will then concentrate on the communicative means of the coexistential dialogue itself understood philosophically as the art of thinking together. As examples we will mention social and community theories and also reflect on ancient and modern thoughts on war. With reference to Plato the final section will analyse a Western philosophical reading of both the subjective conditions that underlie a conduct of dialogical coexistence but also of the dialectical structure of the development of a dialogue. Although all four parts are interrelated and each contains aspects of the others, the overall progression of the text will therefore follow from the culturally general and specific up and towards more philosophically general and specific reflections on dialogue.

In order to meet the cultural and philosophical conditions of coexistential relations among human beings and their communities for the purpose of safeguarding the well-being of mankind we have to learn how to

practice and accomplish the dialogue in the full knowledge, however, that its outcome will always be uncertain and never final. To experience this truth, yet never to despair but instead to repeat the Sisyphean task of communicating with one another is the hallmark of man's maturity.

2 Education in Dialogue Towards Peaceful Coexistence

In light of UNESCO's lofty ideals, we would like to address not so much only those who passively and merely factually study and appropriate philosophy as an academic discipline. Rather, we would like to reach out to those who themselves are actively engaged in philosophising, and this for good reasons as we know from *Faust*, the famous tragedy by the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). This drama begins with the following words by its protagonist Faust: 'I've studied now to my regret philosophy, law, medicine and – what is worst – theology from end to end with diligence; yet here I am a wretched fool and still no wiser than before' (lines 354-359) (1994: 13). In other words, only passively acquired and accumulated knowledge is meaningless unless it is also critically reflected upon as to its meaning, purpose and value for life and unless and through self-thinking we learn how to understand it in all its import.

Factual knowledge and its theoretical understanding are not the same cognitive experiences. As the philosopher of science Karl Popper (1902-1994) put it in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*: 'Observation statements and statements of experimental results are always *interpretations* of the facts observed; ...they are *interpretations in the light of theories*' (1977: 107n; italics in the original). Or, and in more general but also qualifying terms: knowledge is knowledge only in the light of theories which are based upon the act of philosophising or critically assessing the veracity of its various claims. The only way to establish a fact is by way of interpretation. Even the word 'fact' (from the Latin *facere*, meaning 'to make') gives this away. In the most literal sense, a fact is made (*factum*). A theory is made

within a socio-historical context; it is always a situational construct. This is even recognised in the philosophy of the social sciences by no less a *praxis* thinker than Karl Marx (1818-1883) who when still young famously stated in the Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach that ‘the philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it’ (1970: 123; italics in the original) also later argued that ‘it is not enough for thought to strive for realisation, reality must itself strive towards thought’ (2012: 9). That is to say, only if reality comes to critical thought or if the world comes to language, can thought and language be truthful in their hermeneutic tasks to interpret reality which then itself is – hopefully - to bring about and motivate a change in human actions. Reality cannot be known or understood or judged without ideas about it that ultimately are prompted through the creative intersubjective or shared function of the imagination. In other words, we are not responsible for reality but for ‘reality’, that is, for the concept and interpretive theory of reality. And such a theory is coexistentially and dialogically arrived at. Without a theory reality is lost on us. To understand is to understand something *as* such and such. All understanding is interpreting, and to interpret is to contextualise. Dialogical coexistence supplies the frame within which this is happening.

When considered in the context of this study, philosophising is an activity which is borne of the recognised need to think through together and share in dialogue a searched-for understanding of the problems that afflict mankind as a whole and not only particular countries, regions or cultures. What such a world situation calls for is a willingness to face the challenges of coexistence and *inter*-culturalism and not to insist to have affirmed one’s singular and *intra*-cultural existence in isolation. What is therefore called for is a fundamental paradigm shift, a revolution of the mind and not a reactionary settling down in consumer comfort and docility.

The objective then is not pretended international social harmony but forever sought-after planetary and communal efforts to comprehend the truth

of the possibility of mankind committing an act of global suicide or what we call elsewhere 'self-inflicted finality' (Krombach 1991). Emphasis on abstract notions of harmony across borders without an education towards it tends to breed repression, closeness and silent modes of communication. Emphasis on existential truths, by contrast, is based on freedom, transparency and the art of verbal communication. Silence and dialogue are therefore mutually exclusive and contradictory terms and from the point of view of wanting to establish and share openly and freely the conditions of coexistence in international relations are incompatible with one another. Silence, if it is not just employed as a rhetorical device, can easily be seen as devaluing deliberately or through induction the coexistential need for courageous participatory dialogue. Silence represents a fundamental misunderstanding of coexistential dialogue and of its advantages over a cultural soliloquy. However, it *is* the dialogue that is our most vital and enduring means of resolving problems and conflicts, crises and wars and of engendering mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence. But for a 'self' to engage in a dialogue with an 'other' means having to go through an existentially often painful 'boundary situation' (*Grenzsituation*) (Jaspers 1970 II: 177-222), that is, through moments of doubt and affirmation. Silence in seclusion cannot exist for silence. It exists to be broken in dialogue across borders and after its participants have learned something that affects them all and which requires all of them to help resolve. To be responsible is to respond to that which is in question and calls for an answer.

As we as different individuals and different nations go through many apprehensive experiences of life, we begin to realise not only the importance of indigenous and foreign knowledge systems and their respective underlying claims of validity, but therefore also become aware of the need to think in and through dialogue 'out of the box' and learn to make the other one's own rather than discriminate against or withdraw from it. In fact, and from the point of view of seeking to establish dialogic criteria of humanistic

coexistentiality, it is not only possible but of the highest exigency to understand one's humanity through the humanity of others. The humanity of the human is found in the recognition that the other person comes first because it is only through the other that one's own humanity is mediated (Levinas 2005). Whether it be in attaining inner transformation or sound political negotiation, whether it be in realising our interconnectedness with others or collective identity as global citizens, or whether it is in exploring our distinct differences or individual histories as they unfold in the space-time configurations of East and West, North and South and of past, present and future – dialogue is *the* educational medium in and through which individuals can consciously transform their existential conditions into cultures of peaceful relationships.

Ever since Hiroshima and Nakasaki in the middle of the twentieth century humanity has become aware of its vulnerability and even its survival with dignity (Krombach 1997a). And now in the twenty-first century the problems that affect mankind at large have compounded: the world faces many cross-border challenges, such as unresolved war and peace issues, extremism, terrorism and nuclear proliferation, climate change and infectious diseases, severe economic and social, political and spiritual crises, in large part due no doubt to our poor engagement and communication between peoples. In order to deal with these problems in an appropriate manner, we may want to learn about how a global culture of coexistence can be fostered which could transform our planet in profoundly positive ways. In other words, we have to choose between dialogue towards peace and the likely devastation wrought on the world as a consequence of incompatible interests and therefore inability and incompetence to engage in reconciliatory dialogue. Peace is a condition of life without which we would not continue to exist. But while human progress and prosperity depend on the peaceful coexistence of human beings and their communities and most people have always sought to live in conditions that are conducive to pursuing the

‘glorious art of peace’ (Guttings 2012), our perceptions of the past and the present are still dominated too often by a narrative that is obsessed with war and other forms of strife that undermine the good will across borders towards the well-being of human existence and even threaten the survival of mankind.

A precondition for wanting to engage in future dialogue of reconciliation is indeed the willingness to break boundaries and challenge conventional wisdom, is a refusal to be controlled by religious, political or cultural orthodoxy. But there remains a mystery, for instead of escaping into and hiding in if only illusory comfort zones of geographically and historically conditioned religious and political ideologies or of following conveniently beaten cultural tracks, the question is: what sort of person actually risks challenges and change, what sort of individual resists authority, particularly in modern functional and instrumentalist societies which encourage conformity and compliance, uniformity and submissive behaviour? Who has the courage to speak truth to power, to tell it all (*parrhesia*) when it can cost us dearly (Foucault 2011, 2012)? It is all too obvious that any culturally informed institutional pressure, suppression and oppression does nothing but imprison the mind, stifle individual initiative and the drive towards free-spiritedness and innovative and creative thinking. It is easier because more convenient and comfortable to submit to the collective pressure of harmony; it is all the harder though to muster individually and self-responsibly the courage to truth and to speak truthfully.

It is equally clear that in schools and universities students and teachers alike are increasingly subjected to a kind of ‘instruction’ that dictates what to think instead of an *education* that – and this is what ‘e-ducere’ actually means – teaches reflectively *how* to think and critically wonder about the reasons why one thinks the way one thinks. Or better still: that guides us out of (*e-ducere*) preconceived and self-serving justificatory ideas and that helps us to venture out of the box and courageously into new pastures of

experiences. It is an education that lives up to what for many is an irritating dictum enunciated by Heidegger, namely, that ‘questioning is the piety of thinking’ (1977: 35). It therefore does not accept the academic indoctrination of ready-made thoughts to be thoughtlessly applied to narrow curricula of teaching and empirically more and more confined research areas that make contextual, relational and perspectival thinking impossible.

But yet again, freedom to think for oneself and thus the questioning of normative precepts can be a psychologically burdensome and daunting and a quite hazardous condition. As Erich Fromm (1900-1980) throughout his book *The Fear of Freedom* (2001) famously argues, the urge to escape the demands of free choice, of free thinking – by adopting rigid beliefs or norms of conformity – can be especially compelling for those whose sense of a strong autonomous identity or a capacity to think for themselves is not fully developed. It goes without saying that such pathological attitudes are the opposite of what is required if one wants to create the free conditions of a coexistential dialogue between human beings across cultural borders or between nations and their spokespersons.

The preparedness in dialogue to think out of the box and be educated to think through grander intellectual strategies requires an inner transformation by which we mean a personal effort to enhance one’s own courage, wisdom and compassion. Courage in dialogue, though, is not inherent; it involves risks of exposure and takes practice to acquire. But the experience of taking risks can be part of the transformation and may simultaneously confront questions of identity such as: who am I? or: what do I stand for? When asked from within the realm of humanity, these are questions which are meaningful only in coexistential personal and national contexts of dialogue.

We are here reminded of Jostein Gaarder’s book, *Sophie’s World*. This introduction of philosophy for children, passionately written by a Norwegian high school teacher, begins with Sophie opening the post box by the street. She removes an envelope that only has her name but not that of its sender.

And when she opens the envelope and takes out a piece of paper she reads nothing but the three words: who are you? (1995: 4). This is the most vexing of questions one can possibly be faced with, and it accompanies the rest of this educational novel. But it is also a question that has been present throughout Western traditions of philosophy and theological religion and one which is answered, for instance, either in objective metaphysical and ontological terms, that is, by giving human beings a predetermined or given essence of identity as an underlying condition for existential experiences or also in subjective dialectical and phenomenological terms, that is, by claiming that humans exist first and only during their lifetimes learn as an ongoing task to give themselves an always only evolving and never fixed identity. Another example that is about personal identity is Socrates' famous line in Plato's early dialogue *Apology*, where he observes that 'an unexamined life is not worth living' (Apol. 38a4-5). But an examination of one's life is possible only in the context of the communicated life to and by others, that is, in and through the dialogue or only through a process of the intersubjective questioning of and answering to issues of identity.

In addition to these two examples, which we afforded but a brief glance, a third one may warrant a closer look and deeper scrutiny. Although Japan has enjoyed highest levels of cultural achievements in the traditions of spirituality and the arts, the compulsive process of modernisation has not only and equally led to enormous advances in the fields of science, technology and economics, but at the same time has also kept the country entangled in corrosive intellectual and linguistic, socio-psychological and political dilemmas that offer infinite material for study and much national and international analysis and critical commentary. Some of these approaches to understanding modern and contemporary Japan have important bearings on the very issue of communication and dialogical coexistence. One venue where this is evident is the practice of dialogue in theater which functions as a socio-critical comment on communal life.

Theater in Japan has become ‘theater for all’ (Tanaka 2015). Contemporary drama used to be a realm of an in-group and elites, but stage performances are now fast becoming part of more and more people’s everyday lives. In today’s Japan, most people belong to a vertically structured closed society where dialogue between the young and elderly is denied, obedience instead demanded. But in a mixed-age society on stage actors are agents and can behave in an unstructured and open and free manner.

One example is particularly noteworthy. It is of course not our remit to discuss in depth *intra*-cultural norms of non-verbal communication and the attendant difficulties when these are brought to bear in *inter*-national dialogue (Inaga 2010: 41-43). But it may be instructive though to refer to and dwell for a while on the unusual if not even intriguing case of the contemporary philosophically-minded Japanese playwright, director, theater theoretician and educator, Hirata Oriza, professor of communication-design at the University of Osaka and the Tokyo University of Arts. Although most sensitive to Japanese communicative habits, Hirata controversially yet most courageously argues that the Japanese people are rather inept at dialogue, partly for geographic, historical and social and partly for linguistic reasons. Being a people of collectives the Japanese as individuals do not verbally communicate well or sufficiently either with foreigners or with each other. Hirata claims that the Japanese have never developed a strong tradition of dialogue (*taiwa*) or coexistential sharing, which he defines as a discourse for people who are strangers to each other. But they have created a refined sense of *harmony* in conversation (*kaiwa*), a form of verbal exchange that takes place between peers in an in-group (Poulton 2002: 4).

In other words, where and when – as in the case of Japan – *intra*-culturally everything is in a Confucian sense collectivistically understood and accepted as hierarchically determined authority and therefore as given inequality between self and other, there is no need to establish rules of oral communication in order to reach a sense of togetherness or belonging

among speakers. It would only undermine in-group social harmony if one were to engage in transparent democratic dialogue of presumed equals or in critical questioning and answering, let alone in contentious discussions, fierce debates or destructive disputations, that is, in contests that more surely would lead proverbially to risking one's individual or collective loss of face. Freedom of speech, the initiative of thinking and making personal decisions can be curtailed so as to serve the patriarchal powerful. But if one's intention and objective is to forge friendly coexistential relations across borders or *inter-culturally*, one is confronted with the possibility of a different and risky situation, for, while it initially cannot but be based on dialogue, that is, on shared verbal communication, the dialogue may very well also deteriorate into more problematic and divisive forms of discourse if the content and its meaning and import are not shared and if thereby the chance of unity among participants is prevented. Japan is not the world, and the world is not Japanese.

Moreover, for political and cultural reasons, the tendency is to appropriate and integrate the world or to Japanise that which is international instead of the Japanese becoming also international. Or, to put it slightly different: what one observes is the Japanisation of the process of internationalising, for instance, universities and companies; it is not the internationalisation of Japanese views and attitudes. But when people are ideologically domesticated instead of being opened up towards international relations, no self-criticism is necessary because one is always right. And when one is always right, no coexistential dialogue across borders is possible either.

At the same time and ironically, apart from devotional Shinto animism, whose underlying holistic worldview was not committed to writing millennia ago and that over time became much interlaced and hybridised with other Japanese spiritual values and practices (Kasulis 2004; Yamakage 2006), most of Japanese culture in its deepest and most defining aspects is not Japanese at

all but a copy culture in the sense that it is foreign and as the foreign was in the past and continues to be Japanised today, that is, it is Indian and Chinese, European and American. But while the syncretisation of Indian and Chinese modes of thinking was a success because it chimed in with indigenous nondual Shinto spirituality, the take-over of Western philosophies with the help of which it was thought to comprehend already Asianised Japanese mentalities was and is a failure. One cannot square a circle: the Western dualisms of theology, metaphysics and ontology and Eastern nondual worldviews are mutually exclusive. And to impose a conceptual apparatus onto non-conceptual thinking – as was so easily and uncritically embraced by the nationalists and religionists of the so-called Kyoto School of Philosophy - is to confuse a cultural and academic *diktat* with the free-spiritedness of coexistential dialogue. As to the process of Westernisation, this happened dramatically of course during and after the Meiji Restauration in 1868 when Japan created whole new languages in order to assimilate and thus cope with the implications of the wholesale importation and imitation of Western values in the humanities and the social and natural sciences. More often than not, though, such an imbalance in practicing reciprocity makes the initiative of dialogical aspirations towards *intra-* as well as *inter-*cultural coexistence into one-sided and unequal communicative and frequently aggressive efforts by the other, the West, rather than also by the self or by a self-respecting Japan.

Hirata's Tokyo-based Komaba Agora Theater, as the Greek name (*agora* = market) suggests, is a truly therapeutic and educational stage where people in freedom and without fear of losing face can meet and learn to engage in dialogue, to feel connected to others, to experience a shift from a culturally defined enclosed personal place - in which the conversationalist remains the same through the figurative mask he or she wears - to the open and socio-historically created public space. In public spaces – which encourage not only the encounter of but also direct and active contact with

other persons from outside entering the in-group - the dialogue partners need to drop their protective and defensive masks and show their real and true faces and thus their honesty. Masks are pretence for thinking that there is equality and sameness where in fact none exists. It is such pretence which allows for chatty conversation which, however, is a poor substitute for dialogue, for, after all, behind the mask everyone is a different person and each such individual has a different individuality. The mask, therefore, betrays a possible lie and deception behind it that functions as a calibrator of and which lubricates artificial social harmony.

There is a notion that for the Japanese their concept of *tatemae* – which means that the true, honest self should be hidden behind public pretence, that is, behind the mask – not only mandates but values deception. But while lying and deception may be a social phenomenon common to varying degrees in all cultures (Nyberg 1993; Serban 2001), the Japanese are said to be perhaps more honest about this (Guttig 2014). Not being Aristotelian, which prescribes the resolution of contradictions, the Japanese rather relish them. They have perfected this trait of being honest about lying to a fine art and even have a proverb that says that lying is a means to an end: *uso mo hōben*, namely, that of saving face. It may very well be the case that lying and deception stabilise a communicative culture of in-group conversation. But when applied to the encounter of and contact with out-group strangers, however, they are also prone to undermining the ethos of and trust in dialogical coexistence. Of course, once the masks fall off, honesty can become free and thus force any dysfunction in life from behind the mask and into the open (Harris 2013: 9). But this in dialogical coexistence is not losing face but the mask that concealed its true reality. Losing the mask makes possible, though, the admittedly challenging path towards constructing and showing a face that – in the end - can become truly authentic and thus worthy of trust only in and through courageously facing another face.

This existentially pervasive and interrelated face-to-face experience has

also been theoretically advanced by the Russian literary critic and philologist Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) in his essays on the ‘dialogic imagination’ (1998). The reason for this reciprocally mediated affirmation of self/other identity is that human beings coexist with one another and their natural environment because they are fundamentally interdependent with one another and all other phenomena. As has been said for Bakhtin: ‘Our very status as the subjects of our own lives depends on the necessary presence of other subjects’ (Holquist 2013: xix). And elsewhere it has been asserted that ‘whatever else it is, self/other [in Bakhtin’s philosophy] is a relation of simultaneity’, or ‘all meaning is relative in the sense that it comes about only as a result of the relation between two bodies occupying simultaneous but different space’ (Holquist 2010: 19, 21). The self cannot be without the other, and the other cannot be without another self. As we shall observe later when studying the Buddhist Lotus Sūtra, this idea of dialectical and phenomenological reality apperception is also grounded in the Asian philosophical notion of the inseparability and dependent origination of self and other which basically says that human beings only fully exist in their relations with others. The only way to develop fully the self, then, is through dialogic interaction with the other; and the other can only be fully developed dialogically with the self. In other words, in Bakhtin’s dialogism ‘the very capacity to have consciousness is based on otherness (...) in dialogism consciousness is otherness’ (Holquist 2010: 18). Dialogue is here not mere verbal exchange between interlocutors; it is a complex world that emphasises the interconnectedness and permeability of all phenomenal boundaries as a means of personal development or dialogical becoming. The dialogue in which this self-other development happens does not diminish the dignity of those involved but enhances and indeed doubles it. In dialogical coexistence one does not lose individuality but through the dynamic process of dialectical mediation attains a greater one. In opening up the self one gains the other, and potentially the whole world. Dialogical coexistence can

therefore be observed not only between individual persons and states but even within an individual him- or herself, that is, within a self that faces itself.

What for Hirata is intended and observed on stage is not what happens according to the static texts of formalistic theatrical rules of reality representation but *how* it is said according to the presentation of real life situations that are saturated with dynamic verbal intercourse. The stage becomes an educational platform on which the actors playfully demonstrate how to step out of one's box – *into* which one had been *in*-structed - or be led or *e*-ducated out of it (*e-ducere* – lead out of) and into expanded horizons of communication experiences. As the playwright shows in *Tokyo Notes* (2002), theatre is meant to portray not events or actions as written into literature and directed on stage but to problematise the actuality of human existence and socio-historically contingent rather than fixed relationships as they are communicated in and through dialogue (Breu 2014: 14; Poulton 2002: 2). Such an attitude towards more critical dialogue rather than benign and harmless conversation would be in line with the view of the great French essayist Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) who writes that while 'the most fruitful and most natural exercise of our minds is conversation' and while in dialogue 'rivalry, competitiveness and glory will drive me and raise me above my own level'... '[i]n conversation the most painful quality is perfect harmony' (2003: 1045).

When interpreted, this is to say that the Japanese have a propensity to support any cultural status quo and are usually loath to change and fearful of opening up both towards others but therefore then also towards themselves. It is interesting that some of Hirata's plays involve robots that bring out very well this man-machine in-group social interaction phenomenon. Although theatre can only allude to and thus make one aware of the enormous ethical and social implications of robotics in the age of spiritual machines (Kurzweil 2005; Lin, et. al. 2012), with respect to verbal communication Hirata

attempts to demonstrate to an audience how programmed robots and programmed individuals in a conformist society are each other's mirror image. But robotic sameness or the denial of any sense of failed aspirations or socio-historical tragedy exists only as a cultural self-imposition of convenience the alternative to which would be the willingness to experience and celebrate the challenge of difference and otherness. This only goes to show that while it is already problematic to establish criteria for living one's life in open dialogical coexistence when practiced in *intra*-cultural or *in*-group situations, how much more difficult must it be in *inter*-cultural or *out*-group social formations.

This dilemma is especially encountered in Japanese post war education which, while largely still being based on Confucian robotic reliance on standardised tests, rote learning and dutiful regurgitation, is beginning to be seen as having reached a vexing crossroads (Hoffman 2015). Even Confucius himself might be bemused at the durability of remnants of his educational prescriptions, some 2500 years after his death and during the contemporary pell-mell adventure we have come to call 'globalisation'. But what good is programmed rote learning in an age when today's techno-fantasy is tomorrow's techno-reality or when yesterday's wisdom becomes tomorrow's nonsense? And if students are merely instructed to learn how to 'know' something factually rather than being openly and freely educated into learning how to *think* critically and for themselves, and if, by extension, academics in personal or bio/psycho-narratives monologically acknowledge but only rarely and with objective scholastic argumentation engage with each other's work, what one is left with in verbal and written communication is then little more than inconsequential conversation. The call for dialogue or for the constructive questioning of and answering to opinions, standpoints and ideas becomes a travesty of what is actually required in an intercultural, pluralistic and increasingly complex set of planetary relations, namely, the ability to reach out across borders and make the world at large one's own

rather than remain confined to insularity and chauvinism.

This difficulty may in part be explained with reference to the Japanese language which lacks the sensibility concerning propositions whose reciprocal understanding a dialogue, however, can help to achieve. And it is because the language has as yet little room to accommodate dialogue, Hirata seeks to produce plays that have a dialogic structure that e-ducates the actors and audience alike to step out of the box of private conversational norms and that leads them into public and wider international horizons of verbal communication with one another. And this precisely because what used to be taken for granted has become questionable; what used to be taken as a *given* qua psychically deeply imprinted traditions has become the mutual dialogical *task* of creating contemporary and future intercultural practices of communication.

After having discussed some socio-psychological peculiarities of Japanese *intra*-cultural communication habits that all too often though complicate their *inter*-cultural applications, we can now go somewhat beyond cultural specificities and explore a few related points further and explain coexistential and international perspectives by raising the question of the significance of dialogue in the first place. A mundane interpretation of a commitment to dialogue is that it overcomes cowardice in silence and that it avoids self-centredness – let alone any preoccupation with the alleged merits of one's own country and culture, political ideology or religion. To engage in dialogue is a way to demystify stereotypes, to question the claims of experts, and even – and most importantly perhaps – to find humanity in the people who might have been seen as enemies. For whereas pride in national glory, which is imposed on the minds of others from without, is by its very nature exclusive and non-transferable, a spirit of compassion, caring and listening in and through dialogue and as a faculty and engendered from within is by nature universal.

The importance of philosophical dialogue lies in constantly seeking to

find common ground but also in realising the need to be realistic enough about the consequences of clarifying differences. Dialogue is not a way to remove artificially differences in the hope that we will all merge into a happy organic and harmonious whole. Rather, it is an often paradoxical activity that guides interlocutors towards a sharing that is based on common ground. At the same time it is also a movement towards respectful distance based on the fact that no two human beings - let alone two states or religions, for example – can completely agree on everything. The art of dialogue can therefore be defined as the ability to create meaningful and lasting mutual understanding and therefore relationships despite differences, and sometimes even thanks to these differences. The art of dialogue, in other words, describes the ability not to be bothered and disturbed by differences and hence by the uncertainties which an experience of difference often implies.

To be different as a person or a country is not the same as the claim to be distinct from or even to be unique. Cultural and national and certainly nationalistic assertions of distinction or uniqueness, which suggest arbitrary separateness from others and which tend to lead to attitudes of xenophobia and policies of exclusivist relativism, preclude the possibility of any meaningful coexistential communication. But therewith, too, any expectation of coming together in dialogue grinds towards irrelevance. Unlike the relativistic concepts of distinction and uniqueness, the term ‘difference’, on the other hand, is organically derived from the idea of the *genus* that immanently opens up into its self-own *differentiae specifica*e, like a seed opens up and differentiates itself into roots and branches (Krombach 1991: *passim*). These *differentiae specifica*e between themselves and collectively relate coexistentially to the *genus* as perspectival parts to the whole, or as states and cultures, for example, relate to one another horizontally, as it were, but ultimately vertically to that which holistically underlies and thus sustains them existentially, that is, to humanity or to mankind. To view world reality in this way is for inclusive relational thinking to overcome exclusive

relativism.

International or intercultural cosmopolitan or coexistential dialogue can be regarded as a method, as an expedient means for conflict resolution, as a pedagogic strategy and way of interacting with an interconnected world. To engage in philosophical dialogue is in a mutually reflective and thus relational way to learn from those who are different but not distinct. If social phenomena were distinct and thus separated from one another, no communication would be possible between them. Furthermore, dialogue in and through differences or dialogue as learning across differences is a central theme of modern cosmopolitanism and is at the heart also of the aforementioned axial age and existentialist thinking of Karl Jaspers whom Hannah Arendt (1906-1975) calls a ‘citizen of the world’ (1981: 539-549).

Let us briefly distinguish a contemporary description of cosmopolitanism from its ancient and modern understanding. In past centuries and millennia cosmopolitanism was a belief in the Stoic ideal of the ‘cosmopolis’ or ‘world-state’, to which all human beings or rational creatures necessarily belong, and which they must attempt to realise in their actions, regardless of the local conditions which may frustrate them. The ideal underlies Augustine’s (354-430) theocratic universalism in *The City of God* and Dante’s (1265-1321) conception of world-empire in his *Divine Comedy*, ideas which can here not be further explored. Its greatest advocate in modern times has been Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), whose prescription for a ‘perpetual peace’ (1983: 107-143) involves the generation of an international federation of peace-loving states obedient to the conception, incipient in the thinking of every moral agent, of a kingdom of ends in which everything is as it ought to be and ought to be as it is. But unlike the traditional ethical conceptions of cosmopolitanism, which are derived from transcendent metaphysical and divine sources, a contemporary explanation of this term would be that it is the belief in and pursuit of a subjective style of life which is cosmopolitan in the sense of showing an acquaintance with and an ability

to incorporate the manners, habits, languages and social customs of different cultures throughout the world. Contemporary cosmopolitanism, therefore, requires the value of particular cultures and local commitments. As Buddhism (Hershock 2012) it appreciates and respects diversity. At the same time, it realises the urgent need now and in the future to think and, indeed, work and act together across differences. The wisdom of the world as a guide to human life can therefore also be found in Western thought (Brague 2003).

Because cosmopolitanism recognises the value of both local and global commitments, of particular and universal norms and attitudinal orientations in an increasingly interconnected and ever-changing world, it positions people to dwell meaningfully in the tension-laden, often paradoxical realm of being both destabilisers and preservers of culture. Individuals and communities destabilise culture every time they learn something new and different. Dialogue from a cosmopolitan perspective, then, becomes an approach to inhabiting the normative tensions of the world.

The dialogical encounter with such tensions can be exemplified with the experience of two opposing perspectives: coexistence through collaboration and coexistence through competition. Collaboration can be described as the *empathetic*, competition as the *agonistic* function of dialogue (Obelleiro 2013: 38-48). The following paragraphs will discuss these aspects of dialogue each in turn. The main empathetic function of dialogue, which is conducted in a spirit of mutuality and reciprocity, is to provide equal conditions for individuals – both in their capacity as private persons or as representatives of public policies – to transcend differences and to bring out a sense not of a unified (which is impossible to obtain) but of shared humanity. The focus is on cultivating reciprocally accepted conditions for the self to recognise in the other above anything else a fellow human being or a different but nonetheless befriended state. In this positive sense – and as alluded to in the introduction - recognition differs markedly from mere tolerance which, while seemingly accepting what is encountered as alien, is,

however, in tone and behaviour a negative attitude in that it discriminates against and condescendingly looks down on others. A key source for understanding the socio-historical, that is, dialectical and reciprocal structure of the struggle for and experience of mutual recognition is the 'Lordship and Bondage' section in Hegel's book *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1977: 111-119). For lack of space a contextual interpretation of this short but philosophically all the more significant and politically most influential section can here only be deferred to other works, for instance, to Alexander Kojève's (1902-1968) *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel* (1980).

Closer to our present concern, recognition characterises the empathetic or feeling-into function of dialogue. Empathy encompasses a broad range of psychological states that reveal themselves in inter-personal relations, including caring for other people and having a desire to help them, or experiencing emotions that match another person's emotions and discerning what another person is thinking or feeling. It is profoundly important in that it helps us to understand what enables us to respond to others ethically and what makes people moral and societies decent (Coplan/Goldie 2014; Howe 2013). Two points concerning the conditions to meet this function of dialogical understanding warrant mentioning. One is that the prevailing Eastern interdependent sense of *communal intimacy* may be perceived as being more conducive to promoting peaceful coexistence than the Western insistence on the *social integrity* of the independent individual. However, it would be a mistake to believe that what operates well – but only seemingly so – within a state, nation or culture that is vertically or hierarchically structured and in which members are locked into predetermined relationships and constrained therefore in their verbal expressions would of necessity also obtain in the relations between cultures and nations or states which are organised horizontally and according to principles of individual freedom and social equality. For reasons to do with the perception of the well-being and existential survival of the whole rather than the self-assertion of a part, in

Eastern Buddhist and Confucian regions this self is suppressed and instead absorbed in and made to serve the prescribed interests of indigenous communities. In Western societies and in international relations the individual and the state, that is, the self or subject qua person is said rather to be legally and philosophically sovereign but for that reason not also and already politically or economically independent. In fact, contemporary developments in social, political and economic life have thrown into crisis even the modern concept of sovereignty itself and the notions of statehood and citizenship that rest upon it (Barbour/Pavlich 2010).

To return to our culture example of Japan: an illustration of the empathetic and coexistence-friendly idea of communal intimacy is well expressed in the idiom '*kūki wo yomu* = reading the air', an amorphous understanding of things which the islanders are fond of confronting foreigners with and which helps them to assert apparent cultural uniqueness, mystique and cognitive and emotional impenetrability. Fundamental to this idea of community or in-group social bonding is also the word '*ningen*', extensively discussed by Watsuji Tetsurō (1889-1960) in his *Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan* (1996). Similar to Heidegger's concept of 'thrownness' or *Geworfenheit*, which denotes the arbitrary or inscrutable nature of Dasein, that is, of human existence being thrown into this world and that connects the past with the present (Dreyfus 1991), Watsuji likewise develops the idea of humans being thrown into society. The word '*ningen*' means literally 'person (*nin*) in between (*gen*)' or the 'in-betweenness of persons'. An equivalent expression for 'person in between' is *hito no aida*. What these ideas of the *inter*-personal factually state is that human beings are born and in this sense already from the very beginning of their lives thrown between persons, that is, between their mother and father and that the suggestion, therefore, that individual human beings can ever be conceived of as being isolated or as having an independent self-nature is simply impossible to entertain. But the notion of '*ningen*' does not only tell us that humans are in the Aristotelian

sense from the moment of their birth and thus by nature social and even political beings (*zoon politikon*) (Pol. 1253a7-18), but that this - and for Watsuji - carries with it also the still more existential and moral responsibility condition of 'belonging' to a social or communal group that endows the individual with ethical meaning. Each and every person can exist only in that it lives between or among others. This natural fact of belonging can then, however, become a psychological need when one is deprived of the company of in-group comforts.

This need to belong and the feeling of belonging can be well satisfied and experienced *within* a culture or *intra*-culturally. But – again - to live as a human being according to the existential meaning of *ningen* as belonging is fraught with complications of unrealistic expectations when it is to manifest itself openly also in *inter*-state or *inter*-cultural contexts, that is, *between* different cultures. Although against frequent protestation by prickly revisionists who don't really know the world outside Japan (Cortazzi 2015), since the Japanese do not radically differ from other people, the claim of Japanese homogeneity and uniqueness or *nihonjinron* has largely been discredited as pseudoscientific and for long therefore been exposed as a myth (Dale 1990). Be that as it may, both expressions, though, community and society, and intimacy and integrity, are derived from their important analyses by Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936) in his classical book on *Community and Society* (2002) and in Thomas Kasulis' more recently published work on *Intimacy or Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural Difference* (2002), respectively.

These considerations in the context of earlier references to the idea of harmony warrant a further critical comment. In Japan the quest for harmony as a synonym for peaceful coexistence has its origin in the 'Seventeen-Article Constitution' promulgated by Prince Shōtoku (574-622) whose first article states: 'Take harmony to be of the highest value and take cooperation to be what is most honoured' (Heisig, et.al. 2011: 36). But just as

the biblical exhortations to love one's neighbour (Lev 19:18, Mk 12:31) and even one's enemy (Mt 5:44) is virtually impossible to adhere to, so it is difficult to envisage a harmonious international society of states based on political counsel and expediency. For loving one's neighbour and enemy is not what nature prescribes, and more than that it is not what 'naturally' happens. This is at best possible in tightly controlled customary codes of conduct and socio-psychological cultures whose values have been inculcated from childhood onwards in people's mind through centuries of indoctrination. However, unlike an instructor with instrumental manuals in hand, no educator at home or in class and seminar rooms can ever presume to have the right to wanting to form and make anyone in his image or according to conceptions and ideas as his or her culture prescribes; it would contradict the very ethos of education. A child is carefree, and in freedom it wants to and is to be guided with an open and caring mind towards exploring its inner and outer world. An attitude of dominance only distorts the 'self' and therewith the perception of the 'other'. And it precludes every possibility of equality in dialogue.

It is well known that the Japanese make much of the idea of uniform human relationships more than the pluralism of truth. But the flipside of this is that according to some culturally self-critical Japanese scholars the enormous family and peer pressure to comply with what is understood as given and thus rarely internally questioned traditions has brought about a 'straightjacket society' (Miyamoto 1994). In this kind of society, in which the sharing with others of investigative dialogue is frequently seen as heretical and disturbing harmony, people often suffer from a 'double bind' syndrome and 'split personalities' or schizophrenia when engaging in dialogue with strangers, and mediators from the indigenous to a foreign culture may be guilty of 'inappropriate behaviour', 'inadmissible transgression', and even 'treason' (Inaga 1999: 130-133). As a consequence of policing one another, the moment when the self strays off towards the other it is immediately

corrected and pulled back into line. What stands out is again thumbled in.

Lacking a mature sense of selfhood leads therefore also to an inability to be self-critical. Paradoxically, however, to be critical of things Japanese invites then the collective opprobrium for being non- or even anti-Japanese. Internal debate, for instance, on sensitive historical issues is discouraged, while self-assertion on near-abroad controversies that incite disputational reactions by neighbours is encouraged. What appears to be a dualist reading of history is artificially and falsely nondualised so as to preserve the fiction of political purity. The truth of history though and a dialogue of humanity with itself will expose the lie of harmony. Promoting a propagandised version of history leaves students and the populace at large ill prepared to develop critical thinking skills and engage with others. The stereotypical Japanese is therefore constantly on his or her guard lest the violation of traditional mores of social conduct and national interest provokes a reaction of retributive justice (Debito 2015). As Japanese studies of dependency show (Doi 1981, 1988; Rosenberger 1994), in Japan, whose society is often still regarded as being fairly closed in the sense of revolving about itself, groupism or the moral submission of the individual to collective family or other in-group ethical precepts enforces order and therewith normalises the acceptance of the status quo. As remarked in various places before, children and students are cosseted by intensive parenting, peer instruction and government educational policies that encourage passivity and dependency and hinder their abilities to improvise, adapt to challenges and weigh risks. People coexist, but not in dialogue. Japanese society continues to be largely bogged down by a lockstep mentality that minimises individuality, an inward and navel-gazing mindset, disregard for communication and a poor ability to appeal to others, especially to people outside Japan.

However, being frequently afflicted by social ‘don’t do!’ prohibitions is anything but conducive to building up self-confidence and independence of thinking and to engaging in transparent dialogue. In addition, it blunts

analysis of Japan's social and cultural fabric. Rather, the collective fear of critical introspection stifles the dialogue's emancipating possibility of courage into an attitude of withdrawal, silence and compliance. Clearly a standardised conservative if not even reactionary and revisionist mindset has also exclusivist and therefore negative implications for practicing and ascertaining the meaning of dialogical coexistence and coexistence in dialogue. Where for the institutionalised individual there is little social distance, the need for dialogue is reduced to almost zero and coexistence becomes flat. Or, the less there is space for the individual the less is there room for social dialogue. The same can be experienced with expectations of orthodox social behaviour which are taken for granted and apparently therefore not in need of being explained - not even to outsiders. In these instances too, however, in that the dialogical principle of the mutuality of listening to one another and the reciprocity of questioning and answering is confused and replaced with the demand to conform, in-group dialogue is superfluous while it is rendered most complex in *inter-cultural* verbal communication. And here as well, because of the culturally stunted sense of selfhood and thus also of a feel of responsibility towards the other in the sense of responding to its need to have things Japanese made clear to it, the onus of coping with arising misunderstandings is not without a tinge of arrogance squarely placed on the foreigner and not on oneself, the indigenous person. Two hundred years of isolation and more than one hundred years after its opening to the world, Japan continues to feel the lingering effects of isolation. Japan is billed as sensitive and harmonious, but is it when it shuns education in tragedy or the risky thinking-out-of-the-box in and through critical *inter-cultural* and coexistential dialogue?

To take a further conceptual leap and a still broader perspective, it has been observed that as a corollary to the idea of Japan being a straightjacket society the island in its international relations as well can likewise be described as living in the 'shackles of the past' (Murphy 2014). By this is

meant that Japan today is not a free country with respect to its dealings with the outside world. Rather, it is seen as Washington's biggest and most significant vassal, dwarfing any European country. It has adopted America's enemies to its own detriment, inviting future disaster for the region and possibly the world. In its foreign affairs too, therefore, Japan finds it difficult to engage constructively or in a free and open manner in peaceful dialogical coexistence. For that it is still lacking in the historical wisdom of self-criticism and hence is much too reticent in owning up, for example, to controversial because also painful aspects of its history and building bridges to the pivotal arena of Northeast Asia. But there can be no dialogue in the relations between and among countries unless and until the conditions of trust and honesty have been established and their sincerity are mutually believed in.

With exceptions, in such an internally and externally restrictive society dialogue as understood in these pages is not really and wholeheartedly encouraged because fear of peer sanctions like marginalisation or even ostracism and expulsion from the community and cluster of friends in case of betrayal of loyalty and breaching the rules of engagement with others looms ever large on the horizon. The problem is that this false because 'unnatural' and virtually enforced sense of harmony is artificially nurtured and manipulated. It often leads individuals and collectives to a negatively enhanced protective preoccupation with the apparently selfless personal and cultural self. Furthermore, because of a lack of confidence in dialogue and thus relevant practices with cultural 'otherness', the 'self' and one's own culture remain pretty much unreflected with the consequence that the idea of social harmony turns into an obsessive ideology that is imposed rather than a hope whose conditions for realisation are freely and openly created. The tension therefore too between the *intra*- and nonverbal and *inter*- and verbal communicative experiences remains unmitigated and is seldom resolved.

What we seek is not harmony in sameness but sharing in difference.

Dialogue is not necessary in relations of sameness but a possibility in those of difference. Japanese society today confronts the ‘paradox of harmony’, its one-time flourishing and now fragility (Hirata/Warschauer 2014). How will its future generations fare in a pluralistic world in which no culture can claim again to be autarchic, if ever such a culture existed in the past? All forms of isolation have points of entry and exit. No island can be an island onto itself. There can be no self without its other. Where the self is unknown, the other is unknown as well, and *vice versa*, where the other is unknown the self remains unknown too. But where there is no mediation between self and other dialogical coexistence actually becomes nonexistent. However, the challenge is to recognise that a life lived in dialogical coexistence - and that means in a pluralistic world - of necessity problematises its own culture and the assumptions that underlie the sense of selfhood of its members. In other words, what is required in a coexistential dialogue is to accept the challenge to question oneself in the encounter with the other.

The previous pages applied to some extent the issue of empathy also to its Japanese cultural conditions. Now, apart from the empathetic or collaborative function of dialogue which seeks common ground across differences, there is also the *agonistic* or more competitive role a dialogue can play. This overtly expressive way of meeting the other is much less intrinsic to the Japanese social fabric. Nonetheless, it is important for general reasons at least to outline its function. The concept of the ‘agon’ is the primary organising principle of the global capitalist order, one that gives primacy to the ruling order of competition in many forms of inter-personal and social relations; it is the single most exacting way of pooling the expression of power that contributes to the problem of domination in the world today and therefore is less likely to establish coexistential relations that are free of frictions (Colaguori 2012). In our context, the transition from one to the other may be informed by the experience that while finding a common ground is the primary objective and goal of dialogue, there is also a

creative tension which is inherent in the growth and learning of individuals and states and in their respective relationships with one another. A common understanding may for dialectical or socio-historical reasons give way to differences and very well develop into irreconcilable positions.

Here it is important to distinguish between ‘agonistic’ and ‘antagonistic’ relationships. The hostility inherent in the latter leads to an adversarial or even war-like path and is thus inimical to the very idea of coexistence or existing together with one another in friendship. The friendly and transparent attitude towards one another in agonistic situations promotes potentially instead a spirit of competitiveness that recalls and goes back to the classical Greek *agon*, whose literal meaning is ‘competition’ and is associated with the Olympic contests in athletics, with chariot- or horseracing, or with music or literature at a public festival (Ramba 2014).

It is to be borne in mind, however, that in the context of dialogue *agon* does not mean harmony and does therefore not imply the erasure of difference either. The possibility of dialogical conflict is dialectically necessary and arises out of holding different viewpoints that come into play for the purpose of finding a common ground between and among interlocutors in order to obtain commonly pursued objectives. But, as we shall learn later, any such agreement will again only be temporary and subject to change and transformation and hence result in a new problem or *aporia*. In this way a diversity of competing views or opinions and a creative tension between them is being preserved thus manifesting the Buddhist conception of the world not only as interconnected but also as impermanent and perennially problematic. All individual propositions and all socio-historically arrived at agreements are finite or, in postmodern sociological jargon: contestable; they are devoid of values that could be considered valid here, now and forever. In other words, dialogue and competition are not mutually exclusive opposites. Although its direction is teleological and purpose-bound, the work of dialogue does not require a telos

of complete agreement that in an entelechy is expected to be final and lasting. A consensus as a correspondence of positions wrapped in the spurious garb of truth-meaning and in all significant aspects is not only impossible, but from a cosmopolitan and that is pluralistic world perspective and hence perception of international relations also undesirable.

What the reflections so far on our first theme of the cultural conditions of dialogical coexistence and the critical example of the Japanese internal and foreign experience appear to have demonstrated is that the willingness to engage in philosophical dialogue presupposes the preparedness as well to perform as possibility or even necessity an irreversible Gestalt switch of standpoints or what the physicist and historian Thomas Kuhn (1922-1996) in his landmark book *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (1970) develops as an intellectual paradigm shift from one mode of thinking to another, that is, from a Ptolemaic to Newtonian to Einsteinian cosmology. After Kuhn it is no longer possible to ignore the element of the socio-historical context in science. While 'normal' or incremental scientific practice is organised around a prevailing paradigm or framework, occurring anomalies in research may lead to a questioning of and a crisis in its claimed validity which occasions holistic or revolutionary shifts in the entire framework of assumptions that govern an existing paradigm. Such revolutionary changes in conceptional and theoretical thinking about reality are, however, not confined to the sciences. Paradigm shifts can happen anywhere. Martin Luther (1483-1546), for example, precipitated a comparable crisis in theology, and Picasso (1881-1973) in painting. But such crises are not resolved with rules of research, rationality and logic, because it is the rules themselves that are in crisis. Rather, crises are resolved with discernment, judgement and interpretive acumen. What is needed are wisdom and insight, inventiveness and creative thinking.

We have access to reality only under the conditions written into the theory by its socially situated authors, which is why the theory has also a

history and thus can be altered, not arbitrarily but circumspectively and with reference to contexts, relations and perspectives. Interpreted freely, in our case such a paradigm shift would be one from an exclusivist, narrow-minded and parochial worldview based on mental myopia and normally pursued in the West to an inclusive, open-minded and pluralist understanding of world relations that finds its revolutionary bearings in the intellectual courage of conviction that adopts the approach of holistic thinking as it is practiced more truly in Eastern spirituality. Such a paradigm shift from a dualist and analytic to a nondual contextual and synthetic approach can be exemplified with reference to its Asian cultural background condition. The source that perhaps best manifests the principle of coexistentiality is the Mahāyāna Lotus Sūtra. It is therefore to this text that we shall now turn.

3 World Reality and Peaceful Coexistence in Eastern Buddhism

As was alluded to already earlier when discussing the reciprocal nature of coexistence in dialogical relations, what best describes Asian Buddhist traditions – which are philosophically at odds with the entrapments of Confucian social ethics - and their epistemological understanding of the world as freely and openly shared and coexistential reality is the philosophical awakening to and awareness of ‘dependent origination’ (Skt. *pratītyasamutpāda*; Ch. *yuanqi*; Jp. *engi*) and ‘emptiness’ (Skt. *śūnyatā*; Ch. *kong* ; Jp. *kū*). While the former suggests that all phenomena are caused by and are experienced as interdependence, the latter and as a consequence related idea refers to the equal experience that everything is therefore also devoid of any essential self-nature. Both terms encourage us not to think of and reify the seemingly abstract and thus dualistically separate in-box and exclusive *either-or* extremes of the dichotomous relation of ‘self’ and ‘other’. Instead – and to express the Eastern formulas of world apprehension in similar but modern Western parlance – these categories guide us towards thinking dialectically and phenomenologically out of the box, that is, in the

nondual terms of the concrete middle ground in and through which both sides in the relation ‘self-*and*-other’ coexistentially or reciprocally and together develop – again – not towards an individual and isolated but an inclusive socio-historical and beyond that cosmic consciousness. While the two sets of expressions differ according to their respective methodological functions, they show a remarkable affinity with respect to the objective of taking a holistic approach to resolving theoretically but also in practical ways the global problems that therefore affect humanity at large as well.

It is here not the place to delve too deeply into a narrative of Buddhist scriptures that manifest these modes of comprehending world relations. At the same time we recognise the need to perform a paradigm shift from Western classical Greek, medieval and early modern metaphysical and ontologically static worldviews to the dynamic archaic Greek and more recent but equally Western dialectical and phenomenological methods of reflection, on the one hand, but also to the Eastern horizons of the cosmic context of the human life-world, on the other. This need to adopt holistic and flexible structures of thinking can be substantiated and confirmed with a reading of a most profound literary source that lives vibrantly the coexistential spirit of Buddhism and that continues to offer us therefore a relevant Asian but globally inclusive framework for comprehending the timeless human condition in the world past, present and future.

As an Eastern scriptural example of a cultural background condition for formulating principles of dialogue and that, in turn, may serve as presuppositions of peaceful coexistence we will accordingly consult the Indian Mahāyāna Lotus Sūtra (LS) (Reeves 2008) (Skt. *saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*; Ch. *fahua jing*; Jp. *hokekyō*). Unlike earlier Hīnayāna (Small Vehicle) or Theravāda Buddhism, in which the practitioner as an Arhat pursues the goal only of self-liberation, Mahāyāna (Great Vehicle) Buddhism goes beyond the self and, by introducing the idea and ideal of the compassionate bodhisattva (*bodhi* = awakening; *sattva* = sentient

being), seeks to awaken to and thus reach out in order to liberate others as well. The Lotus Sūtra was probably written by several authors long after Śākyamuni Buddha's life around the middle of the first millennium BCE and between 100 BCE and 100 CE, and most of the text had appeared by 200 CE. It can be read as the presence of the absent Buddha. However, despite its popularity as a Buddhist text, it is necessary to clarify that Buddhism is originally and in the Western two-world metaphysical sense not a faith and revelatory religion but a spiritually holistic view of the world we live in. It is a secular experiential philosophy of reality apperception and in particular from a social point of view a reflection on the meaning of the 'other'. It is a descriptive psychology of humanity's existential condition and a pedagogical teaching of the Buddha Way in order to overcome the largely self-inflicted human sufferings in this world. All systems of practice are based on theoretical underpinnings, whether these are explicit or not. At the very least, there are reasons why the systems of practice are thought to be efficacious in achieving their aim, and reasons why that is their aim (Hamilton 2000: 5). In order to adapt the Lotus Sūtra for our similar purposes, we shall therefore disregard its devotional and in this sense 'religious' features and concentrate instead on its philosophical messages, politico-philosophical and utopian visions. These underlie the abstract idea of a perfect domestic and by extension international society which in concrete practice and, because it expresses an ideal, can at best be approximated but in action never fully corresponded to.

In a famous parable the Lotus Sūtra likens the phenomenal or *saha* world to a 'burning house' (LS 3: 112-118). The lack of care for the house was due to the 'three poisons' and its variants (LS 3: 115), described elsewhere in the sūtra as lust and desire, anger and rage, folly and stupidity (LS 25: 372). Two thousand years later we are still in the thrall of these afflictions and as a consequence live all over the earth with suffering, violence and war. The parable tells of the story of a dilapidated house on fire

and how the father through so-called ‘skilful means’ (Pye 2003) such as the offer of a precious present gets his playing, oblivious and ignorant children to agree to use the ‘only one gateway’ (LS 3: 113) and come out and into safety all by themselves. While in this brief and only paraphrased account the father stands for the Buddha, his children are none other than we, the ordinary people. Further, the run-down house is our plain human society, and the fire is our physical and mental desire. It is this desire that not only manifests itself in many different ways but that is also the very cause of human miseries. But what matters are not the problems as such of life but how we coexistentially face these challenges and react to them. That our existence is suffering and our experiences in the world unsatisfactory is, however, not a pessimistic view. Rather, it can be the reverse image of a positive view, namely, to try to live a better life together.

The Lotus Sūtra itself puts the meaning of the versified story thus: ‘Most honoured of all the sages, I [the Buddha] am the father of this world. All living beings are my children, but deeply attached to worldly pleasures, they are without wisdom. The... world is not safe, just as a burning house full of all kinds of suffering is much to be feared. Always there is the suffering of birth, old age, disease, and death. They are like flames raging ceaselessly. The Tathāgata [the Buddha] is already free from the burning house of the... world. He lives in tranquil peace, as in the safety of a forest or field. Now, this... world is all my domain and the living beings in it are all my children. But now this place is filled with all kinds of dreadful troubles, from which I alone can save and protect them’ (LS 3: 126f).

In this sūtra the burning house is a metaphor for *this* world of ours, enveloped as it is in the flames of injustices. But what for our reading and interpretation of the parable is most interesting is the way the father or the Buddha seeks to gather up his children or us the peoples of the world and thus mankind not by pulling and dragging them against their will outside and into freedom. Realising that this is useless he instead made them come into

safety of their own accord and free will. This suggests how different it is to be saved passively or to be given freedom, as it were, by an external divine force and agent from being freed by a power that emanates from within oneself and therefore from one's own inner human strength and agency or that gives itself its own freedom. The invocation of a God, of gods or buddhas does not lead to an awakening to the real and true condition of humanity and the need therefore to devise precepts for right conduct. Only self-cultivation – both individually and collectively – through practicing one's own will can be a truthful and self-responsible guide towards awakening to oneself and otherness and thus towards the liberation also from self-inflicted pain. To be freed from outside or from above and thus be *enlightened* by an imagined truth through other-power or in Japanese *tariki* is to remain immature and beholden to the liberator; to free oneself and hence *awaken* to the truth of reality as it is through self-power or *jiriki* is to incur no debts to anyone. To paraphrase Immanuel Kant: awakening is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use this faculty to understand without guidance from another (1983: 41).

However, and of greater significance still is the ultimate goal of doing away with this sense of overblown and empowered selfhood. For the locus of universal truth does actually not reside in anything particular, be it of an objective and transcendent or subjective and transcendental nature. Rather, it is the other way around: the existential meaning of the individual is dialectically mediated through its intrinsic but self-created and experienced and not through any logically or divinely dictated relationship to the inner-worldly whole. Only if we awaken to what ultimately surrounds us, that is, the one cosmic context, represented by the one single gateway, can we hope to be able to put our actions into a rightful, that is, a

phenomenological perspective which implies that everything relates to everything else. That this in practice is most difficult is symbolised by the small and very narrow door that leads from the burning house out into freedom and safety (LS 3: 113).

The emptying of the self of substantive beinghood is one step towards becoming aware of the relational structure of all that exists in this world. The second stage must be the realisation that in accordance with the Buddhist law of causation or dependent origination all that we think we are and all that we want and are attached to is interdependent and a temporary appearance only – all and everything is impermanent and partial. Furthermore, it must be recognised that following the law of the twelvefold chain of causes Buddhism traces our desires and attachments ultimately to ‘ignorance’, that is, to not knowing the truth about the fluid or flexible and always shifting structure of reality. It is then this mental misapprehension which causes our dissatisfaction with the phenomenal world. When one perceives these multiple and non-reductive laws, it becomes clear that the self to which one has clung is in fact something that has no real fixed substance, essence or self-nature, and as a result one is removed from self-centred thinking and open to experiencing a richer social and natural world. All beings in the universe are void and identical, meaning that everything partakes equally of world reality. There is then also no deliverance without casting away the self. As we are told by Dōgen, the Japanese philosopher-monk (1200-1253): ‘To learn ourselves is to forget ourselves’ (1994 I: 34) and is to merge with the Buddha who is the principle of universal world reality which is in all things and which permeates us all alike. It is in this way that the mind becomes truly free, for we are not hindered by anything and, acting as we will, we are always in harmony with the truth, and our acts give life to ourselves and all people. This is the great, the true, compassion – which is buddhahood itself.

In light of this reading and interpretation of the parable of the burning house, it is not difficult to observe that humanity today continues to repeat

the cycle of suffering, violence and war and that the root cause of this remains the ignorance about our true coexistential relationship to other people, our natural environment and their cosmic context. Unless we can achieve a fundamental transformation within ourselves by breaking through self-imposed arbitrary and artificial boundaries, so that we are able to perceive an intimate connection with all that lies beyond these mental barriers, it is unlikely that we will become free from what afflicts the world and its societies. But such inherent awakening and awareness requires an intercultural dialogue on all levels. More integrated and multi-layered coexistential efforts need to be made to generate a trend towards changing our ways of thinking and acting. This warrants a short digression from the text of the Lotus Sūtra and into the world situation of security, its philosophical principle and politicisation (Gros 2015).

In order to overcome divisions and grapple with the question of peaceful coexistence and more amicable relations in an endangered world, it is essential to promote human security first of all, for we can become free for and open to others only if we feel safe in our individual and social existence. For when we are insecure, we have a tendency to coil up and become defensive and protective of our injured sense of selfhood. A major source of human insecurity comes from the failure of states and their governments around the world to recognise the increasing cultural diversity of their populations which has resulted from globalisation (Shani 2014; Shani, et.al. 2007). In order therefore to mitigate the experience of the harmful consequences of insecurity, it is morally mandatory to embrace the ethics of the planetary phenomenon of pluralism and to take a reflexive approach to the explanation and normative power of the global and critical perspective of human security.

Human security today does of course not only mean the physical and economic protection of people by meeting the rights of citizens to food and water, shelter and health care, but it also refers to the need to increase their

practical skills and inner capacities because people are the main engines of change. In a complementary relationship with human security is human development which requires a philosophical and spiritual foundation upon which to cultivate goodness within human beings, that is, a sense of humanity that – to reiterate once more - not merely and only negatively tolerates others but which positively recognises in others the same values that we would like to have recognised in ourselves. But in light of the Buddhist worldviews outlined above but also of those of the West through which we no longer see reality as stable and immutable but dialectically and phenomenologically constantly in flux, the idea of a firm base upon which to build developmental structures has become less and less credible. Instead, such structures, whatever their specific political, economic, etc. content may be, have themselves become subject to domestic and international deliberations and thus are always socio-historically fragile and, depending on one's perception as to what is at stake, need to be constantly revisited and for the good of mankind renewed. Principles of an ethics of action are not given or decreed but as a self-responsible task are coexistentially created with all the risks of failure that this entails.

Against such background of intellectual and scientific uncertainty and indeterminacy, the most fundamental means of ensuring the sustainability of human security and development must be to take two interrelated and complementary approaches: one practical, the other educational. It is imperative that one designs a compelling and practical framework for how global citizens can use a holistic way forward to address the seemingly intractable worldwide problems of persistent extreme poverty, environmental degradation, and political-economic injustice (Sachs 2015). Following the progress made already in this regard under the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), which guided global development efforts in the years 2000-2015, the world's governments are currently negotiating a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) for the period 2016-2030. The

MDG's focused on ending extreme poverty, hunger and preventable disease, and were the most important global development and security goals in the United Nations' history. The SDG's will continue the fight against extreme poverty, but will add the security challenges of ensuring more equitable development and environmental sustainability, especially the key goal of curbing the dangers of human-induced climate change. It is for our generation to move the world towards sustainable security and development.

But, and as will be further argued below - in the first instance security and development in a world of many different nations must be approached through the coexistential promotion of holistic education in and through philosophical dialogue that takes the new understandings of reality structures into account and that is pursued across a vertical or historical axis of time and which can moreover span across a horizontal or intercultural axis of space. For peaceful coexistence based on the cosmopolitanism of global citizenship is an intercultural and historical desideratum. The cultural and philosophical conditions of a dialogue about development are in consequence at best always only contingent and never necessary.

Let us after these political asides return to the philosophy of the Lotus Sūtra. In the following paragraphs, and in light of the 'burning house' metaphor of the state of international relations, we shall take up these educational and dialogical framework conditions of peaceful coexistence as they find their equivalents in three concepts in this scripture, that is, in the ideas that buddhahood is in all people, that the Buddha qua principle of reality apperception is eternal, and that the epistemological teachings of the Buddha are expounded by the bodhisattvas (Kawada 2013: 13-21).

To begin with, what does it mean to say that 'buddhahood is in all people'? The 'Skilful Means' chapter of the Lotus Sūtra talks about four reasons which are put together into one sole purpose for which buddhas appear in this phenomenal world. 'The buddhas appear in the world because they want living beings to *open* a way to the buddhas' insight and thus

become pure. They appear in the world because they want to *demonstrate* the buddhas' insight to living beings. They appear in the world because they want living beings to *apprehend* things with the buddhas' insight. They appear in the world because they want living beings to *enter* into the way of the buddhas' insight' (LS 2: 83; italics added).

From this passage we can deduce several observations. First, Buddhism affords the basis for human dignity, and the reason for why human beings have dignity is because the Buddhist understanding of the cosmic coexistential context of whatever exists is inherent in all that is and therefore also in human beings in the sense that we all and individually have the inner cognitive and moral faculty to ascertain and thus live and act according to the real and true structure of world reality: dependent origination and impermanence. Another point worth making is that since the wisdom of the Buddha is expressed in these principles of the cosmic context, and since all that is inheres in these principles, each and every human being therefore also partakes of the wisdom and nature of the Buddha. For the Lotus Sūtra the cosmic context applies to and is valid for all human beings and without distinction as to cultural background, race or gender, ethnicity or religion, class or occupation, physical or psychological condition, and so forth. In that all people are endowed with the same faculty, it thus and in this and only this sense makes the case for coexistential equality of all human beings. And this is to say that the object of the teachings of the buddhas is to lead all people to the state of buddhahood, that is, to the source of their existence and after the realisation that in their development towards grasping reality as it really is they have gone astray. The objective is always the same, although the methods of teaching may differ and be adapted to different circumstances and the ability of individuals to understand their holistic import. The third observation we would like to draw for the sūtra's understanding of coexistence is that the idea of 'opening' a door into the buddhas' insight, of 'demonstrating' this insight, of 'apprehending' or awakening to it, and also of

wanting people to ‘enter’ into their insight - which is of course the Buddha’s very own insight - is a manifestation of the potential of human life to change towards buddhahood and become a buddha.

These interpretations are clearly written into and can be gathered from the chapter on ‘Skilful Means’ itself. One crucial passage describes the true nature of the reality of all things by expounding the so-called ‘ten suchnesses’, a teaching of perfect harmony originally developed by the Chinese monk Zhiyi (538-597), founder of the Tiantai school of Mahāyāna Buddhism (Krombach 2011). The chapter in question states: ‘Only among buddhas can the true character of all things be fathomed. This is because every existing thing has *such* characteristics, *such* a nature, *such* an embodiment, *such* powers, *such* actions, *such* causes, *such* conditions, *such* effects, *such* rewards and retributions, and yet *such* a complete fundamental coherence’ (LS 2: 76; italics added). Reality in the ‘true character of all things’ means existence, and its true nature can be seen in nine aspects as such, that is, as they really are: (1) their objective appearances or attributes, (2) their subjective or inner nature, (3) their entities or forms, (4) their powers or inner potentials, (5) their functions and activities, (6) their primary or direct causes, (7) their environmental or indirect causes, (8) their effects upon others, and (9) their rewards and retributions upon themselves, (10) the complete coherence or equality of the previous nine factors which describe mutual and inclusive ‘*both-and*’ relations. These suchnesses can be interpreted as illustrations of various viewpoints from which the true nature of existence may be understood. They refer to an ultimate truth which has been grasped intuitively (Skt. *prajñā*; Ch. *bore*; Jp. *hannya*) but whose implied holistic wisdom is entirely beyond our ordinary and dualistic way of understanding things as exclusivistically ‘*this or that*’. They describe the way something really and concretely is and not how we think it is, let alone how it ought to be according to some projected abstract ideal. The other places in the chapter that lend support to our observations of the truth of the oneness

of reality are several references that speak of the ‘*One Buddha-Vehicle*’ or of the fact that ‘these teachings are all for the sake of the *One Buddha-Vehicle*’ or that ‘there is only the *One Buddha-Vehicle*’ that leads to the truth of the interrelatedness of all that is (LS 2: 83-85; italics added).

This reading of the Lotus Sūtra is then substantiated and given further credence in the ‘Parable of the Plants’ which tells of how all plants and trees, while growing in the same earth and the same rain, are nonetheless all different from one another. In our case and for our purpose this suggests a philosophical principle of a phenomenal part-whole relationship or, more concretely, of a coexistential domestic and international society where all human beings coexist together and in harmony with that which ultimately sustains them in their existence as individuals or *differentiae specifica*e but also as humanity or as their underlying and sustaining *genus*. And so the text speaks accordingly of a cloud that ‘pours rain down on all equally and at the same time. The moisture reaches all the plants, trees, thickets, forests, and medicinal herbs...Every tree, large or small, according to whether it is superior, middling, or inferior receives its share. The rain from the same cloud goes to each according to its nature and kind, causing it to grow, bloom, and bear fruit. Though all grow in the same soil and are moistened by the same rain, these plants and trees are all different...The Tathāgata is like this. He appears in this world like the rising of a great cloud, and he extends his great voice universally over the world of humans...’ (LS 5: 159f).

This parable about global and indeed cosmic interdependence and nonduality symbolises the potential awakening of all people to the Buddha’s ‘all-inclusive wisdom’ of universal harmony (LS 5: 160). It is a magnificent paean to the rich diversity of humanity on earth in which each sentient and insentient phenomenon contributes to the truth of the grand concert of life’s symbiosis. Despite the fact that all people are alike in their basic Buddha-nature, they are also all different from one another, and it is these differences that in turn give rise to differences in the way they receive the

rain of truth. But however great these differences in receptivity may be, they all receive the rain of the truth suited to and according to their individual natures – and this forever, because, as the Tathāgata or the Buddha says: ‘I understand both the present world and the worlds to come as they really are, I am one who knows all, one who sees all, one who knows the Way, one who opens the Way, one who teaches the Way’ (LS 5: 160). And while ‘living beings live in a variety of circumstances...only the Tathāgata sees these situations clearly and understands them without hindrance (LS 5: 161). And the philosophical principle that underlies the Buddha’s or Tathāgata’s *one* truth is none other than the way-awakening to the fundamental inner-cosmic and planetary identity of mankind in the presence of all apparent cultural differences. The truth is that all is one and one is all.

It is worth noting in passing that the talk about ‘the Way’ in Buddhism contrasts markedly with the one in Christianity. While, for instance, the Tathāgata is a ‘philosophical principle’ that *describes* a way of awakening towards intuiting the nondual and inner-worldly unity of all that is, in Christianity we speak of a ‘theological person’ (*theos*) who dualistically *explains* Jesus’ way of becoming enlightened about him as the world-external creator God of all that is. As Jesus in the New Testament reveals about himself and us humans in relation to the divine Father: ‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me’ (Jn 14:6). Thus, while in Buddhism we can self-creatingly and self-dependently have human dialogical coexistence, in Christianity human existence is decreed by a God who is said to be the essence of everything and therefore also the source of our dependence. Buddhism is about freedom, Christianity about alienation.

The truth in Buddhism shows itself in yet another aspect of the Tathāgata. Apart therefore from the issue of universal buddhahood, for our present purposes a second relevant and related concept to be found in the Lotus Sūtra is the idea of the eternal Buddha. In the account of ‘The Lifetime

of the Tathāgata' the time and space dimensions of Śākyamuni Buddha as the cosmic life principle is expressed in enormous numbers. For instance, he declares that 'there have been innumerable, unlimited hundreds of thousands of billions of myriads of eons since I became a buddha' and that my 'worlds are innumerable, unlimited, beyond the reach of calculation and beyond the reach of thought' (LS 16: 291f). In other words, 'I am not extinct' and 'I am always here' (LS 16: 296). And this means that the world has no beginning and no end and that whatever exists does so in the everlasting 'now'.

Let us put this interpretation into a broader historico-literary perspective. The above account of the Buddha's existence qua principle of all that is clearly raises the question as to what we can still say about such a reality that is spatially boundless, that contains an infinite number of worlds, whose beginning and end remain temporally forever unfathomable and in which no definite knowledge about anything is ever possible? The experience of not-knowing is reminiscent of the historically much older 'Nāsadīya Sūkta', the hymn of origins of the world in the Hindu *Ṛgveda* (RV) which was composed sometime between 1700-1100 BCE. These verses, too, are full of wonderment when it asks: 'Who really knows? Who can presume to tell it? Whence was it born? Whence issued this creation? Even the Gods came after its emergence. Then who can tell from whence it came to be? That out of which creation has arisen, whether it held it firm or it did not, He who surveys it in the highest heaven, He surely knows – or maybe He does not!' (RV 10.129) (Panikkar 2001: 58). In short: nobody can know the foundation of knowing, nor can anyone say that it is not known.

These very lines from the *Ṛgveda* hymn, which are a reflection of intellectual uncertainty, are an anticipation from thousands of years ago of our contemporary philosophical situation, in which we are almost certain that almost nothing is certain (Cox, G. 2010). It also anticipates a cosmological understanding of the 'human universe' which, in fact, – and according to the Theory of Inflation – may only be one among an infinite number of

universes and that may have come about by chance rather than divine design. It is the idea of alternate universes, meaning universes endlessly spawning and being spawned by other universes (Steinhardt/Turok 2008). And so in answer to the question ‘why are we here?’ the *Rgveda* verse was recently poignantly quoted: ‘But, after all, who knows, and who can say whence it all came, and how creation happened? The gods themselves are later than creation, so who knows truly whence it has arisen?’ (Cox, B. 2014: 169). Philosophical uncertainty, too, is also what Werner Heisenberg (1901-1976) characterises in quantum physics as the ‘Indeterminacy Principle’ that perhaps more than any other scientific theory captures best the underlying meaning of the *Rgveda* speculation (1979, 1990). It has even been suggested that we live in a ‘dappled world’ (Cartwright 1999), a world rich in different things, with different natures, and behaving in different ways, and that the laws that describe this world are a patchwork rather than a pyramid. This is particularly true of physics in the natural and economics in the social sciences, disciplines with imperialist tendencies in the sense that they aspire to account for almost everything. But they fail in these aspirations because the world itself is disordered and hence the laws too can turn out at best to be plotted and pieced. Our understanding of the natural and social world can never be objectively fixed in terms of formal truth propositions but instead is always subject to interpretation.

While these empirical findings and their interpretive epistemological consequences can here not be further explicated (Valgenti 2014), it must suffice to make only two comments. One is that ancient intuition and modern science arrive through different cognitive means at very similar formulations of the macro- and micro-dimensions of world reality and our human place in it. The other implication of such scientific, philosophical and even religious indefiniteness is that we can no longer claim any foundation either as a premise for dialogical coexistence. The justification for dialogue and its thematic reach and depth is not based on given presuppositions but is a task

and therefore needs to be established in and through dialogue itself. In other words, before there can be a dialogue, there must first be a dialogue about dialogue, that is, there must first be a thinking about thinking, a meta-agreement about its justification.

To return again to the Lotus Sūtra: the idea of infinity as emptiness and openness and as it is manifested in the Lotus Sūtra's chapter on 'The Lifetime of the Tathāgata', in the earlier Hindu *Ṛgveda* hymn, but also in modern physicalistic theories, allows in the sūtra for the Buddha's equally infinite compassion for all human beings. This is expressed in the parable of the physician's sons who, after having drunk poison, are saved by their father (LS 16: 294f). In this story the doctor is the Buddha, the children are we ourselves. The poison stands for various desires, and the good medicine is the teaching of the Buddha. Accordingly, we read: 'Because living beings have different natures, different desires, different activities, and different assumptions and ways of analysing things, and because I wanted to lead them to put down roots of goodness, I have used a variety of causal explanations, parables, and other kinds of expressions to share various teachings. I have never for a moment neglected the Buddha's work' (LS 16: 293). From the point of view of cosmology, the Buddha's practice of compassion is universal in space and time. Or: it is the inherent nature of the universe – or *multi*-verse if we suggestively inflate its number to infinity – to be compassionate. And it is because we are born not into the world from outside but from within it and therefore partake of the cosmos-immanent wisdom of the Buddha, that it is our moral mission too as humans to live ethically coexistential lives of compassion towards all people, towards all sentient and insentient beings. In other words, in Mahāyāna Buddhism, those who practice this global mission within this world are bodhisattvas or global citizens.

The practice of the bodhisattvas brings us to the third major concept that further offers us a framework for understanding the Asian cultural conditions

of dialogical coexistence. Bodhisattvas of the earth are the ‘children of the Buddha’ (LS 15: 289), who as it were parental *philosophical principle* symbolise the unity of all that is. These citizens of the world appear first in the ‘Springing up from the Earth’ chapter which informs us that the earth ‘split open and from it innumerable tens of millions of billions of bodhisattvas great ones sprang up together...These bodhisattvas heard the sound of the voice of Śākyamuni Buddha preaching’ (LS 15: 279). This sound of the cosmic voice is audible in all directions, in all lands and regions of world reality. And it is the bodhisattvas who will propagate the teaching of the *historical person* Śākyamuni Buddha after his passing.

Three points may be noted. One is that only through the work and effort of people living wherever they may be is it possible to attempt and perhaps even achieve peaceful coexistence among human beings and their communities. This requires, secondly, that all teachers break first from beneath through the ground of darkness and experience the light of life in actual society. Only when they break through and overcome the divisive barriers of the one-sided and arbitrarily erected assumptions of our isolated self-identities may they really be credible envoys of the Buddha and come to lead people to the true awakening to universal and nondual harmony. It does not do merely to deal with abstract ideas, for without being in touch with the concrete reality as it actually is experienced one cannot deliver mankind from its ignorance and follies. And from this it follows, thirdly, that any teaching without ventured application in practice is dualistic and thus ineffective in its intended objective to reach all human beings. Theory must be converted into action. The true bodhisattva is the doer who applies his knowledge of the true aspect of all reality. He is the doer who, in his compassionate conduct, exemplifies the holistic truth of the Buddha-nature that lies dormant in all human beings; he is the kind of person who makes the teaching of the Buddha meaningful in this world. This is emphatically confirmed in the chapter that describes the ‘Teachers of the Dharma’, which

states that these bodhisattvas are ‘emissaries of the Tathāgata, sent by the Tathāgata to do the work of the Tathāgata’ (LS 10: 226).

The compassionate work of the bodhisattvas, who are the different manifestations of the Buddha, is seen in actual practice in the ‘burning house’ of this phenomenal world. Such specific acts along the Buddha Way that help people in distress but also promote many freedoms are depicted from various perspectives in the Lotus Sūtra. Since they are self-explanatory, we need here merely cite and list the deeds rather than also explicate them in full. The chapter, for instance, on the ‘Previous Lives of Medicine King Bodhisattva’ gives an account of the wondrous effect it can have on people in need of compassion. ‘Just like a clear, cool pool, it can satisfy all who are thirsty. Like fire to someone who is cold, like clothing to someone who is naked, like a leader found by a group of merchants, like a mother found by her children, like a ferry found by passengers, like a doctor found by the sick, like a lamp found by people in the dark, like riches found by the poor, like a ruler found by the people, like a sea lane found by traders, and like a torch dispelling the darkness, this Dharma Flower [Lotus] Sūtra can enable all the living to liberate themselves from all suffering, disease, and pain, loosening all the bonds of mortal life’ (LS 23: 359).

In another chapter that extols the nature of the ‘Wonderful Voice Bodhisattva’ the sūtra asserts freedom of artistic expression as represented by music. In the lands through which this bodhisattva passed precious lotus flowers rained down and ‘hundreds of thousands of heavenly instruments sounded spontaneously’ and ‘hundreds of thousands of billions of pieces of music played’ (LS 24: 365, 368). Moreover, the chapter that lauds the ‘Encouragement of Universal Sage Bodhisattva’ proclaims the inner freedom of thinking and learning rather than obedience to prescriptive norms of external dictates held to be necessary. The bodhisattva here assures those who ponder the sūtra that ‘if any such person forgets even a single phrase or verse of the Dharma Flower [Lotus] Sūtra, I will teach it to them, and read

and recite it with them so that they can learn it once again’, and he urges those ‘who want to study it and put it into practice, they should single-mindedly devote themselves to it’ (LS 28: 394). The bodhisattva who listens to people’s earnest wishes and fulfils those wishes is described in the text ‘The Universal Gateway of the Bodhisattva Regarder of the Cries of the World’, from which we quoted already at the beginning of this section of the Lotus Sūtra. In order to come full circle let us therefore repeat that in this story the bodhisattva liberates afflicted people from ‘lust and desire’, ‘anger and rage’, ‘folly and stupidity’ and that, in general, he ‘is able to bestow freedom from fear on those who are faced with a frightening, urgent, or difficult situation. This is why in this world everyone gives him the name Bestower of Freedom from Fear’ (LS 25: 372, 375). In this mundane world, which is in the state of a burning house, perceiving and meeting the needs of people is what constitutes human security and thus is the beginning as well of an envisioned sustained development towards true and peaceful coexistence.

But all this, ultimately, depends on a specific attitude and motivation of the bodhisattvas towards all human beings. In our last sūtra chapter, ‘Never Disrespectful Bodhisattva’, we therefore hear: ‘I deeply respect you. I would never dare to be disrespectful or arrogant toward you. Why? Because all of you are practicing the bodhisattva way and surely will become buddhas’ (LS 20: 338). Or: the bodhisattva never disrespects anyone because all people have the inherent faculty to awaken to the Buddha’s wisdom of nondual and holistic thinking and because this wisdom is not only timeless but can also be taught through an education in philosophical dialogue.

Despite the Buddhist principles of emptiness and impermanence, which suggest that any social and political practice is in vain, the behaviour of the bodhisattvas as described in the Lotus Sūtra counsels ways of how we ourselves should nonetheless behave as self-creating global citizens and how as such we actually should take a determined stance. But it is only in recent

decades and following calls for going beyond emancipatory meditation exercises in temples and for social and political activism in Asian countries that this direct involvement and engagement in domestic and international affairs has become a subject of serious research and debate (Queen/Sally 1996). According to the sūtra itself, though, and anticipating contemporary interpretations and developments, worldly persons should embrace a view of existence that supports the dignity of humankind and the sanctity of life and that is committed to nonviolence. In a pluralistic and progressive, that is, ethnic, national, and global way they equally should broaden their perspective and cultivate themselves as individuals in intercultural relations for the benefit of others and do their best to awaken humanity to the need to establish the conditions for peaceful coexistence among the diverse peoples on earth. But to be endowed with moral faculties to live up to dialogically not divinely arrived at ethical values is one thing; to be able, motivated and willing to develop them so as at least to approximate their implied value goal is quite another. Through religions, philosophies, and political ideologies human history and cultures have long sought an ideal society composed of ideal persons. But in line again with Kant's transcendental critique of a pure and transcendent reason, though these ideals are viewed *as if* they existed in reality, they nonetheless represent norms that by definition can serve only as 'regulative' experiential principles for judging actions and not as fixed ontological and metaphysical dogmas or doctrines that in a fundamentalist sense are considered to be 'constitutive' of our practices (1965: 550). There are no guarantees of mutually acceptable forms of coexistence, only perennial attempts to negotiate their primary dialogical conditions.

While the Lotus Sūtra offers us a specific Asian literary cultural framework for thinking holistically in a way that also finds a deep resonance in the Western contextual and relational modes of dialectical and phenomenological thinking, it at the same time, however, and as was intimated earlier, raises the extremely difficult but also most important

question of how to motivate and educate people towards peace. Politics, if successful, may at best keep us out of war and from falling victim to other human self-destructive tendencies, but establishing a lasting peace, whatever its negotiated coexistential content, must first of all be the work of education. The real issue in the study of international relations is of how to bring about a consciousness of the world as a whole, a continuing and increasingly reflexive awareness of the fate of the planet, the place of the earth in the cosmos, and the numerous and growing risks facing humanity (Krombach 1992, 1997b).

Let us in only a few words take up this issue in a third brief excursus in this section on the Lotus Sūtra. It is indeed in the field of education that a kindred voice can speak to us in the person of Maria Montessori (1870-1952), the Italian physician and pedagogue, who has revolutionised modern thinking about children and the relationship between ‘education and peace’ throughout the world (1972; Fox 2014: 260). What is most remarkable about her philosophy is the concept of a ‘cosmic education’ for children. As one of her guidebooks states: ‘Although humans have made remarkable progress throughout history, they are simply changing the way they meet the universal, constant needs of all humans throughout time and space’ (Duffy 2002: 115). Fully appreciating this insight is the intention to teach children at least the idea but not necessarily the practical reality of ‘the unity of humanity’ (Duffy 2002: 128). Such holistic thinking can only be obtained in dialogue, that is, in teaching people how to listen to one another and in thus maintaining coexistential lines of communication across borders. It suggests that the perception and experience of the world as fragmented is clearly a false view, because it is based on our mistaking the content of our thought for a description of the world as it is. The world – even as a multiverse rather than only one universe - is a whole and an implicate order in which any element contains enfolded within itself the conscious and material totality of a shared universe (Bohm 1983). The purpose of cosmic as opposed to culturally

isolated education is the development of an actively inquiring, flexible, creative, innovative, and courageous personality who when crossing borders can face uncertainty and ambiguity without disorientation and who can formulate new meanings to meet changes in the social and natural environment which threaten individual and mutual and global survival.

Interestingly, this concept is based on Montessori's reflections on man's place in the universe which she presented in the 1930's as a grand vision and developed further in India in the 1940's into a workable pedagogic programme. Fundamental in Montessori's thinking is the observation that not only is a child in developing according to its inner laws not bound to any restrictions, but that moreover and in general human beings, unlike other sentient phenomena, exist in cosmic contexts within which – strictly speaking - they do not experience any boundaries (2007: 16). It is significant for understanding the conditions of cultural coexistence that this concept was developed in India with its Eastern holistic mindset and that both Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) and the poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) supported the idea and that the latter even founded many 'Tagore-Montessori' schools in his country (Heitkämper 2000: 29-33; Eckert 2007: 46, 167). Montessori schools are now of course an educational feature throughout the world. It is not surprising, therefore, and as he told the author, that the Japanese playwright Hirata Oriza, whose work was discussed earlier and who is one of the most progressive educators of dialogical coexistence in Japan, was likewise much influenced by Montessori's pedagogic methods. These methods, he learned, are crucial in the effort to instil in people a sense and indeed need to embrace dialogical coexistence across borders, that is, in an increasingly interconnected world where each and every person and country is now part and parcel of a worldwide web of communicative relationships. The Lotus Sūtra clearly gives us an Asian venue and insight into grasping our socio-historical sensibilities about dialectical coexistence in cosmic contexts.

4 Dialogue as the Art of Thinking Together

We certainly need to make serious efforts to practice the bodhisattva way of taking the other into oneself and therewith pursue the humanistic promise of dialogue in ever more complex personal and social, domestic and international settings, and justify these with reference to their ultimately cosmic context. Beyond that, though, we not only need to approach philosophical problems dialogically but also learn how to understand the very conceptual elements of a philosophy of dialogue itself.

In this third part we will accordingly move from the dogma of thought imposed and outline some general principles of thinking in dialogue as the art of thinking together and then in the final part describe more specifically the subjective conditions and dialectic that inform and determine the movement of dialogical relations. The first thing to be said is that if we want to integrate dialogue into our lives, we must from the outset reject any hierarchical authority as being simply discriminatory, condescending and therefore inadequate if not outright inimical to whatever problem dialogue partners see themselves confronted with. What enhances the prospect of dialogue is not talk of primacy and dominance but cooperation and collaboration. A dialogue is coherent only in light of shared meanings. And these, in turn, are attainable only if the challenge in dialogue is accepted to allow multiple points of view to be expressed and patiently and conscientiously developed together.

To paraphrase an earlier comment regarding academia: teachers who by dint of their position deem themselves hierarchically superior to their students merely instruct them top-down to absorb factual knowledge, while teachers, who meet the searching minds of students with a sense of intellectual humility, can educate them in the art of reflecting together in an ambience of free-spiritedness on what is initially merely claimed to be known but for that reason not also and already understood. Or in Hegel's

words: ‘The familiar, just because it is familiar, is not cognitively understood’ (1977b: 18). Its meaning and import, therefore, has to be in a dialectical manner dialogically explored and ascertained.

In a more general sense, it is admitted though that allowing diverse views to stand can be almost impossibly difficult. The thing that mostly gets in the way of dialogue is holding onto assumptions and opinions, and defending them. This instinct to judge and defend, embedded as such a reaction is in the defence mechanism of our biological heritage, is the very source of incoherence in communication (Bohm 2004: 6-54). To insist on personal or collectively held cultural assumptions or opinions is to mistake them for inviolate truths. Truth in international relations, though, is never to be unilaterally asserted but can only be multilaterally searched for. Any particular and thus only one-sided truth undermines the principle of dialogical coexistence and hence leads to the experience of large-scale incoherence and to patterns of thinking and then also of acting that separate people and cultures from one another and from the larger world reality in which they attempt to live.

The grafting, for instance, of Western scientific rationality upon other cultures and therewith the colonisation and mental occupation of other minds runs counter to any coexistential hope of engaging in hemispheric dialogue that attempts to tackle global problems, conflicts, crises, and war and the destruction of human habitats. And similarly, the claim to possess unique religious or, more precisely, theological truth is foreign to any promise of coexistential interfaith dialogue so-called but never truly conducted as such and in a spirit of equality. The quest for unique truth carries the potential to divide rather than connect people; such insistence is a demand for obedience. It is asserting to have a privileged view of reality which is not only phenomenologically false but morally fundamentally wrong in that it betrays an attitude of discrimination against and arrogance towards others. But truth does not emerge from clinging to opinions but perhaps only – if at all – from

a freer movement in communication of coherently shared meanings, from reciprocally taking part in the common search for truth. We don't reach agreement when we have discovered the truth; rather, we have discovered the truth when we reach agreement (Vattimo 2014: 77). And also and as a corollary, not that which is true frees us, but that which frees us is true (Vattimo 2012: 96).

Truth lies in truthfully walking a path together, not in being coerced towards the illusion of its destination. Truth is a form of life, not merely a property of propositions. Dialogical coexistence is the medium through which truth tries to happen. To the extent that cultural borders are disappearing, the dualism of logic also begins to diffuse. Truth is not deduced from observations, but made coexistentially, and dialogue partners are its artisans. Incidentally this is not only a postmodern dictum but a principle pronounced already in the early seventeenth century by the Italian 'new science' philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668-1744) who, arguing against the idea of Enlightenment reason, stated that truth is verified through creation and not through rational observation. Similar to our earlier example of the relationship between facts and their interpretive theoretical understanding, the criterion and rule of the true is to have made it: *verum et factum convertuntur* or 'truth and the made are interchangeable' in the sense that we can experientially know with certainty only what we have made (1988, *passim*). What truth is depends on us who make it, not on God who is said to decree it or pure reason that claims to constitute it. Just as truth and logic are now fuzzy and no longer fixed, by the same token we have to accept that what human minds can do they likewise can undo.

This concept of truthfully creating a *sensus communis* can also be expressed with the word 'communication' which is based on the Latin 'communicare', which means 'to share'. But these terms can be interpreted in perhaps two ways. One meaning of *to communicate* or *to share* is 'to make something common', that is, to convey or disseminate knowledge or

information. However, another reading of the word ‘communication’ - and one that is much closer to the idea of making and thus sharing meaning in coexistential dialogue - is not to attempt to *make common* certain ideas but rather to make something *in common* or to create something new and to do so together. But, of course, such communication, such dialogue is not only as an event to be endlessly repeated. In addition, it can only lead to improved and shared understandings of a question or problem if people are psychologically or otherwise motivated, willing and, above all, freely able to listen to each other without prejudice and without trying to influence, let alone dominate each other. It is important to note in this context the ‘if’, the condition upon which all and every sense of commitment depends. The resolution of the ‘if’ depends entirely upon the altruistic motivation that may or may not lie behind it (Babula 2013; Singer 2015; Wong 2000). Be that as it may, only when we adopt a listening attitude can there be any realistic prospect of dialogical coexistence (Fiumara 2006: 192).

The tendency to dominate and the fear of being dominated in a dialogue raises the question of the difference between dialogue and both discussion and disputation. A dialogue is characterised by a stream of meaning shared and flowing among and through the interlocutors. A dialogue has synthetic objectives. By contrast the word ‘discussion’ has the same root as, for instance, ‘concussion’. It really means to break things up. It emphasises the idea of analysis whereby different points of view are being broken up and closely examined. A discussion and, similar, a debate is almost like a ping-pong game where ideas are batted back and forth and the objective is to score points and to win. A disputation is a severe escalation of what goes on in a discussion or debate in that convictions are being thrown at each other with the intention to denounce and discredit the opponent. Insults are heaped upon one another and self-righteousness dominates disputations which were famously conducted in the European Middle Ages and by sectarian religionists throughout history and in other cultures as well. There could be

named many more examples of disputations; may it suffice to mention only two well-known and more modern ones from the West and the East, respectively. One is the Abrahamic and hence in this sense *intra*-cultural theological poem ‘Disputation’ between a Jew and a Christian by the German writer Heinrich Heine (1797-1856) (1982). The other example is by the Japanese Nakae Chōmin (1847-1901) who during the Meiji era (1868-1912) wrote the *inter*-cultural politico-ethical *Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government* (1984). This work narrates a dispute about Western democracy and traditional Japanese samurai values.

Unlike in a discussion, debate or disputation, in a dialogue, however, nobody is trying to win, dominate or insult. A dialogue is something more of a common participation in which the interlocutors are not playing a game against each other but *with* each other. It may very well be that a genuine dialogue can be conducted and shared only between friends, for in a dialogue everybody wins in the sense of gaining a deeper personal knowledge about one another. Beyond that it also leads to a better and increasingly more comprehensive understanding of publically shared and examined concerns. Nonetheless, a dialogue is conducted through the communication of different assumptions and opinions. These normally basic assumptions can be about the meaning of life, one’s self-interest or that of one’s country, religious or politico-ideological interests, or whatever one thinks is important for upholding and protecting one’s dignity and self-esteem as a person or country.

The more there is at stake, the more assumptions are challenged and defended and the more a dialogue, therefore, can escalate into a disputation and this verbal exchange get out of control and deteriorate into a real conflict, a conflict into a crisis, and the crisis into the outbreak of war. This touches upon the fundamental socio-historical ‘we-they’ principle (Gelven 1994: 133-180) that challenges every content of coexistential relations. At the same time and most profoundly, since being with others is *a priori*, it is through

this principle that we make sense of our existential reality. It is hence also by means of this principle that we can think about who we are. And here the German philosopher of war Carl von Clausewitz (1780-1831) guides us towards understanding disturbed coexistences and the range of reasons therefore for fighting wars: ‘The more powerful and inspiring the motives for war, the more they affect the belligerent nations and the fiercer the tensions that precede the outbreak, the closer will war approach its abstract concept, the more important will be the destruction of the enemy, the more closely will the military aims and the political objects of war coincide... On the other hand, the less intense the motives, the less will the military element’s natural tendency to violence coincide with political directives’ (1976: 87f).

If assumptions are to be communicated, the purpose of dialogue is then to ascertain the dialectical nature of their underlying socio-historically and culturally mediated consciousness formation, that is, a mutual and coexistential effort needs to be made to go into all the pressures that are *behind* the assumptions and not just the verbalised assumptions and opinions themselves. Assumptions – transmitted as they normally are through family, teachers, books, etc. – are programmed into personal and collective memory and when identified with are experienced and outwardly expressed and projected as truths, phenomenologically unjustified though this may be. Although universalised, such isolated presuppositions therefore bring about the fragmentation of the dialogical intention which is to strife towards a commonly acceptable coexistential worldview, for it is only when the whole can be grasped in thought that the dialogue can have a reciprocally shared direction and purposeful orientation.

Fragmentation, and analogous to analysis, means to break things up into smaller bits or units as if they were independent, whereby in fact they are not separate either from one another or from the whole of which they are parts. Parts are parts of and thereby partake in a whole, but fragments are just arbitrarily broken off from the whole. An example would be the observation

that holistic intellectual dialogue and its prestige has drifted away from theologians, poets and philosophers and towards contentious debates among neuroscientists, economists, evolutionary biologists and big data analysts. These scholars have a lot of factual knowledge to bring into their specialised areas of inquiry, but they are not in the business of offering wisdom about the existential human condition, for instance, that may matter more if not most to people. Once again, and as we have written elsewhere (Krombach 1992, 1997b), the compartementalising of academic disciplines and the divisive teaching as a result of it are a case in point and speak for themselves. It is most obvious though that in such situations it is most difficult to share one's consciousness and in dialogue coexistentially think together.

However, it is necessary to learn to share meaning coexistentially in and through the practice of dialogue. To use again the distinction between community and society: in the neo-Platonic and medieval Christian periods and throughout religious histories communities and their members were vertically oriented towards God. These church communities held together because people's relationships within were said to be divinely sanctioned and supported by world-transcendent, that is, by metaphysically projected and ontologically rigid values of being and behaviour. Unlike such scripture-based and theological covenant communities, a modern, mundane and voluntarist society - composed of sovereign individuals in a state or of post-Westphalian sovereign states in the international realm - is a link of negotiated contractual and treaty relationships among people and secular institutions so that we can live and coexist together. The key and early expositions of such theories can be found, for instance, in the *Leviathan* by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the *Social Contract* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and the *Philosophy of Right* by G.F.W. Hegel (1770-1831). But a shared praxis of dialogue between such horizontal, as it were, and inner-worldly socio-historical relations which continuously evolve into a variety of shapes and forms only works and can only be effective if we have

a spatio-historical culture, implying that we from within and out of these secular relations and over time come to cultivate and share meaning, that is, significance, purpose and value. The content of dialogue is therefore no longer a given and decreed covenant with the divine but a contract to be negotiated as a perennial task by human beings or by states that in international law have the agency status of legal persons.

But if it is our extrinsic and thus relativistic and dogmatically held assumptions that threaten not only domestic societies and the society of states and through self-serving actions also their intrinsic relationship to mankind, that is to say, if our assumptions threaten the existential relationship between the *genus* and its immanent *differentiae specificaе*, then what is clearly asked for is something similar to what Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) calls an *epoché* or suspension of assumptions or truth-claims. Phenomenologically speaking and formulated explicitly, for Husserl the philosophical *epoché* consists of ‘completely abstaining from any judgement regarding the doctrinal content of any previous philosophy and effecting all of our demonstrations within the limits set by this abstention’ (1982: 33f). If employed in order to reduce the tensions that endanger the coherence of dialogue, the *epoché* in our case encourages the bracketing of dialogue-blocking assumptions temporarily and to do so with the purpose of looking thereby into a personal and collective mirror so that one can see and critically reflect oneself in the dangerous views one holds vis-à-vis others and mankind.

Honesty is a gift we can give to others. But honest and critical self-perception may be hard to entertain, because we are often caught up in a selfish impulse of necessity that is ingrained in one’s socio-historical depth-consciousness and that is imprinted into one’s individual and collective memory. It therefore does not allow us easily to think and act together and discard assumptions that, after all, define our individual lives and self-understanding as states, cultures, religions, ideologies, etc. However,

is what seems at first non-negotiable really and absolutely necessary? For a free, open and constructive engagement with and in a dialogue may very well make possible a creative perception of new orders and dimensions of necessity with the realisation that the parts, that is, persons and states, can be safeguarded only if through coexistential dialogue and action the whole, that is, mankind is protected. As was already and emphatically argued in the introduction, it is the whole to which we are called for to respond, and it is the whole, therefore too, for which we as parts are responsible, and not the other way around (Krombach 1991: 248-254).

The whole as an abstraction and idea does not act; it is not an agent. Only its concretised and *act*-ual or real parts act, namely, towards one another and towards the whole itself. What in the end – and if we do not want to bring the human world to an end – determines the well-being and indeed survival of mankind is then – to make use of these terms again – also only secular and coexistential human self-power or, in Japanese, *jiriki*, and not an imagined and transcendent divine other-power or *tariki* – be it a God of the Abrahamic religions or the divinised historical Śākyamuni Buddha in Pure Land or Amida Buddhism. If human self-power fails, if dialogue fails, then we all will have failed. The breakdown of coexistential dialogue always brings about a relational problem, conflict, crisis and – ultimately – the possibility of war, big or small, limited or total, a war of words or a war of weapons. If we cannot coexistentially in and through dialogue cope with a global Dark Age or what again in Japan is called *mappo*, no God and no gods of whatever religious denomination will rescue us from our follies and failures to communicate ourselves into mutual understanding, for no such *deus* or deities exist except as a fabrication of human imagination.

Let us conclude this part of the essay by mentioning the arguably two greatest thinkers of war and their view of the human condition: the Greek historian, philosopher and general, Thucydides (c.460-c.395 BCE), and Carl von Clausewitz, whom we have already quoted above. What from a

philosophical standpoint is the most important aspect of Thucydides' *Peloponnesian War* and which is so reminiscent of the narratives in Plato is not the reporter's factual account of the unfolding of the fifth century war between Athens and Sparta. Rather, it is the many dialogues and speeches which complement each other in the book in and through which the objectives and moral and ethical arguments of the war are reciprocally reflected upon within and between both cities and on the basis, however, of a more pessimistic than idealistic assessment of human nature. The assumption is that human nature remains relatively constant and that, when certain conditions prevail, the basic human impulses of aggression, fear, and self-interest manifest themselves and can then codetermine the course of history as well. The fear and self-interest that govern the building up of societies, domestic and international on both sides of a polarity will also ultimately bring them to a situation of *stasis* or civil strife and war against each other. When negotiations have collapsed, it is then the pressures of war that act to undo the solidarity of a society or the societies of states (Pouncey 1980: xif). In his narrative Thucydides lets Pericles in his speech to the Athenians put human nature down to the most succinct but also negative formula: 'All things are born to decay' (1972: 162).

And social and historical relations over the millennia have not made us with a good conscience want to change this dismal inquiry into what humans are in the end all about when dialogues break down and fine and exhortatory, hopeful and positive speeches are of no avail. Accordingly and realistically, Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust* therefore recapitulates and puts into poetic language Pericles' dictum when he declares: 'I am the Spirit of Eternal Negation, and rightly so, since all that gains existence is only fit to be destroyed; that's why it would be best if nothing ever got created. Accordingly, my essence is what you call sin, destruction, or – to speak plainly - Evil' (lines 1338-1344) (1994: 36). For dialectical reasons - and irrespective of the justificatory foundations of one's existence, be they of a

secular or divine and metaphysical nature - the dynamics of history will always break through the hopes embedded in coexistential relations and create the necessary conditions for the possibility of evil war, or in short: the possibility of war is a dialectical necessity. While every status quo is fake, change is always all too real.

And as far as Clausewitz is concerned, a most crucial quote from the introduction to his book *On War* in which he articulates his epistemological approach to comprehending war may suffice: 'I propose to consider first the various *elements* of the subject, next its *various parts* or *sections*, and finally *the whole* in its internal structure. In other words, I shall proceed from the simple to the complex. But in war more than in any other subject we must begin by looking at the nature of the whole; for here more than elsewhere the part and the whole must be thought together' (1976: 75; italics in the original). It is for this reason of holistically ascertaining the characteristics and consequences of war as a socio-historical phenomenon and when it affects a totality of people, country, and the world at large that Raymond Aron (1905-1983), the French philosopher, sociologist and political scientist, calls Clausewitz a 'philosopher of war' (1983).

This, of course, is likewise in line with Hegel who states that after all and always 'the True is the whole' (1977: 11). But the whole in general is not merely the totality of its parts but the philosophical comprehension of that totality. It is the result of the activity of reflecting socio-historically upon the dialectical relationship between the moments of its domestic or international development. This dialectic, which is intrinsic to coexistential relations, is not only the thinking culmination of all that came before Hegel but is at the same time also the precursor of all future inquiries into the nature of part-whole relationships, whatever the human context and its empirical content may be. But all such inquiries can be fruitful only if they are based on dialogue as the art of thinking together and learning from one another.

5 Subjective Conditions and the Dialectic of Dialogue in Western Philosophy

Before addressing this theme let us first make some further general comments about dialogue. A dialogue is a particular mode of relationship between human beings or between them and the place they may address such as the natural environment, history and tradition, culture and the present world they live in. The dialogue as conceived in this study about coexistentiality is usually associated with the idea of verbal communication involving participants perceiving each other as equal to one another. In essence, a dialogue implies mutual consideration. The identity of the self starts to shine in the light of the other, and vice versa, the other comes to life in the light of the self. The dialogue is therefore a morality-based ethical praxis among interlocutors who are open to questioning instead of seeking to impose a scheme to resolve problems.

The dialogue has a long history and has even played a foundational role in world philosophy. Much of philosophy in the West and Asia emerged from dialogues. As to Eastern traditions we already referred to the Hindu Upaniṣads and Buddhist scriptures of which the earliest are the Buddha's discourses such as the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the *Mj̄jhima Nikāya*, and the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. To these should be added the famous Hindu epic *Mahābhārata* and within it the 'Bhagavad Gita'. Apart from Plato's dialogues that will be discussed below, other important examples of Western dialogues are the *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems* and the *Dialogues Concerning Two New Sciences*, both by Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), the *Dialogue Between a Christian Philosopher and a Chinese Philosopher on the Existence and Nature of God* by Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715), the *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* by George Berkeley (1685-1753), and the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* by David Hume (1711-1776). But unlike these dialogues with specific themes, the Platonic ones do not only have as their subject matter and content various

human virtues like wisdom, piety, courage, justice, and moderation – all leading up to the idea of ‘the good’ - but these dialogues are also analysed as to what makes them work as dialogues in the first place, namely, according to their subjective attitudinal conditions and dialectical form structure. In addition to the countless dialogues that have shaped philosophical thinking, it is worth mentioning that as a consequence of the Enlightenment and post-modern breakdown of the dialogue between man and God and pure reason the twentieth century saw the emergence of all-encompassing philosophies of dialogue that have sought not only to find ways of negotiating with secular otherness but also to explore what it means to lead an authentic existence in light of human otherness. Significant works are: *Ich und Du/I and Thou* by Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945) (1999), *I and Thou* by Martin Buber (1878-1965) (1996), *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) (1998), ‘The I-Thou Relation in Zen Buddhism’ by Nishitani Keiji (1900-1990) (1982), and *Oneself as Another* by Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) (1994).

While for lack of space and time we cannot elaborate on any of these previous dialogues and later philosophical studies of dialogue, it is our intention in the following pages to thematise more closely the structure of the Platonic dialogue, for it is here that we can learn how not metaphysical or divine but socio-historical truth is mediated as a constant task. The path itself of the task is destination and thus is truth. If human beings are truth-seekers, then to be human is to be a *homo viator*, a way-farer on the way to truth. Truth cannot be said to be truth but to *become* truth. Truth is always its self-own becoming.

The possibility of a nuclear war, environmental degradation or even an ecological collapse justifies an examination of the philosophical dialogue and its inter-personal and inter-national practice. In these and other possible events with planetary dimensions, dialogue and thus communicative coexistentiality will have broken down, just as the often hubristic

assumptions upon which the universalist sciences, theological religions and political ideologies base their reasoning will have turned out to be spurious and even fatal for thinking through the conditions of a meaningful dialogue that is ultimately directed towards preserving the self-dignity of humankind.

A dialogue has developmental possibilities with respect to its dialectically obtained agreements, but it also has limitations. For it to be conducted coherently the dialogue also needs to meet subjective conditions such as responsibility, trust, courage and hope, whose fulfilment, however, and precisely because they depend on favourable personal dispositions cannot be relied upon. Because of their presentness, not only can knowledge claims not be proved, but subjective dialogic reflections make ultimately assertions which future history alone can demonstrate. Thus dialogic knowledge in Plato is directed more towards the ‘how’ of knowing and living than the ‘what’ is known and lived (Gonzales 1998). At the same time, the dialogue and its uncertain theoretical and practical consequences are the essence of the human coexistential condition. What dialogical thinking therefore teaches us, or ought to teach us, is a sense of moderation and humility, because our personal or national standpoints and their merely assumed validity can always be questioned. A dialogue never ends with a conclusion that could be considered valid here, now and forever. As we shall see, it is open-ended and always leads to further questions that require new answers. And this is a process to be pursued *ad infinitum*. Hence, in order for coexistence to manifest itself in peaceful dialogue, it needs the caring of reflective and circumspective minds. Care, however, is first and foremost to be taken by the interlocutors themselves or within the dialogue because it is its practiced language that is the verbal and communicative expression of our human self-comprehension.

The question of care touches upon the subjective and dialectical conditions of a coherent and in this sense meaningful un- and enfolding of a dialogue. Just as we have earlier – and for cultural, educational and heuristic

reasons – referred to the ancient Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist Lotus Sūtra in order to highlight the need to think in terms of holistic structures, so this fourth and last part of our expositions will narrow down the philosophical treatment of our theme still further and historically go back to ancient Greece and briefly sketch the subjective elements and dialectical structure of the Platonic dialogue (Krombach 1991: 12-27).

As argued throughout, the need in our precarious life-world to engage in dialogue is perhaps more urgent today than at any previous time. For what is at stake in our era is nothing but the freedom of humanity. But it is only through the dialectically guided dialogue that the idea of this highest good for mankind can be coherently approached and in any educationally meaningful way. In other words, and although we are hardly ever aware of it, the primary experience of the possibility of inter-personal and inter-national humanity manifests itself coexistentially within the practiced dialogue. An understanding of its teleological movement is therefore of paramount importance. That humanity is initially only a possibility and never a given conceptual certainty is due to the insight that it always only begins as hope, but that hope in turn can develop only socio-historically, that is, only reflectively and intersubjectively in and through dialogue. Such dialogue is an on-going here and now process of verbal communication that takes place across borders through which all inner-worldly phenomena are – to repeat – not distinct but differentiated from one another. What guides the origin towards its future is the principle of hope (Bloch 1995).

As an example of dialogue in Western philosophy we believe that Plato's philosophical description of its eternal dialectical essence can induce contemporary interlocutors to ponder the dialogue qua dialogue and not as a discussion, debate or disputation and thus with less semantic confusion but all the more thoughtfulness and the greater respect it deserves. For Plato dialectic is a method of reflection that must be observed if one seeks intersubjective and therefore coexistential knowledge of principles such as

truth, the whole or oneness that he identifies with the ‘idea of the good’ (Rep. 534b9) and which he considers to be a ‘guide on the voyage of discourse’ (Soph. 253b11). If used correctly, it helps to point out the coherence or incoherence of the contributions made by the dialogue partners. Plato argues that the issue of coherence is based on the ‘royal warrant of reason’ (Soph. 235c1) which for him elevates philosophy to a dialogical science or, more precisely, to a ‘science of dialectic’ (Soph. 253d3). In fact, he sets dialectic ‘above all other studies to be as it were [their] coping stone’ (Rep. 534e2-3). But, and as intimated already, dialectic as method is not separated from the dialogue. On the contrary, for the philosophical method to be meaningful, it is required to show its worth in its practical application, that is, while on the path of dialogue. Method and application, therefore, turn into the dialectical and that means coexistential dialogue. It is in respect of this holistic and nondual relationship that he speaks of a science, of a synthetic science of dialectic or of the path itself of dialogue.

What from the point of view of coexistence is of fundamental importance is that a correctly conducted and coherent philosophical dialogue leads to the attainment of freedom. Understanding the science of dialectic is the ‘free man’s knowledge’ (Soph. 253c8), because through it one can emancipate oneself from the constraining fetters and fixed and one-sided assumptions that inform our opinions. After all, and as the ancient may still want to teach us moderns: it is the aim of philosophising in and through dialogue to set people free.

To engage in a dialogue is to ask questions and to answer them. It is an attempt to overcome opinions by critically examining them as to their internal coherence but also their consequences for the further development of dialogue. In doing so, the interlocutors enter the realm of truth. And what in this process transforms ignorance into an understanding of otherwise only opinionated knowledge is for Plato education, is *e-ducere*. The task of ‘nurturing and educating’, he accordingly writes, should consist in teaching

the ability to 'ask and answer questions in the [dialectically] most scientific manner' (Rep. 534d5, 534d11-12). This is so because the study of a subject must be accompanied by a heuristic inquiry into what is true and false in it, and 'must be carried on by constant practice throughout a long period' (Letter VII, 344b3-4). Hence the issue taken up in a dialogue is not, and ought not to be, decided by a unilateral decision. Because of the dialectically guided dialogue, it is neither stated arbitrarily nor wilfully and arrogantly imposed on authoritarian instruction. What is put forward as an answer to a question, then, is never the truth but merely an opinion. It is through dialectic that an answer presented is questioned. What is given is thus taken again and thought through in its implications and then dialogically and in this sense also truthfully developed further into more precise statements and accounts of what one deems to be the truth. Truth in dialectic is coexistentially made, not singularly proclaimed.

It is worth recalling the distinction we made earlier between dialogue and disputation. A disputation is a relativistic communication, as it were, for here the disputants remain seemingly autonomous and self-referring sophistic selves. As such and in their separateness which, however, is merely abstract (Latin: *ab-strahere* = draw from/away), they heap upon one another aggregates of arguments. In their unreflected sophistry they run to and fro, in talking they say nothing, and their linear verbiage remains without any concrete development towards one another. Plato therefore argues that in engaging in a 'shadow play of discourse' the disputants only create 'illusions' (Soph. 234c6, d7). In a dialogue, by contrast, the horizontal movement of the relativistically expressed positions of the sophists is sublated, and - in that they relate to the common purpose of the symposium - the interlocutors instead advance together, that is, concretely (Latin: *con-crescere* = grow with/together) towards a higher and mutually agreed comprehension of the thematic content of the dialogue. The ancient Greek critically reminds us still today that the 'isolation of everything from everything else means a

complete abolition of all discourse, for any discourse we can have owes its existence to the weaving together of forms' (Soph. 259e4-260a2).

In a dialogue questions and answers are issue-bound, and this in a double sense in that the participants within a triangular structure both relate to one another but also to the reason for why they have come together in the first place. It is this purpose which prompts the interlocutors to give their reciprocal accounts of their understanding of an issue but which also unites them in their mutual effort to understand it both together. It is this which forms them into a community or into that which allows them to make something 'in common'. Philosophically speaking, this is to say that it is the idea of the whole which conditions the developmental movements of its parts.

Let us in connection with this dialectical reading of the dialogue insert another yet very important and somewhat unexpected point and historical experience. To begin with, similar to the positional structure of the relationship between pupil and a sage in Asian Hindu and Buddhist scriptures, the relationship between the philosopher and the interlocutors in Plato's dialogues is also hierarchical. Or, put differently: the Platonic dialogue does not take place among equals for, while the philosopher thinks pure thoughts, the sophist only opines about appearances. The internal progression of a dialogue thus proceeds discontinuously with itself. Wisdom is not something that flows without interruption from one person to another. It is not something one is naturally endowed with but an attribute whose attainment requires a mutual and sincere effort.

In the coexistential context of our earlier comments about dialogue as being the art of thinking together, this Platonic and asymmetrical movement of a dialogue raises in our troubled time of international discourse the uncomfortable question as to whether a symmetrical inquiry into an issue – though recognised as being of mutual concern – can at all be pursued between partners that see themselves as being equal to one another, not

before the law but before the judgement of one's self-perceptions and those of others. Since, as we said before, there will never be complete information available, do symmetry and equality not rather render the dialogue immobile and force it to become a mutually reinforcing disputational confrontation? One could argue that while a dispute may not force an issue, the issue may however bind the dialogue. But because of the homonymous treatment of topics this of course is not obvious either. Though interlocutors may very well feel equal to one another, their argumentation, as was pointed out above, often also originates from different primary conceptions whose formative socio-historical, political, religious, and other determinative conditions may vary considerably. The likely result of such a situation is that the dialogue about a common problem, which the interlocutors profess to share, is not only a cognitively self-serving but also an action-oriented self-interested exercise.

The historical *locus classicus* is the experience of the Cold War during most of the second half of the twentieth century (Gaddis 2007). In this period the relationship between the former Soviet Union and its allies and the West underwent a transformation from a situation of objective equality, understood in terms of numerical missile deployment capabilities, to that of subjective equality, understood in terms of reciprocal perception abilities. While the former scenario locked the adversaries into immobile ideological disputations that was accompanied by dangerous military escalatory potentials, the latter development allowed for a more dialogically arrived at controlled but no less ethically dubious Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) perception and deterrence strategies. Peace blackmailed and enforced by the threat of annihilation is not peace but insanity. It was during the Cold War that the Soviets coined the originally Marxist-Leninist expression of 'Peaceful Coexistence' between the two blocs (Pittman 1964; Trofimenko 1988). The purpose of the ensuing disputational dialogue was to curb the arms race and to set in place confidence-building measures in order to

prevent the outbreak of a nuclear war. In this, and ever since the demise of communism, Russian governments and Western countries have so far succeeded. However, the fear of an atomic catastrophe in the future can never be fully negotiated away, for the knowledge of constructing lethal weapons and to use them can never be eliminated from the mind of mankind. To be sure, in the meantime, and apart from its use to describe inimical ideological relations, the term 'peaceful coexistence' has been employed in all areas of international political, economic and social affairs, East and West, North and South.

Against this background the general question poses itself whether it is realistic to envisage a successful dialogue whose homonym is approached from assumptions that are incompatible with one another. The broad diversity of geographical constants and cultural contexts or the narrow dogmatism of ideological and religious enclosures do not easily if at all secure a synonymous grasp of a problem to be solved. At the same time, though, the notions of difference and dialectic are the immanent *species* differentiations of the unitary principle of the *genus* mankind. The possibility of a dialogical reconciliation in the strict sense is therefore difficult to entertain unless, that is, the interlocutors in their coexistential endeavour can conceive of the endangered world in such a way that it transforms their initially inflexible positions into the focus of the common cause of finding the right approach and a solution to whatever threatens global humanity, a cause to which, after all, both partners in dialogue are related with equal necessity. The ability to free oneself from strictures and to enter into open horizons is itself never to be taken for granted; it is instead and remains a perennial task.

After this conceptual and historical interlude, let us return to Plato. Apart from the element of freedom which a dialogue can but not necessarily will grant the encounter between interlocutors also contains the subjective condition of *responsibility*. This moral attitude, however, lies mainly with the

questioner himself. And in a Platonic dialogue it is the philosopher who takes the priority over the respondent and his answers. The presupposition is that the questioner as questioner has already within himself a preliminary synoptic overview of the subject matter at issue and that he comprehends the structure of the dialectical unfolding of the dialogue, while the answering interlocutor merely replies with the external reflections he hopes to bring to bear on the problem which both seek to scrutinise. And this suggests that the former guides and educates the latter.

But, and this is the crucial difference between, for instance, the sage Yajñavalkya in the *Upaniṣads* or the teacher Śākyamuni, the historical Buddha in his *Discourses*: in the dialectic of the Platonic dialogue the issue is actually not as such known. By contrast, the Asian seers or ṛṣis do know - and know *ab initio*, if only intuitively and not by ratiocination - the whole import of questions and answers. This is their wisdom. The manifest consequence of this, however, is that those who come to learn from them are therefore and from a dialogical point of view actually not e-ducated but in-structed. They are not independent producers of values in the process of thinking but dependent consumers of goods provided by ready-made thoughts. The learner is not encouraged to learn out of the box and to question authority but to accept with docility what is poured into the box. This pedagogical method is prevalent to this day, for example – and as lamented earlier - in Japanese schools and universities, and in the main is geared towards functional and practical knowledge acquisition and not the critical questioning of the content and meaning of such knowledge as it has been communicated by the teacher in the sense of having been made common but not ‘in common’.

Unlike in the tradition of Eastern knowledge wisdom, the wisdom of the philosopher in Plato’s dialogues is to admit that he in fact does not and cannot claim to know. As Socrates says about himself: ‘I am quite conscious of my ignorance. At any rate it seems that I am wiser than he [the sophist] is

to this small extent, that I do not think that I know what I do not know' (Apol. 21d5-8). In short: the philosopher knows that he knows nothing; it is the sophist who knows, albeit only in pretence. It is he who confuses opinion with knowledge or knowledge with understanding. If the philosopher knew already the meaning of what he asks his interlocutor to give an answer to, it would not be necessary to engage in an inquiring dialogue in the first place, for what informs the agreement to come together is not knowledge but the lack of and therefore the need and quest for it. However, the philosopher does have quiet internal reflections or dialogic monologues. For Plato such monological thinking is a 'dialogue of the mind with itself' (Soph. 264a11). But the attempt by the philosopher to think things through first and alone does not mean that he possesses a full understanding of the relationship between thinking and the object thought about. It simply refers to the mental function which manifests dialogical vagueness. But in this sense, the absence of knowledge can be said to be embryonically already present at the beginning of the dialogue, and the philosopher's role is then the one of a 'midwife' who in and through the process of questioning and answering helps others to give birth to knowledge because he himself is 'debarred' by heaven from doing so (Theaet. 150d1).

What this in its wider implication suggests though is that knowledge and its interpretive understanding are in general never to be taken as a given truth, never therefore in the possession either of one person, one country, one culture, or one religion and political ideology alone. Truth is always only interpretive truth. In a world determined by relations and reciprocal dependencies, by dialectical becoming rather than ontological and metaphysical being, nothing is ever merely static and abstract, separate and unique but in reality always only to be understood in dynamic and evolving contexts.

We have said that the dialectical dialogue has to do with the give and take of arguments. Its striving towards a consensus or the *logos* is necessary

because, as the philosopher asks his interlocutor: ‘have you ever supposed that men who could not render and exact an account of opinions in [a dialogue] would ever know anything of the things we say must be known?’ (Rep. 531e2-4). Two aspects of this question need to be noted. One is that it is the holistic epistemic pull of the objective purpose of the dialogue which demands that the opining interlocutors come together. The other is the realisation that the coming together is not automatic. The methodological objectivity of dialectically conducting the dialogue can be carried out only if the relationship between the interlocutors has been established on the basis of another subjective condition, namely, the confidence (*con-fides* = trust together) that both partners in fact follow and *trust together* the philosophical precepts inscribed in dialectic.

The method of give and take is thus in an important way also contingent upon ‘trust’ (Rep. 511e1). But this means that the functioning of the principles of dialogue presupposes the agreement on a rather uncertain commitment. In a dialogue it is a personal sentiment that either supports or weakens the effort to fathom the reasons for wanting to reconcile different opinions and find a resolution to a given problem. A dialogue, however, that operates on the basis of such a plea can render its reason or outcome only as a constant *aporia* or as a persistent problem that in a fresh dialogical attempt is again open to new hermeneutic interpretations.

Yet this raises the question of motivation which we already touched upon previously. What, for instance, are the interests that may motivate interlocutors to come together and talk at all? Trust is required in the absence of incomplete knowledge and its interpreted understanding of what it is that ultimately prompts and guides interlocutors towards dialogue. A dialogue partner will and can never have comprehensive and full information about his interlocutor. Whatever one may want to read into any such information offered or surmised can always only be based on perceptions or misperceptions. If trust cannot be easily objectified in interpersonal relations,

how much more difficult must it be and actually is in international politics (Jervis 1976). But if there is no initial trust, nobody will want to enter into any dialogue or negotiation. Here again, both issues, the one to do with motivating interests and the other with trust, are purely subjective conditions; they are indeed socio-historically contingent and cannot be objectively established or tested. Consequently, there is no sure criterion for ascertaining let alone guaranteeing a positive outcome of a dialogue. A dialogical coexistential relationship is therefore from the start fraught with risks.

But be that as it may, although personal trust and confidence in the willingness of the interlocutors to conduct their dialogue in line with their dialogue-immanent dialectical rules cannot be formally tested, the requirement is that abstract thoughts become concrete and are made manifest in spoken language. What at first was implicit and indeterminate becomes transparent and explicit. In this sense, thinking and speaking are dialectically identical. It is through speaking that the dialogical result is mediated but also mediates itself to itself as the dialogically arrived at new agreement or consensus. In other words, the interlocutors approximate such an epistemic result through the dialectical movement of ever clearer, though mutually always only contingent, opinions about it. For a dialogue to work, it is not enough just to express an opinion, but this opinion also needs to be reasoned through and thus explained and justified. As Plato admonishes and advises us: ‘True belief with the addition of an account [explanation/justification] is knowledge, while belief without an account is outside its range. Where no account is given of a thing it is not “knowable”’ (Theaet. 201d1-3).

Without the praxis of the dialogue the abstract word is without a clarified content and hence remains meaningless. Plato lets one speaker say to another: ‘All that you and I possess in common is the name. The thing to which each of us gives that name we may perhaps have privately before our minds, but it is always desirable to have reached an agreement about the thing itself by means of explicit statements, rather than be content to use the

same word without formulating what it means' (Soph. 218c2-7). 'Playing with words, but revealing nothing' (Gorg. 489e6-7) is not only likely to lead to misunderstanding and a mutual misinterpretation of their signification; it also does not help the dialectic of the dialogue to develop coherently. Therefore, lest it loses itself in groundless chatter, the interlocutors, precisely because truth is not known, must nevertheless muster a third subjective condition and have the courage and *dare* a reasoned explanation of what they mean by what they say.

Despite the uncertainty that informs one's reason and justification to enter into a dialogue and despite the uncertainty as to its outcome, the moral quest and even demand to participate and speak honestly and transparently is thus to have also the courage to take a stance in the search for learning about and understanding and perhaps even solve the problem at hand. It is to 'dare' to assert and offer openly a truthful opinion and therewith to try the epistemic truth, no matter how elusive the truth may be with respect to grasping the import of what is being talked about. To remain silent in an attempted and initially agreed dialogue is to avoid and evade the responsibility to respond to the call of the task.

Due to the hierarchical structure of the Platonic dialogue, however, it is incumbent upon the listening philosopher to question the claims of his opinionated sophist. And it is in the philosopher's own daring that a sincere concern for the outcome of the dialogue is manifested. He therefore reminds his partner that 'our whole [dialogue] from the outset has been an inquiry after the nature of knowledge on the supposition that we did not know what it was...Then, doesn't it strike you as shameless to explain what knowing is like, when we don't know what knowledge is?' (Theaet. 196d8-13). Elsewhere in his dialogues Plato vividly describes the tragedy and purgative effect of reducing someone to *aporia* or perplexity: it shows someone who merely thought he knew something that he does not in fact know it and that this humiliating experience of being lost through questioning in dialogue

instils in him humility and a desire to investigate it further (Meno 84a-c). In commenting first on a student's reply to a question, Plato writes that 'then he thought he knew it and answered boldly, as was appropriate – [and] he felt no perplexity (*aporia*). Now, however, he does feel perplexed. Not only does he not know the answer; he doesn't even think he knows' (Meno 84a5-8). In other words, while the student's response was at first seen as rash and rather thoughtless, out of this grows his desire to know and to understand and thus to bring to presence what was experienced as absent. After all, as Diotima reminds us in Plato's dialogue *Symposium*: in philosophy or in *philo-sophia*, that is, in the 'love of wisdom' there is *philein*, to love, to be in love, to desire. Aristotle puts this epistemological sentiment into the categorical phrase: 'All men by nature desire to know' (Met. 980a22), namely, to know the causes of and reason for what is and how and why the way it is. For us, of course, this applies equally to the dialogue as well which initially alone makes coexistential relations possible.

The philosopher's courage, however, and unlike the one of his brazen fellow speaker, is thoughtful. He takes the task upon himself, responds to its dialectical requirement, and in a social context dares his responsibility for it. Private and abstract language is pretentious and yet vacuous, static and sterile. The concreteness of shared verbal expressions, by contrast, is in its development dynamic and daring. To dare the task, however, is not to have already succeeded in it. But this only means again that through questioning and answering or through the mediating dialectic of the dialogue what is being sought in it *becomes* rather than is its self-own result understood as verbal consensus or as the *logos*. It comes about through the dialogue because it is dialectically mediated through (*dia*) its internally tried and dared reciprocally offered language (*logos*). Dialogic – and that is interpreted - truth always assumes the shape of a mutually attained result even though a defective and never final and definitive one; it is merely and only momentarily correct but not and never true here, now and forever. Because

of the socio-historical progression of the dialectical dialogue or the dialogical coexistence of interlocutors, it is impossible for the alternation of word and the object it is said to refer to ever to correspond fully to one another.

To question an answer is to problematise it and to bring its assumed unity into differentiation with itself in order then and through the ongoing dialogue to bring it back to itself in a higher unity to which it belongs. What is clearly at issue is the tension between question and answer. Inherent in any answer is its dialectical division. The answer appears in its differentiation because its dared formulation exposes it to the critique by the interlocutor. Differentiation and contingency are thus the obvious public and hence coexistential consequence of the concretisation of the abstract private claim made in an answer. However, they are also the very presupposition of the dialogue.

Through multiple questions and answers the Platonic dialogue uncovers and therewith demonstrates the many epistemic aspects of its task. But, although 'knowledge taken in its entirety will seem to be a plurality in which this knowledge is unlike that [knowledge]' (Phil. 13e9-10), the interlocutors undertake to bring such difference into harmony. 'For I imagine' writes the philosopher, 'we are not striving merely to secure a victory for my suggestions or for yours; rather we ought both of us to fight in support of the truth and the whole truth' (Phil. 14b6-8). This is a fine example of how in a dialogue the joint venture is teleologically conditioned not only by its shared objective but also by the friendly atmosphere that prevails in the dialogue. Merely 'combative' and 'fighting', 'competitive' and 'pugnacious' exchanges of questions and answers are nothing but what are commonly called 'disputations' or sheer 'sophistry' (Soph. 224e-226a). Such adversarial and eristic argumentation and the 'forensic controversy' (Soph. 225b7-8) this implies does not know any striving for the sake of finding universal truth, truth understood in its qualified sense that it is never absolute and universal and never the possession of one voice alone but at best the question and

answer as reciprocally interpreted by interlocutors.

But the experience in dialogue of the plurality and differentiation of knowledge, understanding, or truth is at the same time also the very origin of hope we alluded to above, our fourth and perhaps most important subjective element and condition of dialogical coexistence. Yet, while the dialectic guides and goads the dialogue towards truth, hope itself of course is not the same as truth. The perplexed companions, because of their subjectivity, always limp behind its forever hidden objectivity. Whatever they may in the end agree upon, it cannot be of more than partial validity. But it is precisely because of this dialectical gap between the interlocutors and the truth of the task they seek to establish, or between what is present and what is absent that the path of hope is opened up and indeed pursued. Truth is hoped-for truth, an image of that which can only be imagined.

The fact that the result of a coherently conducted dialectical dialogue of questioning and answering is plural - because always at best interpretive instead of singular and forever fixed - means as a consequence also that - as was alluded to above - it is open-ended in the sense that it always ends up in yet another problem, another puzzle or impasse, an *aporia*, that is, to which one can continuously address further questions, but for which likewise no final truth resolution can ever be found. In other words, a dialogue does not give rise to convergence on a single unifying truth. Truth is not given otherwise than in interpretation and this means that it works only inasmuch as it is shared. The result of a dialogue is therefore always negative and infinitely so.

A dialogue produces one perplexity after another; it is a source of constant wonderment. But it is precisely because of the hermeneutic openness of questions and the humbling lack of any definitive answer, that the dialectical method of the coexistential dialogue is also positively educational and in this sense pure philosophy as well. It comes therefore as no surprise either - and let us repeat what we said in the introduction - that

the experience of a 'sense of wonder' is for Plato the very 'mark of the philosopher. Philosophy indeed has no other origin' (Theaet. 155d2-3). And echoing these words of wisdom Aristotle too writes that 'it is owing to their wonder that men both now begin and at first began to philosophise' (Met. 982b12-13). Education, as we learned at the beginning, helps us to think out of the box instead of being dominated by it. But it likewise makes us fully focused on the task set out in our inquiries. Because we are perplexed and made to wonder about how we fare in dialogue - in modernity through the Hegelian experience of dichotomy (1977a: 91, 89) - education is a mode of social engagement that in other words guides us towards stepping out of preconceived ideas which – and because we have been historically instructed to internalise them - we have a psychological and cultural habit to defend, to cling to and be attached to. Education instead encourages us to gain an overview of many views as they are revealed in coexistential relations, and it thereby teaches us also to learn to think in the socio-historical dialectical and phenomenological or nondual terms of contexts, relations and perspectives that are perennially in flux. In the end education in and through coexistential dialogue informs us not only about what a human being is but teaches us, and more fundamentally, what it is to be human – what it means to live and to live graciously towards and with others. The dialogue itself is origin and goal of coexistence.

6 Conclusion

Never before has there been a greater need for deeper listening and more open intercultural communication to cope with the complex problems mankind faces.

We mostly write in response to an event. The event that led to the composition of this article, whose canvas contains a multitude of venues into understanding the complexities of dialogical coexistence, was the experience of different worldviews that for some observers, however, are so distinct

from one another that they appear to be irreconcilable. Referring to (Near) Eastern Islam and Western Christianity (Cox, H. 1977: 7-21), we are reminded of the English author Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) who once famously remarked in his 1889 poem, *The Ballad of East and West* (1989: 233) that

East is East, and West is West,
And never the twain shall meet.

Many observers today, of course, wish to go beyond the conflicts within the dualist Abrahamic religions. Instead they apply such categorical statements to the apparent divisions between Western forms of dualism and the nondual grasp of the relationship between human selfhood and the world as we find it in the spiritual and philosophical thinking in countries further east, like India, China, and Japan. The main reason for this impasse in communication is the continued inability to question and even let go of assumptions that often define our self-understanding and cultural identity.

But if our philosophical reflections in these pages have taught us anything at all then it must be the realisation that we learn little from one another unless we learn how to unlearn what we have learned, that is, unless we learn to break away from the orthodoxy of Western metaphysics, ontology and theology but likewise from the Eastern traditions of Confucian social and educational strictures, Buddhist utopia, and the ideology of cultural isolationism.

It is as if this one world which we inhabit is fragmented, humanity separated from itself, and reality cut off from its meaning. It is therefore the loss of sense of oneness in which we wish to anchor a philosopher's responsibility to bring to presence again what is absent, not in some original disappearance that has made us forget oneness itself, but in the unfolding of the history of humanity in which the congruence of reality and meaning is

always elusive and has to be tried out again and again. We philosophise because we are exposed to the world and have therefore the responsibility of naming what needs to be said and done in order for mankind to become more at peace with itself.

We live in an age of global awakening. For the first time in human history almost all of humanity is politically activated, politically conscious and politically interactive. Global activism is generating a surge in the quest for cultural respect. And yet, coexistence is threatened by death, namely a poverty of values and ideas that may well lead to the demise of civilisation through nuclear war, ecological collapse or other global calamities. Humanity is threatened by discontinuity, by an interruption of the communication between its parts. Hence dialogue can never be sure of itself and nothing is settled once and for all. In the field of history and society, in the domain of coexistential relations between human beings and their becoming in domestic and international affairs, there is no written law that determines how they ought to be understood. The idea of the oneness of humanity in which we all share needs to be grasped afresh and remade with the dynamism of philosophical passion and the decision for revolutionary action.

But despite the uncertain outcomes of any dialogue, this mode of communication across cultural boundaries presents us initially with the only hope at least to think through the conditions of establishing conciliatory coexistential relations. As was stated in the introduction, ‘there is no genuine philosophy without dialogue, and in a globalised world dialogue must embrace the diverse strands of wisdom that have influenced people throughout history’. This task is now to be pursued by Eastern and Western and all other cultures because these do not exist relative to one another but in a spiritually organic sense are intrinsically related to what ultimately underlies and thus unites them, that is, mankind.

With this in mind it is then also possible to agree with Goethe (SW

I/3.1) (1987: 614; with the author's translation) and proclaim that:

Wer sich selbst und andre kennt

Wird auch hier erkennen:

Orient und Occident

Sind nicht mehr zu trennen

He who knows himself and others

Will now recognise as well

That East and West

Are no longer to be separated.

Tragedy looms if we falter! But tragedy can also find its resolution in dialogical coexistence. Although the context is different, one literary and most educational precedent is the trilogy *Oresteia* written about 2500 years ago by the archaic Greek writer Aeschylus (525-456 BCE). After generations of strife, murder and revenge, the Furies and the Eumenides, or the 'Kindly Ones', reached agreement and established democratic peace. It was the event when 'at last humanity was achieved' by human fiat (line 1009) (1979: 275). The *Oresteia* is the triumph of the Mean. But it is this not only from the point of view of the mediating middle in the Western modes of dialectical and phenomenological thinking but also in light of the binding medium of nonduality in Eastern thought structures. As such it is the resolution of discord into harmony or the sharing of democracy across the borders of erstwhile opposing worldviews. It is then also a final vision, for better or for worse. For better, since it answers to the human need for respite after so much suffering and inflicted pain. For worse, because this Apollonian optimistic vision of harmony may seem unreal, even a delusion. And thus this particular vision may contain, despite itself, the Dionysian seeds of historical ruin. But if memory can be a guide for action, then, in the

time-space nexus of past and present, East and West, it is for the states today to explore the cultural and philosophical conditions for the hopeful event of dialogical coexistence in the world to flourish instead to fail. It is this task that justifies their future responsibility to humanity.

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Appendix

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Indoteki kyouseishisou no sougouteki kenkyu
Shisou kouzou to sono juyou wo megutte

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