

Our Modern Western Society

Theoretical and Practical Observations from an Ecological Perspective

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It is true, most of us (in so-called western societies) have more leisure time, greater security and fewer accidents, more education, more amenities, higher incomes, more food, and a healthier and longer life.¹ It is not only that our civilization is doing better, but we do so to an increasing cost of our planet's ecosystem. We have achieved this progress by pursuing aggressively anthropocentric interests to an extent that the knowledge and technology that we created controls us ever since; it runs us, and takes possession; we have become prisoners of our own thoughts.² Although these very thoughts have achieved many things but in this very same process, these thoughts have "polluted the entire system". They affect everything on this planet; and since thought is the accumulated knowledge of the past that is applied in the present, it probably keeps on shaping our immediate and long-term future - be it in religious, political, socio-economic or environmental terms. Thus, the collective absorption of these thoughts were (and still are) the very reason of misbalance, conflicts, and wars. Historic experience list numerous events of cruelties against our own kin, while the conquering mentality of modern-type "crusades" across continents keep imposing our worldview onto the face of this planet. Although *Galileo Galilei* in 1612 CE proclaimed the relativistic universal view that Earth and all other planets revolve around the Sun, subconsciously we seem to be stuck with pre-Galilean views and present ourselves with pomp and glory.³ Indeed we did so successfully that our planet is struggling against this unprecedented assault that include environmental pollution, destruction of entire ecosystems, the aesthetic degradation of nature, human overpopulation, resource depletion, industrial growth, technological manipulation, and military proliferation.

Trends within our contemporary Dominant Society

The steam engine laid the foundation for the Industrial Revolution, which over the past century and a half changed production from an almost exclusively human-based labour to the current and primarily fossil fuel based society. Our so-called modern lifestyle is craving for ever increasing amounts of energy to maintain unsustainable production cycles for inefficient produces that pose a heavy burden for generations to come.⁴

Mass industrial output of unnecessary gadgets in poor quality and at low cost seems to be the only way to make these products accessible for the common people and to press ahead with consumerism.⁵ Profit maximation is measured not only in stock markets, but also in overall waste output.⁶ Doing so, we produce goods by choosing values set by ourselves.⁷ For the sake of maximization in yield and thus profit, we aim at monoculture.⁸ Thereby it is possible to maintain a fast-food-style culture – high in calories but low in nutritional value - in a broader sense this is not only limited to food, but applicable to any field in question. Physically and mentally, we feed on few selected "staple foods", and thus exclude the huge diversity available in nature. Patterns like this not only poison the environment via excessive use of fertilizers, pesticides, and waste⁹ but brings about mental and behavioral conditioning and ultimately total control of each and everyone.

Our society aims at hyper-specialization requiring highly skilled people that just do that and nothing else. The "generalist", the handcrafts people that used to cover a wide range of activities are no longer there. This trend, by now, is established in any profession; among farmers, linguists, lawyers, technicians, engineers, medical staff,

¹ Lomborg B.; 2003: 327-352;

² Bohm D; 2003: 1-4

³ Lindner D.; 2004; *Famous Trials*; online;

⁴ Lomborg B.; 2003: 118-136;

⁵ IPCC, 2001; online;

⁶ Shafik N.; 1994: 46:757

⁷ Kuwako T.; 1998: 151-168.

⁸ Kuntiyi, Dan Baliao; 1987; online; & World Food Summit; 1996: online;

⁹ FAO, 2000; online;

scientists, etc.¹⁰ Such specialization forces us to dig deeper, but in doing just that, we don't ask if that what we do is sustainable or not, making us gradually but steadily more detached from all the rest.¹¹ The ever-increasing degree of complexity and the resulting demand of skilled & specialized labour resulted in a shift away from a traditional lifestyle, generating individuals that "cultivate" a modern *modus vivendi*, resulting in tensions between generations and ultimately social destabilization. The information age, in our global village creates a *virtual reality* and an imaginary community that restructures human togetherness at all levels, from family to nation.¹² As a result, distance, no matter how great, does not at all inhibit electronic communication and, ironically, territorial proximity does not necessarily guarantee actual contact.¹³ We are "progressing" so fast with our technical achievements that it will become even more difficult for the elderly to catch up further enforcing the concept of the throw-away-society. This age group has already attained the attribute of being the burden of society.¹⁴ We cultivate the stigma that only the young and dynamic can be successfully integrated into an ever demanding, consuming and wasting production cycle.¹⁵ Like hamsters in a cage, we must keep pushing the treadmill till to the point of exhaustion but without even progressing a bit.

The sheer endless flow of information pouring onto us is literally drowning us. The technology driven media and entertainment industry doesn't give us the time anymore to reflect on each single information unit and what sort of effects it has on our psychological well-being. Far too often the flood of information is causing us to switch into a sort of "tilt-mode", in which we are not even capable of perceiving the simplest information. The quest to have fun has created countless strategies to make us consume, to re-feel in a *straw-fire-like* fashion the sensation that comes along with it and has nothing in common with real happiness and the feelings of joy.¹⁶ It seems that the inner emptiness within many of us made us addicted to this hyper-competitive world in which everything is consumed in excess. Most of us have ended up concentrating on the consumption of an endless stream of shiny new products.¹⁷ And to handle all that, we have to kick-start sleepy hearts with caffeine, drown sorrows with alcohol or anti-psychotic drugs, while many of us have already regressed into illusions and some even to its misuse.

Homogenisation in information technologies has led to the massive invasion of computer viruses, worms, and hacker attacks. Global mobility facilitates the spread of airborne viral and bacterial diseases. Homogenisation in a globalized world makes us all look-a-like's, with similar desires, longings, habits; even modern cities look all the same, and are nothing more than carbon copies. Diversity is undermined by the sheer colossal dominance of our way of thinking and acting and reaches the remotest corner of this globe. Countless indigenous communities vanish as they can't resist the pressure and like species that have lost their habitat they must eke out a living in urban slums or tiny reserves on inhospitable land.¹⁸ Our standards even negate that "indigenous science" and their way of acquiring knowledge any recognition. Their knowledge is treated as anecdotal, folkloric, and less credible, than those of our experts. But their traditional knowledge about herbal remedies is good enough to be taken by multi-national pharmaceutical industries without acknowledgment or compensation.¹⁹ It's a terrible irony that as formal development reaches more deeply into rain forests, deserts, and other isolated environments, it tends to destroy the only cultures that have proved able to thrive in these settings.²⁰

In similar fashion are we confronted with another desperate problem²¹ - massive reduction in species diversity, and in cases of recently discovered ones, often before they are even given names.²² Reckless fishing practices further burden the already stressed and overexploited marine ecosystems.²³ Zoos and botanical gardens are becoming the only safe havens to protect endangered species from extinction.²⁴ Ex-Vice president of the USA, Al Gore justified his criticism of western civilization in that "we are doing better, but we are doing so to an increasing extent at the cost of Earth's ecosystem".²⁵

Astrophysicist *Brian Swimme* commented this by stating that we are currently making macrophase changes to the life system of the planet with microphase wisdom.²⁶ Botanist *Peter H. Raven* goes even that far to claim: "*We are Killing*

¹⁰ Corti A.; 1988; transcript;

¹¹ Suzuki D.; 1992; transcript;

¹² Zeng Y., Wang Z.L.; 2003: 100;

¹³ Tu W.M.; 1998: 4-21; personal remark: this is nothing else than the extended detachment of biological relationships.

¹⁴ Asimov, I. Pohl F.; 1991; introduction: 5-17;

¹⁵ Wilde O.; 1998; Novel: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*;

¹⁶ Fromm E. 1977: 154-166; compare with the German word for *Glücksgefühl*, which is best translated as "a profound sense of happiness";

¹⁷ Gore, A.; 1992: 182-196;

¹⁸ Suzuki D., Knudtson P.; 1993: xxviii-xliv;

¹⁹ TVE; 2003. transcript;

²⁰ WCED, 1987; online;

²¹ Meadows D.H., et al.; 1992: 55-63;

²² Stork N.E., 1997 "Measuring global biodiversity and its decline." In Wilson *et al.*:41-68; or see Botkin D.B., Keller E.; 1998: 41-68;

²³ Pauly D., et al.; 1998; 279: 860-863;

²⁴ Lomborg B.; 2003: 249-257; & Suzuki D.; Knudtson P.; 1993; foreword: xvii-xliv;

²⁵ Gore, A.; 1992: 216-237;

²⁶ Tucker M.E., Grim J.; 1997: xv-xviii;

our World".²⁷ Our feeling of alienation in the modern period has extended beyond the human community and its patterns of material exchanges to our interaction with nature itself. Especially in our technologically sophisticated urban societies, we have become removed from that recognition of our dependence on nature.²⁸ The worldviews associated with our cultural heritage have created a dominantly human-focused morality²⁹, which aims at reforming the world.³⁰

With regards to ourselves, to others, to entire ecosystems and eventually to the entire biosphere, our cultural domain facilitates excessive behaviour in almost any field, forcing some of us to ask serious questions:

- How can we justify our invasive behaviour?
- Are we friends or foe with the Earth?
- Have we become strangers to our own existence?
- Indeed, should we do everything that we are capable of doing?
- Are we as human beings, a viable species on this endangered planet?
- Can the planet's ecosystems cope with our uncontrolled anthropocentric expansion – (to be rivalled only with a terminal form of cancer)?³¹

Ironically, contemporary modern humans behave more like hyperactive kids rather than responsible beings; we cry aloud when in need of a parent, but we are completely self-sufficient when involved in some kind of play.³²

Western Concept

Both in ancient and modern western attitudes we find aggressive and contradicting world-views. Some of the more familiar concepts include "War is the father of all things", "Man is the wolf to others", or "If you wish for Peace, prepare for fighting". And today we reached the point that we have to confront ourselves with "an invisible war of all against all".³³ This most obvious contradiction with western worldview is the result of mental fragmentation, which generates artificial differences, where there aren't any, and to break up things into bits and pieces, which in fact should not be broken up. Doing so seem to suit best our western way of thinking.³⁴ On top of that, we are actually still not fully aware of that explosive potential of fragmentation of ethnicity, language, culture, and religious fundamentalism.³⁵

Obviously, this constant involvement of categorization and fragmentation regards not just our thinking, it co-involves all aspects of our lives, and stretches from the most mundane to the more metaphysical level, and cultivates a perception that further emphasises this understanding. The word cultivation itself implies a movement away from natural processes. It is a matter of arresting succession, not allowing the manifold variety of nature to flourish.³⁶ In agriculture it has become a matter of "arresting succession and establishing monoculture." Indeed it is an artefact, the results of our own thoughts and their associated mental reflexes. Individualism concentrated in self-centeredness is not only ridiculous it's insignificant when confronting it with the endless dimensions of the universe.

Consequently, the fundamental problem we have to deal with is anthropocentrism or human-centeredness: that we are the crown of creation and the measure of all things. This kind of arrogant fallacy is at the root of the environmental crisis and many other problems we face.³⁷ Medieval historian *Lynn White* suggested that the emphasis in monotheistic traditions on the transcendence of God above nature and the dominion of human over nature has led to a devaluation of the natural world and a subsequent destruction of its resources for utilitarian ends. For the most part, the worldviews associated with these Western *Abrahamic* traditions have created a dominantly human-focused morality.³⁸

²⁷ Tucker M.E., Ryuken-Williams D.; 1997: xvi-xxvii; & Suzuki D.; 1992; transcript;

²⁸ Tucker M.E., Berthrong J.; 1998: xv-xxxvii; personal remark: nature can do without us, but we can't do without nature;

²⁹ Tucker M.E., Grim J.; 1997: xv-xxxiii; it has to be noted here that morality as such is a purely human-made concept and therefore implies a *relative* meaning in terms of time and space.

³⁰ Lancaster L.; 1997: 3-18.

³¹ Pearce D.; 2001; online;

³² Fromm E. 1986: 85-103;

³³ Nakamura H.; Wiener P.P. 1971: 93-106;

³⁴ Bohm D.; 2004: 1-24;

³⁵ Tu W.M.; 1998: 4-21; this is particularly true for religious fundamentalism in all three major monotheistic religions, and undermines the principles of tolerance and harmony; see also Sztumski W.; 2004; transcript;

³⁶ Cravello E., et al.; 2003: 765-771; Cultivate (L. *cultus*); is understood as (1) to work in the field until it becomes productive, take care of plants until their bear fruits; (2) to dedicate oneself in some kind of intellectual activity, to cultivate arts, science, or simply to educate, to maintain a friendship, to follow and take care of certain ideas, concepts, or hopes; (3) to venerate in one's improvement of cultural education;

³⁷ Seed J.; 2004; transcript; anthropocentrism is like the fertilizer in an already barren strip of land. It is used to increase yield in the short term but to cause total collapse in the long term.

³⁸ Tucker M.E., Berthrong J.; 1998: xv-xxxvii; & Stone M.; 1978: 224-241;

Hierarchy of Oppression: Figure 1 depicts the main oppressive approach of western thought. The nature of this hierarchy is such that as one advances vertically, one's circle of inter-relatedness becomes increasingly smaller; in that progress the hierarchy of oppression requires that one actively denies and suppresses any recognition of relatedness to those that one seeks to dominate. As one "claws" its way to the top of the pyramid, one submissively accepts subjugation from those above in return for the privilege and right to dominate those below. By doing so, the extent of one's expressed inter-relatedness, as plotted on the abscissa, diminishes while the upward movement brings about a gain in power over others. To safeguard the power and security over others one must ultimately seek to control all of existence. Constantly pressing for the ultimate goal to reach the apex of the pyramid, one is of course in a state of total alienation - not just from others but also from oneself.³⁹

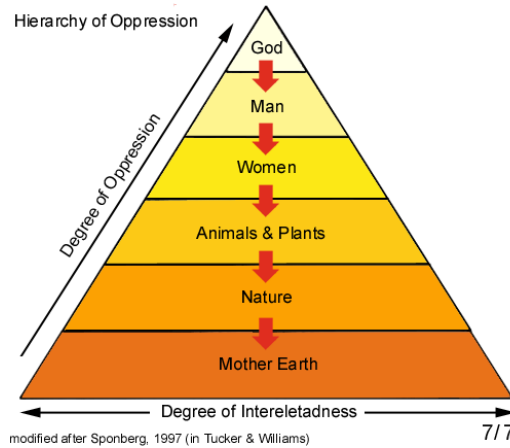


Fig. 1: As one ascends the Hierarchy of Oppression, the level of inter-relatedness decreases. The upper levels within this concept take for granted the live-supporting functions at its base. This perception is a primary cause of our alienation and suppression of other biota.

Indeed, if one wants theological license to increase radioactivity without constraint, to consent to the bulldozer mentality of developers, or to encourage unbridled harvest of old-growth forest, historically there has been no better scriptural source than Genesis, chapter 1 and 2.⁴⁰

Abrahamic traditions as we know them are male centred. Thus it is not surprising that the 19th century attitude regarding females as inferior creatures who are divinely intended to be obedient and silent vessels for the production of children and the pleasure and convenience of men are still imprinted in many of us.⁴¹ Thus, the upper-most position is occupied by a male-type god-figure. He transcends nature; nature is a creation, an artifact, of a divine craftsman-like male creator.⁴² Using god as the supreme entity to whom we are responsible to, generates a problematic scapegoat of *God will fix it anyway!*

Applied on a general setting, this has meant austerities, obedience to religious authority, and an overriding image of a centralized divinity. This hierarchical social structure is rooted in a dualistic ideology, a detachment between sexes, classes, human and non-human beings. In these binary oppositions, man/upper-class/white/human beings are considered superior to women/lower-class/people of coloured nature.⁴³ Nature is viewed politically and hierarchically - God over humanity, male over female, humanity over nature - which establishes an exploitive, ethical-political pecking order and power structure. Being exiled "out of paradise", brought about separation between nature and the human world.⁴⁴ It is an irony though, that our traditions constantly remind us about our evil nature. Thus it comes of no surprise that as the functions of the world are studied in physics, chemistry, biology, that of society in sociology, while that of the mind in psychology, so is the function of language given attention by linguistics that this hierarchical concept, itself fragmented into separate entities, is omnipresent.

Ecology

Indigenous worldviews consider parts and processes of the universe to a varying degree as part of a wider (holy) hole, whereas contemporary scientific view considers them as secular. In an aboriginal consensus the integrity of nature might justifiably be described as "sacred ecology" – in the most expansive, rather than in the scientifically restrictive sense of the word "ecology".⁴⁵ Ernst Haeckel (1866) coined the term "ecology" from the Greek roots *Oikos* "house" and *logia* "discoursing"; ecology thus meant the science of the household (the closely related word "economy" comes from *oikos* "house" and *nemein* "to manage").⁴⁶ In this aspect, Ecology has a double meaning: *logos* of *oikos* (the logical system of the universe) and *oikos* of *logos* the house that embraces human logic, or the intellectual system. The former assumes a human rational and logical imposition on the universe, while the latter suggests human

³⁹ Sponberg A; 1997: 351-376.

⁴⁰ Leuman E.D.C.; 1992: 20-24;

⁴¹ Stone M.; 1978: 180-197;

⁴² Ingram P.O.; 1997: 71-88.

⁴³ Li H.L.; 1998: 293-311.

⁴⁴ Goto S., Ching J.; 1998: 275-292.

⁴⁵ Suzuki D.; Knudtson P.; 1993: 233-235;

⁴⁶ Adler J.A.; 1988: 123-149.

acceptance of the universe as the way it operates.⁴⁷

As illustrated in figure 2, we can find three major pillars supporting life on our planet. These are constituted by the abiotic atmo-, hydro-, and geo- or lithosphere (abiotic denotes the non-living things and usually refers to the physical and chemical components of an organism's environment - also called inorganic).

The biosphere bridges this continuum from the abiotic to the biotic regime and constitutes the manifold diversity of life – be it aquatic, terrestrial or a combination of both. Although humans are part of the animal kingdom, we can nowadays speak of the anthroposphere, or the successful colonization of the other “spheres” by *Homo sapiens sapiens*.⁴⁸ Our innovative capabilities seem to ignore the very basics of thermodynamics.⁴⁹ Einstein may have (inadvertently) enunciated the 1st law of Eco-karma when he said, "humanity will get the fate it deserves."⁵⁰ Based on these fundamentals it is more than obvious that in the end everything we did and keep doing is paid for by the entire ecosystem.⁵¹

So, where do we really fit in that system? The answer points to our essential place - our niche - in the community of life; i.e. the food web is a community that consists of "a gift-exchange relationship, no life that is not somebody's death."⁵²

Deep Ecologist and environmental philosopher *Arne Naess*, does not consider the world as a collection of isolated objects, but rather as a network of phenomena that are fundamentally interconnected and interdependent.⁵³ He suggests that ecology is a field image in which organisms are knots in the biospherical net of intrinsic relations.⁵⁴ This includes behaviour and interactions with other species. Through the process of evolution, through natural selection (niche specialization), species adapt to a particular set of abiotic and biotic parameters characteristic for a given habitat. All biota on this planet (including our humanoid ancestors) fit well into this system and occupy their niche. Only since our post-industrialized era have modern human beings pushed this specialisation so far beyond those natural boundaries that other organisms occupying them are forced out of their habitat, their niche, and ultimately of existence.

It is obvious that an ecosystem is capable of tolerating only limited growth. It is probably not a question of how long humans can maintain this growth, but rather in which magnitude the ecosystem responds to rapid changes with violent means until it regains its dynamic equilibrium. Even our exponential growth has to follow the natural logistic growth pattern outlined in fig. 3. Eventually any growth process flattens out to a sigmoidal path to asymptotically approach the upper limit outlined by the available resources, habitat size, etc. Any of our activities (agricultural & industrial productivity, population growth, ecosystem stability, economics - someone's gain is someone else's loss); must follow these very basic rules.

Sustainability requires living within the regenerative capacity of the biosphere. Peter H. Raven, Director of the Missouri Botanical Garden and President of the AAAS, states⁵⁶: "It has been estimated that if everyone in the world were to live in the way people do in the United States, it would require three more planets comparable to Earth to

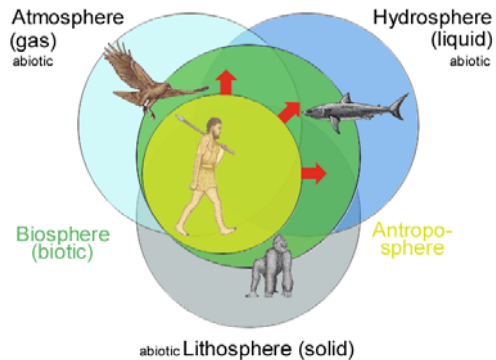


Fig.2: The foundations of our living planet rest on three essential pillars: the atmosphere, the hydrosphere, and the lithosphere; without them the biosphere would hardly exist in the form as we know it today. Although humanity is regarded as an intricate part of it, our current way of thinking makes us believe that we are very much separated from it.

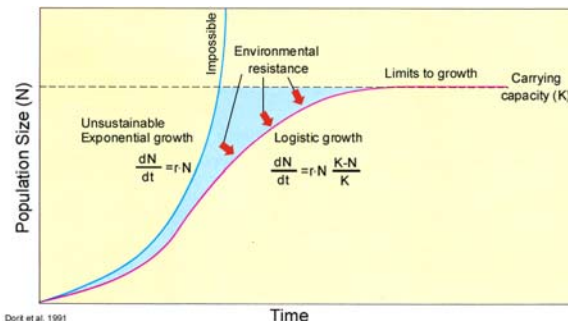


Fig. 3: Logistic growth differs from exponential growth by an asymptotical approximation toward the carrying capacity and is outlined by the resource availability of a given environment. Logistic growth patterns are observable in all natural processes.⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Ro Y.C.; 1998: 169-186; & Tichy 1992: p.21; "the best economy is ecology";

⁴⁸ Watson D.E.; 1997; online; we have named our subspecies *Homo sapiens sapiens*: the tool-making, bipedal, super-wise primate. But have we named ourselves wisely? Or have we merely engaged in typical human self-puffery?

⁴⁹ Pidwirny M., 2004; online Ch.6;

⁵⁰ Kraft K.; 1997: 270-290;

⁵¹ In an ecosystem populations of living organisms are grouped together into communities and interact with each other and the abiotic environment.

⁵² Barnhill D.L.; 1997: 187-217; personal remark: The very basic principle behind the successful survival of species in an ecosystem is its **Niche** and is outlined by its adaptive role that such species have in a given habitat.

⁵³ Capra F.; 1992: 130-143;

⁵⁴ Ingram P.O.; 1997: 71-88.

⁵⁵ Dorit R.L., et al.; 1991; 967-972;

⁵⁶ AAAS; 2000: 1-6;

support them ... Human population will attain sustainability, but will it be sustainability marked by dull, monotonous, unhealthy landscapes, or one in which the biological and cultural riches that we enjoy in the early years of the 21st century will be maintained and enhanced sources of material and spiritual enrichment for everyone?"

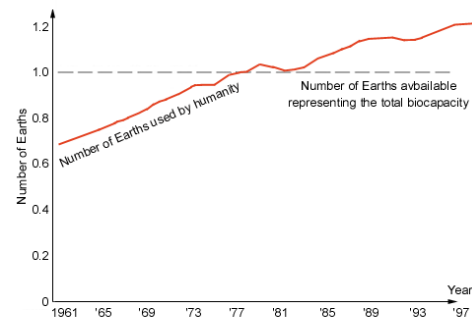
Core parameters indicate that human demand may well have exceeded the biosphere's regenerative capacity since the 1980s.⁵⁷ According to this assessment, humanity's load on this planet corresponded to 70% of the capacity of the global biosphere in 1961, and grew to 120% in 1999 (see fig. 4).

As never before in human history, is the destiny of this planet in our hands; unfortunately there are far too many inexperienced hands that do not even realize the damage that they are doing. We are modifying ecosystems and global systems faster than we can understand the changes and prepare responses to them⁵⁸. All the factors in this complex equation with still so many unknowns affect each other reciprocally and constantly. It's obvious that in a globalised world the elements of human activity interact with each other not only locally but on a planetary scale as well.

Whenever an organism thrives and interacts with a/biotic factors, it's subject to a variety of stresses. These can be considered as a dynamic state in which increasing demands acting on an organism lead to initial destabilization (see fig. 5); that is followed by normalization and improved resistance towards the stressor (eustress).

If these stressors exceed the buffering capacity of the hosting organism (i.e. the dynamic range of tolerance of our planet) they tend to restrict the chances of survival, inducing chronic damage and eventually even premature death (distress).⁵⁹

Single-celled organisms, plants, animals (incl. humans) and even ecosystems behave exactly the same way. Since human beings are just one by-product of evolution, we are not only shaped by the environment, but depend on it. Any interference with these complex regulatory principles provoke responses in manifold ways and intensity. The only difference now compared to then (referring to our fore/mothers-fathers), is that nowadays we have to "sit it out", while our stone-age relatives had the chance to run away.⁶⁰



Wackernagel et al., 2002

Fig. 4: This time trend compares humanity's ecological demand over the last 40 years with the earth's ecological capacity for each year. It becomes obvious that since the 1980s human demand exceeds nature's total supply.

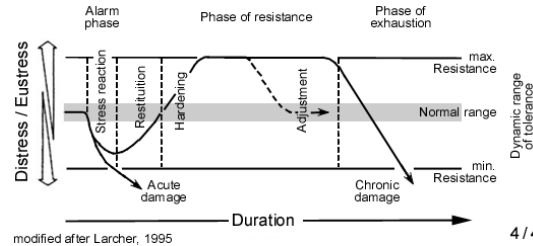


Fig. 5: Stress is the response to a temporary tough situation that results in a feedback to rebalance the system. The characteristic stress response initiates with a distress response and is characterized by the alarm phase, followed by the eustress reply that brings about restitution, hardening and adjustment, whereas chronic stress prolongs the distress answer, triggers chronic damage and eventual death.

⁵⁷ Wackernagel et al.; 99: 9266-9271.

⁵⁸ AAAS, 2000; online;

⁵⁹ Larcher, W.; 1995: 321-325;

⁶⁰ BBC World 2003; online; chronic stress acts like a pressure-cooker, at a certain point it will explode, similar to a car engine permanently operated at high RPMs, eventually the pistons will get jammed up.

Holistic Concept

We always have been attracted by holistic ideals of wholeness - a transformation that aims to truly benefit all life.⁶¹ When it comes to fragmentation, some philosophies of the East, emphasize wholeness and reject the notion of a self-world view. In order to reject division and fragmentation they promote quietness, withdrawal, and even apply techniques such as meditation. These non-verbal techniques lead to a calm mental state of orderly and smooth flow.⁶² Simply attempting to change specific environmentally detrimental behaviours will not work.⁶³

Figure 6 symbolises the holistic relationship in the form of an up-side-down pyramid. Ascending the vertical, developmental axis, the circle of one's inter-relatedness increases. This vertical movement is not a simple, linear upward assertion to gradually gain control over more and more; it is rather a matter of actively and consciously "reaching out". By doing so one affirms an ever-widening circle of expressed inter-relatedness which is illustrated by the spiral path representing the developmental dimensions. Unlike with the hierarchy of oppression, progress along this spiral path confers no increase in privilege over those who are below that path. Quite the contrary, it entails an ever-increasing sense of responsibility.⁶⁴ Human existence can thus be compared to the scientific concept of "degrees of freedom" in which a branch of applied mathematics concerned with the collection and interpretation of quantitative data and the use of probability theory estimate population parameters.

Converted to a more down-to-earth concept, it would assign stones the least degrees, plants a larger, animals even further and humans with their thinking capabilities an even greater degree of freedom and hence immense capabilities to perceive the sheer unlimited responsibilities of their undertaking.

Our modern-day frenetic lifestyles tremendously overestimate the value of time, and thus often do not even grasp the changes that occur in-between. Rather than observing "the motion" at a given moment as Eastern people used to do we rather focus on the act based on time, disregarding the process altogether.⁶⁵

Buddhism, for example is not a religious philosophy like Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, which focuses on the live after this one, but rather is concerned to reform individuals in the present life (the single or individual is insignificant, the whole is everything).⁶⁶ Eventually the ultimate goal is *Nirvana*, a state that we would define as nothing, but for a serious Buddhist it is everything. It is not quite easy to seize the dimension of emptiness and its associated creativity. Indeed, "being" arises from "not being", just as sound is distinguished from silence and light from darkness.⁶⁷

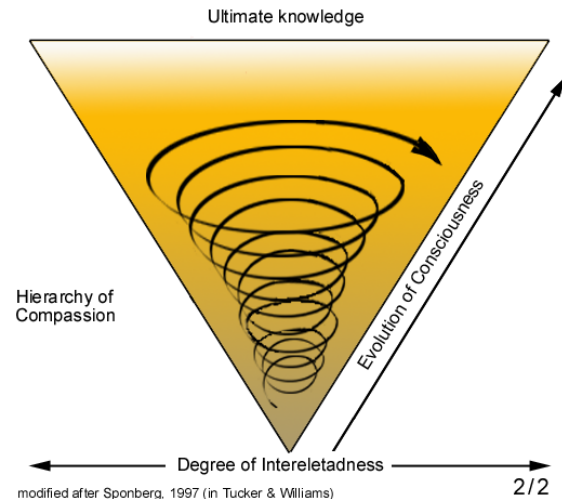


Fig. 6: A Holistic relationship is a way to transform oneself from within. It depicts an ever-increasing sense of inter-relatedness and thus responsibility as one ascends along the evolutionary axis of consciousness.

⁶¹ Bohm D; 2004: 61-82; personal remark: it has to be noted though that evolution is without any morality. The concept of morality is a manmade artefact. Placing our present, legally binding concept of morality into the past does not match with the concept of morality present back then. Therefore humaneness is more than a law, it is a process of human evolution. Laws in this aspect should only be regarded as an auxiliary tool but never be placed as the absolute maxim.

⁶² Bohm D; 2004: 61-82; personal remark: the following examples aim at adapting the empowerment to transform oneself by highlighting only a few approaches of the vast pool of alternative ways of thinking. By no means is it intended to promote religious concepts, on the contrary, the only aim is to look beyond our "plate" and to recognise their values, and why not to incorporate some achievements of other societies;

⁶³ Sponberg A; 1997: 351-376.

⁶⁴ Sponberg A; 1997: 351-376.

⁶⁵ Nakamura H.; Wiener P.P. 1971: 60-66; this becomes most evident when comparing the Indian notion of "the fruit grows soft" while in western languages it is most common to say "the fruit becomes soft".

⁶⁶ Lancaster L.; 1997: 4-18.

⁶⁷ Watts A.; 1977: 42;

Daoistic Concept

道

Dào, literally the Path or Way, is one of the prime elements in Daoism, while the concept of *Yīn* and *Yáng*, *WúWèi*, among others constitute the framework. It is difficult to express the concept of *Dào* in words.⁶⁸ Combining both elements of the pictogram (head & motion) into a single character one could interpret it as an intelligent way of locomotion, providing enough time to finetune deviations during the path.⁶⁹ Perhaps we should consider that as "going and stopping", in which going represents *Yáng* and periods of stops *Yīn*. In Daoism, *Yīn* and *Yáng* is a description of movements (motion and tranquility) in which opposing principles of the universe interact. One cannot exist without the other.⁷⁰

The principle of *Yīn* and *Yáng* is not, what we usually would call a duality, but rather an explicit dualism that expresses one implied unit, such as good & bad, hot & cold, happiness & sadness, health & sickness, truth & falsity, or life & death. In general *Yīn* and *Yáng* refer to the two opposed and complementary forces that pervade the cosmos and give rise to the myriad bipolar oppositions in the world: dark and bright, male and female, and so on, with *Rén* (humans), spaced in-between (see fig. 7). The oscillation between the two polarities is a natural process and can be found in any aspect of life; i.e.: from the food we eat, to a person's character, or the biological cycles within all of us.

In the technical vocabulary of the cosmic resonance theory, *Yīn* and *Yáng* represent two states or polarities of *Qì*, with *Yīn* the passive and yielding, whereas *Yáng* is regarded as the active and dynamic. Thus, the "good" and the "bad" (if one wants to stress these expressions) are intrinsically connected. We can't separate them as there doesn't exist such a perception as *either-or* but merely *both-and*.⁷¹ It goes even that far in that the dots in each domain symbolize the idea that each time when one of the two forces reaches its extreme, it contains in itself already the seed of its opposite.⁷²

The passionate union of *Yīn* and *Yáng*, is like the union between female and male principles, therefore constitutes an eternal model of the universe. Such polarization has not just lead to unification of opposite genders, but has also been observed within individuals; e.g. the concept of "brain lateralization" assigns the left and right side of the brain different functions.⁷³ Actually, this polarization is probably the driving source of our creativity. On a larger scale, this polarity is the fundamental nature of our planet - one without the other would not make any sense. It is a natural process - it is a basic law.⁷⁴

The two-dimensional concept of *Tàijí* (fig. 7) incorporates both the starting and the ending point of all processes and it will always sustain connections among all things rooted in it as the origin, in which all things mutually support and complement one another.⁷⁵ Thus, the principle of *Yīn* and *Yáng* must not be interpreted as an endless conflict between two opposing forces, rather the ever-present dynamic equilibrium.⁷⁶



Fig. 7: The well-known diagram of the *TàijíTú*, the greatest ultimate, summarizes this approach in which two complementary features, known as *Yīn* and *Yáng* conceptualize the description of movements.

⁶⁸ Siao S.YI 1982: 116-117; *Dào* is the mother of all things; to conserve *Dào* is to return to *WúWèi*; & see description of *Dào*: 1-23;

⁶⁹ Watts A.; 1977: 56; the notion that thinking is a constant flux of thoughts, does evoke the metaphor of a stream in which one may see ever-changing patterns of vortices, ripples, waves, splashes, etc. It follows that any discernible event, object, entity, etc., which evidently have no independent existence as such is an abstraction from an unknown and indefinable totality of flowing movement. See also Bohm; 2004; p.61-82.

⁷⁰ Ro Y.C.; 1998: 169-186.

⁷¹ Dethlefsen; 1991: 58; Nakamura H., Wiener P.P.; 1971: 60-66, Capra F.; 1992: 145-160; Siao S.Y.; 1982: 33-34; when all the world understands beauty to be beautiful, then ugliness exists, when all understand goodness to be good, then evil exists;

⁷² Capra F.; 1992: 101-110; as the course of evolution has shown us, there is no advantage without disadvantage;

⁷³ Catalyst, 2004; transcript;

⁷⁴ BBCWorld 2003; transcript; death is within every one of us; it occurs at a continuous rate, every second millions of cells undergo apoptosis (programmed cell death) and are substituted by new ones. Continuously on this planet people die while newborns follow. That's the cycle of life.

⁷⁵ Tucker M.E.; 1998: 187-207.

⁷⁶ Watts A.; 1977: 35;

Neo-Confucian Concept

By deliberately rejecting simplistic reductionist models, Neo-Confucianism defines human beings in terms of an integrated vision,⁷⁷ and actually assigns nature the most beautiful and highest existence.⁷⁸ *Zhāng Zāi*, a Chinese philosopher (1020-1073) once wrote: “Heaven is my father and earth is my mother, and even such a small creature as myself finds an intimate place in their midst. Therefore that which extends throughout the universe I regard as my body and that which directs the universe I consider as my nature. All people are my brothers and sisters, and all things are my companions.”⁷⁹

Such a perception is achieved by visualizing human flourishing, based upon the dignity of the person (not hierarchy), in terms of a series of circles (fig. 8). At the very center of this concept is thought. Indeed, mind is the process of life, the process of cognition.⁸⁰ As the constant stream of thoughts conditions emotions, they can be perceived as a mirror to the outside world. Together, both thoughts and emotions are the very reason for our well-being or sickness and constitute the self with the body forming the frame and responding to these stimuli.⁸¹ Accordingly, in Neo-Confucian understanding, only foolish people comprehend their body as their own possession.⁸² But interaction doesn't stop here; indeed human beings are sentient beings, capable of internal resonance not only between and among themselves but also with animals, plants, mountains, etc. and with nature as a whole.⁸³ Confucianism is a way of learning, learning to be human. On top of that, Confucian virtues do not stand for justice but for human generosity.⁸⁴



adapted from Bohm D. (2003) & Tu W.M. (1998 in Tucker & Berthrong)

7 / 7

Fig. 8: Conceptualisation of the Neo-Confucian approach of the individual and its relation to the universe. Here, thoughts, emotions and the body as well as the layers around them are merely expressions of the larger more universal whole.

The Comparison

In recent decades, and largely as a result of the nearly wholesale acceptance of westernization, including industrialism, urbanism, materialism, and consumerism, environmental degradation gained an extra momentum. Thailand for example has increasingly become an environmental disaster zone. Prior to WWII up to 75% of Thailand was still forested, whereas today less than 15% remains forested. Through westernization of mind, culture and the environment, Thais have subscribed themselves to a "theory of moral collapse" which is the cause of the growing ecological disequilibrium.⁸⁵ A similar trend is visible across South-East Asia and India. Although Indians maintained an unlimited desire for pleasure and profit, they lacked the rational of capitalism and did not develop a system of capitalistic economy until very recently.⁸⁶ Likewise, it's an undeniable fact that *Máo ZéDōng* and *Dèng XiǎoPíng* have inflicted on China the same kind of industrialization and exploitation of nature as we did and still do in the West. In a globalized world almost everyone seems eager to jump onto the bandwagon of commercialisation to “earn” a quick and easy dime without taking into consideration the effects of such reasoning. *Phra Prayudh*, a Thai abbot, attributes environmental destruction to a western worldview flawed by three erroneous beliefs: that humankind is separated from nature, that human beings are masters of nature, and that happiness results from the acquisition of material goods (fig.9).⁸⁷

With the top down structure of our dominant western society, we aim at total synchronization of the world. We impose the same patterns of reasoning, behaviour, (materialistic attitudes, consumerism, etc) of our culture, on others, and imprint our way of living along with the same associated side effects; e.g. diseases like obesity, heart diseases,

⁷⁷ Tu W.M.; 1998: 4-21; & Nakamura H., Wiener P.P.; 1971: 93-106, 284-294,

⁷⁸ Nakamura H.; Wiener P.P. 1971: 277-283;

⁷⁹ Taylor R.L.; 1998: 37-58; Bohm D.; 2003: ix-xv; body, emotion, intellect and artefacts are one unbroken field of mutually forming thoughts;

⁸⁰ Capra F.; 1992: 26-44;

Nakamura H.; Wiener P.P.; 1971: 255-258;

⁸¹ Payrhuber D.; 1998: 53-55;

⁸² Nakamura H.; Wiener P.P.; 1971: 87-92;

⁸³ Tu W.M.; 1998: 4-21.

⁸⁴ Watts A.; 1977: 77;

⁸⁵ Sponsel L.E., Natadecha-Sponsel P.; 1997: 45-68.

⁸⁶ Nakamura H.; Wiener P.P. 1971: 136-142;

⁸⁷ Swearer D.K.; 1997: 21-44.

depression, osteoporosis, to name just a few, are becoming a common occurrence among those where it was unknown prior to that shift.

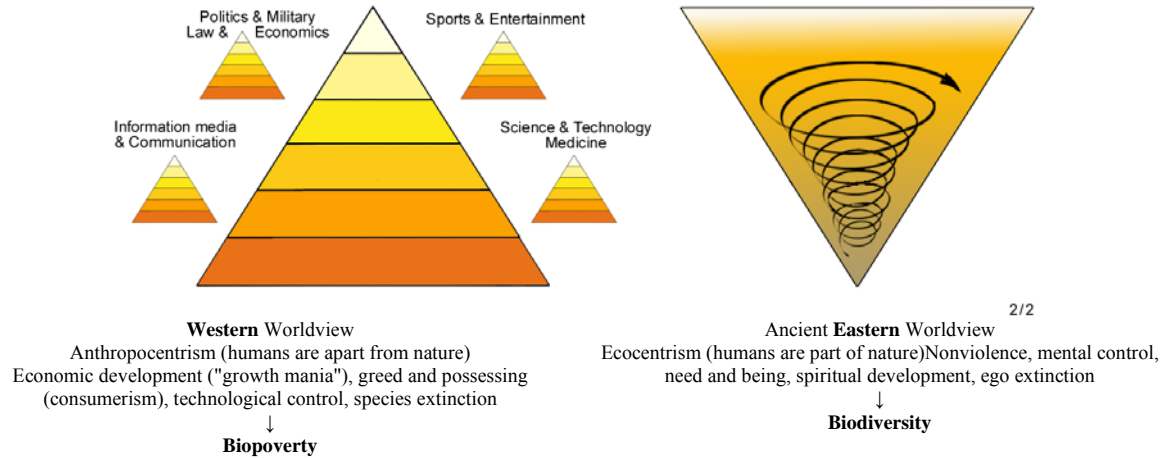


Fig. 9: Confrontation of the two opposing worldviews.

Modern communication technologies and the Media are a wonderful example of that. They disseminate reflexes that evoke the very same response in those who consume them.⁸⁸ The best, the strongest gets it all while the competitors are loosing out. To become a winner, the consumption of anabolic substances is encouraged by the ultimate goal of higher, faster, further, and better. It's not different in the race amongst ideologies; the Western world (including Russia) account for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the global arms sales.⁸⁹ It comes of no surprise when militants that once benefited from western opportunism, are now turning against us. Indeed it is no secret that *Osama Bin Laden* and *Saddam Hussein* are primarily the result of US-foreign policy.⁹⁰ Currently, under the pretext of the "war against terror" the very same initiators pursue their goals even more vigorously than ever before. But if we return evil for evil, than we should keep in mind that we cannot be apart from evil.⁹¹

The same is evident on a different front; few dominating world languages simply wipe away ethnical nuances that cannot withstand our pressure. This is especially tragic with many local dialects that do not even have a written record. When it comes to confront western medical knowledge with traditional ones, our immediate concern is mirrored in economic values. In economic terms a traditional or alternative remedy simply does not bring the yield so hardly desired by profit makers and hare holders. Similarly, pieces of arts are no longer valued on the basis of their artistic values, but rather on who made (signed) them.

It all seems to converge to economics. This materialistic attitude underlines the most selfish attitude of western thinking. People have been already conditioned in a way that they only attain recognition if they are associated with brand-name products and thus buy things with money that they do not have to impress people that they do not like. The American dream of owning a car and a house, making big & easy money, and enjoying freedom of privacy, speech, religion, and travel, maybe reasonable to the US-American sense of what ordinary life demands, it is lamentably unexportable as a modern necessity from a global perspective (most indigenous/nomadic communities do not establish such segregated views, but promote activities in which sharing with other members of the community is a part of the daily routine).⁹² We don't realize that "wanting" itself not only restricts and to a certain extent even prevents "freedom"; it is the product of the conditioning process that we are exposed to in our own culture. And strangely, we are not even free to give that up.⁹³ Under such conditions there is very little "freedom". When asked about Freedom, *LaoZi* commented by replying the following: "*Ah, Freedom; how many crimes have been committed in its name!*"⁹⁴ The idealism of the French, American and Russian revolution, sooner or later, always came along with an excess of violence which sought justification in the name of liberation and of the health of the people who had to endure it.

⁸⁸ Bohm D; 2003: 87-144;

⁸⁹ Shanker T.; 2003; online;

⁹⁰ Wagnleitner R.; 2003; article;

⁹¹ Levertoff P.; 1918; online;

⁹² Tu W.M.; 1998: 4-21.

⁹³ Bohm D; 2003: 187-241;

⁹⁴ Watts A.; 1977: 76; Xie G.L., Zhang H.M.; 1995:19, 83; Nakamura H.; Wiener P.P. 1971: 95-98;

The dominance of western influence on a global scale interferes with the dynamic balance of opposites. Obviously this separation, that the greater part of the world developed an ideal, cultivated the pleasant while at the same time oppressed the unpleasant, gave rise to the contemporary *Hyper-Yáng* of abrasive *Abrahamic* rationalism (fig. 10). Our dominant western society thinks in separating terms rather than in complementary terms! *Descartes'* famous sentence "*Cogito, ergo sum*" I think therefore I exist, has led us to equate our identity with our minds.⁹⁵ This is in sharp contrast to the organism as a whole and was already acknowledged by ancient Indians who regarded the Highest Self as the substratum of the individual soul.⁹⁶ We tend to sharply draw lines between entities, lines that in reality do not exist, and nonetheless keep fragmentizing everything into units without putting them back together (from thoughts and concepts to things, biota, sciences, politics and even among nations).⁹⁷ We have not yet realized that so-called entities within nature are merely gradients and transition zones.

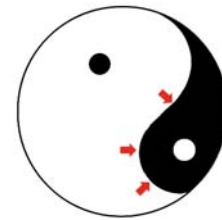
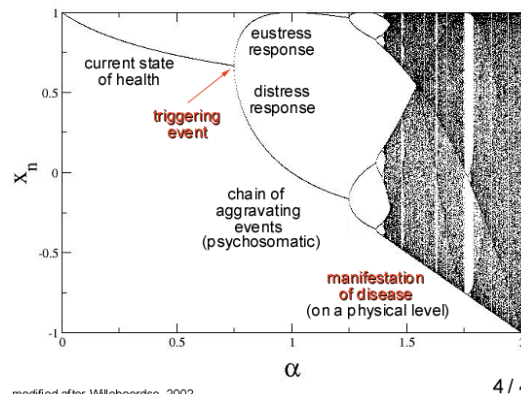


Fig. 10: Hyper Yáng of Western Thinking and acting tends to be reductionistic.

As for the traditional way of Chinese thought, the prevailing *Hyper-Yáng* is contradictive and does not at all establish harmony. As more and more *Yáng* dominates our system, eventually, *Yín* must emerge to compensate or even replace this rocking balance. Whether this replacement will happen gradually or sudden (like a ribbon string snapping back with violence) is entirely governed by system-inherent parameters. In analogy to the electrical current, the opposing polarities "+" and "-" can't exclude each other, and thus the disappearance of one of the two would mean total imbalance that ultimately leads to the demise of the entire system.

When talking about our lifestyle, we no longer follow a natural pattern. Thanks to electricity, and along with our frenetic lives, we encourage ourselves to be active almost the entire day. It's undeniable that the 24-hour society further enforces this hyperactivity.⁹⁸ It comes of no surprise that many disturbed and restless workaholics seek peace, rest and equanimity to their minds in Indian thought.⁹⁹

Any system is to a certain extent capable to auto-correct modest distortions. One such regulatory mechanism can be deduced from Chaos theory (fig. 11). Numerous, if not most natural processes follow a chaotic pattern – an observation well in line with *Daoist* principles. A person's wellbeing is just the physical manifestation of a dualistic system and primarily an act of perception, such as health for example. Viral, bacterial and other agents constantly inflict micro-traumas onto our cells.¹⁰⁰ In a healthy individual, such "pathogens" permanently "tickle" the immune system to trigger an eu-stress response which ultimately signals the brain a feeling of good health. Health does not imply the absence of disease; the difference here is that we are simply not aware that disease is within us. Thus, health must be understood as a subtle jiggling between sick and healthy opposites. It is instructive to consider that the word "health" is based on the Anglo-Saxon word "hale" meaning whole, i.e. to be healthy is to be whole.¹⁰¹



modified after Willeboordse, 2002
 Fig. 11: Bifurcation patterns in Chaos Theory. These repetitive patterns occur as key parameters drift away from stable initial conditions to bring about a sudden and dramatic change. Changes of this kind keep repeating as long as these parameters do not stabilize.

⁹⁵ Capra F.; 1992: 17-25; Nakamura H.; Wiener P.P. 1971: 93-106;

⁹⁶ Nakamura H.; Wiener P.P. 1971: 98-102;

⁹⁷ Bohm D; 2003: 42-86; the electrochemical smog in our brains, caused by the information overflow, results in hyperstimulation of nerves, axons and synapses, which literally result in a shower of electro-chemical processes in the brain; it thus obscures our own thinking and the capacity to grasp the driving factors behind the system; s.p.181

Capra F.; 1992; preface: 5-9; Physics for example cannot say much about living systems; it can provide knowledge about material structures, energy, entropy, and so on, but the very nature of life is something that eludes physics;

⁹⁸ Greenfield S.; 2004; transcript; our 24h society disrupts this fine regulatory balance of counteracting hormones released during various times of the day. Efforts are made to interfere with these cycles to maximize individuals performances to meet the requirements of our society; e.g.: to counter-act with increasingly burnt-out and depressed people, drugs are developed especially to target cabin crew staff in long-distance flights as well as those working on night shifts.

⁹⁹ Nakamura H.; Wiener P.P. 1971: 76-79;

¹⁰⁰ Dethlefsen T., Dahlke R.; 1991: 107-119; the troubles that we have with infections does not consist - as many fanatics of sterilization may think - in the presence of pathogens but rather in the capacity to coexist with them; actually *Dethlefsen* goes a step further, he claims that a person's character with time predetermines a particular disease; in the end, the disease has only one aim: to bring him back to a healthy track: 15-25; Capra F.; 1992: 101-110; illness is a disruption of the balance between mind and body;

¹⁰¹ Parker P.M.; 2004; online; the word *health* belongs to a family of words: *heal, whole, wholesome, hale, hallow, and holy*;

From a linguistic perspective, humanity has sensed that wholeness or integrity is an absolute necessity. So physically, socially, and mentally, awareness of the inner measure of things is an essential key to a healthy, happy and harmonious life.¹⁰²

Traditional therapies (ancient Chinese medicine, Tibetan art of healing – *Kundun*, and others) almost always attempt to see the entire picture; e.g. patterns of thought on a mental level regulating feelings (emotions). According to these schools, the root of a disease in an individual is based on mental and emotional imbalances that are projected outwards and eventually expressed on a physical level. Indeed, mental processes and emotions influence the disposition with both being tightly interwoven. This implies that diseases on a mental or physical level must be considered as frowningly more dangerous than mere physical symptoms.¹⁰³ Interestingly and only quite recently, this outstanding way of classifying an imbalance in human homeostasis can also be found in Homeopathy. Here the patient is regarded as a continuum, and the disease as part of the patient and the physical expression of such a disturbance.¹⁰⁴ Ultimately one becomes aware that mental associations determined by habits and conditioning as well as insight, are assimilated within a single whole, of which part (i.e. organs of the body are inwardly related).¹⁰⁵

So far, contemporary western medicine regards infectious diseases as something it has to combat, to fight (in most cases western medicine is not actually trying to cure the patient, it is essentially seeking a bypass-procedure).¹⁰⁶ By just focusing on the invasive mechanism of a microbiological pathogen, allopathy ignores the possibilities of brainpower to reestablish the dynamic equilibrium beforehand. As a result, the fragmented perception in western thought is left unaltered. This is underlined by the chronic and progressive character of many diseases, which are commonly treated by prematurely administered medication to remove symptoms without enabling a holistic recovery; i.e. a therapy by which one symptom is substituted by another one (incl. side-effects).¹⁰⁷

Western society as a whole has developed a fragmented perception. It resulted in a large number of separate and conflicting compartments that are guided by different aims, ambitions, loyalties, psychological characteristics that to some degree can be considered neurotic; a large fraction of our society is classified as paranoid, schizoid, or even psychotic.¹⁰⁸

In many aspects our contemporary global dominance favours the wealthy countries, the skilled and technologically reinforced members, while the poor are desperately lagging behind and keep drifting deeper into the abyss of ignorance.¹⁰⁹ Our "super specialization", our awareness and our linear way of thinking has left us in abandonment, in total ignorance of the polarity of these fundamental principles and rhythms.¹¹⁰ We have thus to be made aware to seriously consider our theories not as descriptions of reality, but rather as ever-changing forms of insights.¹¹¹

¹⁰² Bohm D; 2004; 248-262;

¹⁰³ Payrhuber D.; 1998: 28-38; reality reveals itself only in part as observable and measurable realms, effecting the whole individual as well as the individual's disorders; i.e. psychic background factors are often the cause of a disease that regularly display devastating effects on the physical level. Indeed, the term psychosomatic is obsolete, and even superfluous, as there are nothing but psychosomatic diseases. Personal remark: indeed madness is a particularly human trait that has hardly been observed in animals, and can be regarded as an imbalance between the mental and the physical states in humans.

¹⁰⁴ Payrhuber D.; 1998: 20-27; harmony prevails in a healthy individual; disharmony emerges in a sick person.

¹⁰⁵ Bohm D; 2004: 1-24; personal remark: due to the analytical way of thinking in western people, allopathic medicine will threaten a patient suffering for example from *Psoriasis* in such a way as to deal with a diseased, a couple of cm² wide area of the skin, whereas in holistic medicine, such skin anomalies are expressions of a sick, unbalanced person.

¹⁰⁶ Townsend I.; 2004; transcript; In vitro fertilisation (IVF) is essentially a bypass procedure. In most of the cases we're not actually curing the problems, we're finding ways around them. So what we've created here is this apparent paradox: an infertile man passing on his infertility, as well as possibly other genetic damage, through IVF.

¹⁰⁷ Tichy G.; 2004; personal communication; *Approaching a disease from a western perspective* assigns medical treatment the form of a cosmetic rather than holistic aspect. Often physicians do not ask for a likely cause but rather enquire about the symptoms;

Capra F.; 1992: 323-342; its nothing else than a crisis of perception;

¹⁰⁸ Bohm D; 2004: 1-24;

¹⁰⁹ Watts A.; 1977: 92-107; personal remark: without providing the means for a broad and profound educational foundation any society that should emerge out of that is condemned to failure. In similar fashion will specialists become wrecked if they cannot counteract one-sidedness by a broad educational background.

Capra F.: 1992: 28; and still, rational knowledge is limited, it will never be able to perceive our complex world in its entirety;

¹¹⁰ Watts A.; 1977: 77-88;

¹¹¹ Bohm D; 2004: 1-24; the atomic theory developed by *Democritus* more than 2000 years ago, ultimately became a major support for a fragmentary approach to reality. However, the uncertainty principle, quantum theory and relativity project a different view of reality in that the notion of universal flux of events and processes, where the observer and the observed are merging to a whole reality that is indivisible and unanalyzable. All these modern approaches agree that we need to look on the world as an *undivided whole*, in which all parts of the universe merge and unite in one totality.

Conclusion

If we want to avoid the scenario of the collision between earth's ecology and modern industrial civilization, as outlined in Al Gore's book, *Earth in the Balance*¹¹², then we ought to pledge for a shift to a decentralized society, which is less resource-oriented, less industrialized, less commercialised, less production-oriented. The responsible use of resources, which must be of utmost concern is a perception likewise emphasised by renowned scientists.¹¹³ In addition, the hundreds of scientists contributing to the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) came up with recommendations that we need to change individual lifestyles, must focus on sharing resources, choosing free time instead of wealth, quality instead of quantity and increase "liberty" while containing consumption.¹¹⁴ Indeed, the principle of renouncement should replace our current attitudes – not necessarily to all and everything but practised in such a way as to favour philanthropism over egoism, teamwork over competition, harmony over conflict, and most of all respect over dominance.

We must challenge our democratic freedom and contest our basic rights to decide for ourselves how we lead our lives, so long as we do not bring harm to other people, the global ecosystem and life itself. We need to be concerned about the pollution of the environment by solid, liquid, or gaseous chemicals or nuclear materials; about the induced abnormality of genes caused by such pollutants, that jeopardize the generation of life and the continuity of growth, reproduction and decay.¹¹⁵ The ultimate goal should be a swing away from the anthropocentric view toward a civilization that focuses on organizing rationales that are rooted in environmental principles.¹¹⁶ True unity within individuals, between all humans, and between humanity and nature, can only arise in a form of action that does not attempt to fragment the whole of reality.¹¹⁷

So what kind of strategies can be used to show us the way out of our current dilemma?

Thinking versus Thought: Our mental reflexes that have conditioned our day-to-day behaviour, are imprinted in our thoughts. Over millennia, we acquired knowledge, stored them as thoughts and without seriously questioning them, we constantly reapply them regardless if they are appropriate or not. Unless we become aware of our reflex-driven behaviour to tackle our contemporary crisis with our deep-rooted traditions we must be condemned to failure. One way to break this loop can be the integration of different worldviews, opening ourselves to different ways of reasoning which eventually would increase the possibilities of a peaceful common as well as balanced future. In any way, the ultimate goal should be a holistic (system), organic (ecology), and monistic (unity of humans and nature)¹¹⁸ worldview that enhances the quality of life rather than accumulating material things (being rather than possessing).¹¹⁸

Modified Language: Language is a concept produced in the operation of thinking. According to *Bohm*, mindful choice of vocabulary and awareness of the message behind verbal and written communication should pave the way for a new mode of language, the *rheomode*.¹¹⁹ It involves a flowing language that does not distinguish between right or wrong, good and bad, etc.¹²⁰ Such language will be freer, more informal, even "poetic" and properly communicates the truly fluid nature of the difference between relevance and irrelevance. Applying the rheomode will reveal a certain wholeness that is not characteristic in the ordinary use of western languages (it should be noted that the rheomode involves not only a new grammatical construction, in which the verbs are used in a new way, but includes also the construction of words not essentially different from the construction of phrases). Thus, we may say that such a language is an undivided field of movement, involving sound, meaning, attention-calling, emotional and muscular reflexes. Only then will the word cease to be taken as "indivisible units of meaning" and instead seen as no more than a convenient marker in the whole movement of language.¹²¹ This approach is similar to Eastern languages that

¹¹² Gore, A.; 1992: 361-369;

¹¹³ Ciotti P.; 1989; online;

¹¹⁴ IPCC 2001; online; liberty understood as immunity from arbitrary exercise of authority: political and religious independence as well as personal freedom from servitude or confinement or oppression;

¹¹⁵ Kuwako T.; 1998: 152-168; please note that gaseous pollutants are far more mobile than liquids or solid pollutants and therefore the former pose a greater danger than the latter. And yet, it was shown that pesticides when mixed together (innocuous when analysed separately) mimic effects similar to the female hormone oestrogen. Mechanisms that investigate these synergetic effects are given by: Simons S.S.; 1996; *Environmental Estrogens--Can Two "Alrights" Make a Wrong?*; Science: 272: 1451-0;

¹¹⁶ Gore, A.; 1992; foreword: ix-xiii;

¹¹⁷ Bohm D.; 2004: 25-33;

¹¹⁸ Fromm E.; 1977; 118-124;

¹¹⁹ Bohm D.; 2004: 59-60; every western language carries a kind of dominant or prevailing worldview, which tends to modify our thinking and our perception whenever it is used The ordinary mode of language fails to give attention to the actual function of the divisive worldview that pervades this mode, so that the automatic and habitual operation of our thought and language is then able to project these divisions as if they were actual fragmentary breaks in the nature of "what is".

¹²⁰ Bohm D.; 2004: 34-60; division, for example, is rooted in the Latin word "videre". Thus "divide" does not simply include the concept of seeing, but to "set apart";

¹²¹ Bohm D.; 2004: 34-60; Einstein for example realized that questions dealing with space and time and the particle nature of matter were confusing presuppositions that had to be dropped. Only then was he able to ask new questions leading to radically different notions in this field.

minimize individuality and specific particulars, especially in those ones in which Buddhism is a common cultural phenomenon.¹²²

Approaches in Learning: Most prevailing educative methods unconsciously transmit a fragmentary self-world view. In the long run, a mind trained to think in fragmented patterns tries to break itself and its actions into pieces that correspond to this mode of thinking.¹²³ True insight cannot come out of conformity as evident in existing teaching approaches, but rather through a creative and original grasp of the insights implicit in such teaching.¹²⁴ Such alternative views can easily be transmitted through the education system and cultivated all the way through tertiary education levels and beyond. One such approach is shown in figure 12, where the Chinese pictogram *DōngXī* (*Dōng* stands for the East, and *Xī* for the West) forms a composite symbolizing the object, the new “stuff” emerging from different ways of thinking.¹²⁵

The *Hua-Yen* school of Buddhism offers us a metaphor in that the world is an infinite net, at each intersection lies a jewel that is a reflection of all the other jewels and where every part of the net depends for its existence on dynamic awareness of every other part (just as is the case with a hologram, that stores information not as discrete units but rather as an interference pattern of probabilities). Theoretical physicist, *Werner Heisenberg*, once said: It is probably true that in the history of human thinking the most fruitful developments frequently take place at those points where two different lines of thought meet. These lines may have their roots in quite different parts of human culture, in different times or different cultural environments or different religious traditions. Hence if they actually meet, that is if they are at least so much related to each other that a real interaction can take place, then one may hope that new and interesting developments may follow.¹²⁶

Increasing Awareness: Human intelligence must be considered as simply “one form of awareness among many others” with life and death being the larger processes of a natural ceaseless cycle rooted in a cosmic transformation.¹²⁷ *Tucker* even refers to this process as one of moving from an anthropocentric vision to an anthropocosmic worldview.¹²⁸ In practical terms this change aims at minimizing our desires; i.e. leading better lives when cutting desires to a minimum. In her view, a hands-on example is nutrition. Switching from a meat- to a vegetable-dominated form of nutrition does ease the pressure onto the environment and at the same would increase the respect to higher life forms. English poet, *Gary Snyder* came up with three aspects that should be at the center of a reinhabitory ecological ethic:¹²⁹

- i) feeling gratitude generates humility and a sense of awareness of the wider self;
- i) taking responsibility for your own acts, thus minimizing destructive human impact on the land and allowing room for the flourishing of non-human others; and
- i) keeping contacts with the sources of energy, which among others include also mindful food preparation, conscious perception of the surrounding environment through “meditative” action, and / or gardening work practice.

Disturbances to this system resulting from our contemporary way of thinking and acting should be kept minimal. This does not automatically translate to a minimalistic lifestyle but rather an attitude based on moderation; e.g. lifestyle characteristics which favour biological diversity (low noise levels, limited lighting, avoidance of unnecessary heating,

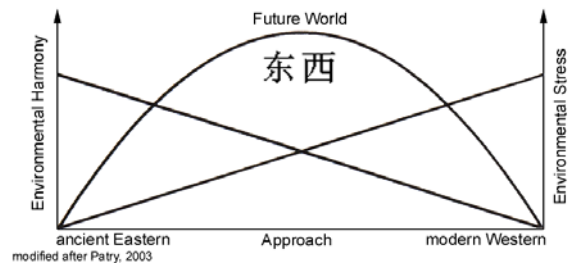


Fig. 12: The *DōngXī*-Relationship highlights the necessity to bring two ways of reasoning together in order to form something new. The get-together of these thinking modes may help to find a new approach in the current eco-crisis.

¹²² Nakamura H.; Wiener P.P. 1971: 531-576; in the European classical languages to say “someone’s descendant” or “someone’s army” is expressed in two words; while in Sanskrit it is often expressed by one word containing a possessive connotation and thus having a vague meaning. This becomes most evident when comparing the Indian notion of “the fruit grows soft” while in western languages it is most common to say “the fruit becomes soft” (s.60-66). Chinese on the other hand is abundant in words expressing bodies and shapes, but poor in verbs expressing change and transformation; i.e. subjects were in the origin mostly words expressing “things”, a single word as a unit standing for a thing as a unit. Japanese have pushed this even further in that it tends to be intuitive and emotional, and even neglecting logical rules. As for nouns, these have no clear distinction between singular and plural, nor are there distinctions between genders, and no articles are used.

¹²³ Bohm D; 2004: 1-24;

¹²⁴ Bohm D; 2004: 25-33; simply imitating concepts of the East and the West to conform to them would have little value. On the contrary, we must not reject the teachings of the past of both systems. Developing new insight about fragmentation and wholeness requires a creative approach that is even more difficult than that needed to make fundamental new discoveries in science, or great achievements in art and poetry. Once the entire field of measure is open, then our overall world views will become flexible, harmonizing the measurable and the immeasurable, and thus conceptualising the whole.

¹²⁵ diagram adapted and modified from Patry J.L.; 1999: 191-239;

¹²⁶ Capra F.; 1992: 303-307;

¹²⁷ Barnhill D.L.; 1997: 187-217.

¹²⁸ Taylor R.L.; 1998: 37-58.

¹²⁹ Barnhill D.L.; 1997: 226.

no hunting, no poaching or trapping, and so forth).

Promoting a holistic Understanding by introducing Trans-disciplinary: Although human interfered extensively with regulatory processes of the Earth's ecosystems, existing biodiversity is still capable to regain momentum once we decide to cut down on our invasive endeavour.¹³⁰ This resilience though has limitations and should not be taken as an excuse to proceed with our current conduct, rather it is a chance which should be taken to give way to an ecological worldview as expressed by wildlife biologist *A. Leopold*, along with the geomantic philosophy of East Asia based on Daoism and Buddhism. Together they provide ethical support for what is known in environmental philosophy as the GAIA theory.¹³¹ It is precisely such an East-West GAIA theory of living nature, which might point a way toward healing our plundered planet, overcoming today's environmental crisis, establishing a harmony between humanity and the biota of the land, the sea and the air.¹³²

While western thinking emphasizes on the individual, and on the self, ancient eastern thinking focused on the shared identity of the community. European philosophy tended to find reality in substance, Chinese philosophy tended to find it in relation.¹³³ We need both, we need dialog that should pave the way to constructive solutions.¹³⁴

Better Safe than Sorry: Since we never can prove anything absolutely, scientific uncertainty ought not to be used to avoid environmental action. The precautionary principle incorporated in the EU-Commission paper underlines a very Anglo-Saxon approach. The proposals presented therein have also been enshrined in the 1992 Rio Declaration.¹³⁵ It states: "where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation." A more far-reaching interpretation originates from the German *Vorsorgeprinzip*, which essentially includes a safety margin into all decisions; i.e. *Giving Nature and the Environment the Benefit of the Doubt* - or in blunt English: to be better safe than sorry.¹³⁶ Such an approach is envisioned in the *Earth Charter*. It is a declaration of fundamental principles for building a fair, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st century. It seeks to inspire in all peoples a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the human family and the larger living world. It is an expression of hope and a call to help create a global partnership at a critical juncture in history.¹³⁷ Thus, the *Earth Charter* provides ethical and practical guidance to individuals, schools, businesses, governments, religious congregations, NGOs, and international assemblies.

Since we no longer live on an isolated plot of land, well shielded from outside influences, but have become rather interactive on the global stage, why not incorporating the popular phrase of *thinking globally and acting locally* and make it a part of everyday life? Political and economic globalisation must not only "take" it must also "share and give"; i.e. by giving other cultures and societies the chance to express themselves, to recognize their achievements and their way of thinking.¹³⁸ In similar manner species protection and environmental management must not just be considered a question of involving individuals and local governments, but has become a worldwide necessity. The concept of protected wildlife reserves is highly respectful but insignificant if not applied on a global scale; biodiversity as such does not exclusively reside and gather within such safe havens, but rather depends on a healthy, planetary environment.

¹³⁰ Kraft K.; 1997: 271-290.

¹³¹ Odin S.; 1997: 90-109; according to that theory, the Earth is a self-regulatory system in which each single living organism is embedded in a vast biotic community - in a complex network of energy currents or lines of force, in which synergistic ecosystems and symbiotic relationships are an interconnected web of life;

Barnhill D.L.; 1997: 187-217; actually we can imagine the universe, the planets, the biosphere, indeed every living organism as a vast web of many-sided and highly polished units, each one acting as a multiple mirror of the whole - the whole can be known through parts;

¹³² Lovelock J.; 1981: 147-167; personal remark: maintaining our current attitude of how we deal with resource, treat other living beings, and perceive the future, one might think that we offhandedly can create another planet with similar features where we can take refuge at.

¹³³ Needham J.; 1956: 50-57; the mercy of the West has been social revolution; the mercy of the East has been individual insight into the basic self and void respectively;

¹³⁴ Barnhill D.L.; 1997: 187-217;

Bohm D., et al.; 2000; online; conflict potentials, including those on a mental level, must be dealt with as soon as they are recognized as such.

¹³⁵ EU; 2000; online;

¹³⁶ Lundmark T.; 1997; 4(4):43-4.

¹³⁷ Rockefeller S.C.; 1997: 313-324; see also The Earth Charter, online;

¹³⁸ Bohm D.; 2004; p.61-82; why don't we consider thought as a "dance of mind", when properly carried out, flows and merges into an harmonious and orderly sort of overall process in life as a whole. Such a comprehension of totality is not a reflective correspondence between thought and "reality" as a whole. Rather, it is to be considered as an art form, like poetry, which may dispose us toward order and harmony. Accordingly, thought has neither beginning nor end; it originated sometime in the indefinite past and is all the way interwoven into the present. When viewed as such, it forms an unbroken totality of movement, like a stream, and does not belong to any particular person, place, time, or group of people - it belongs to everyone of us.

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