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Cultivating Planetary Conversations**

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Social Theory and Asian Dialogues: Cultivating Planetary Conversations*

Ananta Kumar Giri**

Abstract

There is much talk about globalization of sociology but there is very little concrete effort to bring sociology and social theory into mutually transforming dialogues involving cultural presuppositions about self, culture and societies from various locations and traditions of our world. In this essay, an attempt has been made to bring certain strands in Euro-American social theory in dialogue with some Asian traditions of thinking and being. The essay discusses self, Confucianism, dynamic harmony and post-colonialism as part of this broader field of social theory and Asian dialogues.

Key words: self as field, Asian dialogues, Confucianism, dynamic harmony, planetary conversations

Introduction and Invitation

Asia is not a predefined fixity; Asia is a journey of co-realization and pluralizations. Similarly social theory is not unitary; it is a plural process of reflection on the dynamics of self, culture and society. But much of social theory as it rules in the academic corridors of Europe, Asia and the world is

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Eurocentric. But now there is an epochal need for realizing social theories as parts of planetary conversations. While some may look at it in terms of rise of Asia and decline of Euro-America, our challenge here is not to replace one ethnocentrism and exclusivism with another but make social theory a field of mutual learning and dialogue of presuppositions. Dominant social theories coming from the West have their own presuppositions, for example, the presupposition about the centrality of power in Weber and Foucault and its justification and application in varieties of critical theory such as that of Jurgen Habermas. But these presuppositions are not universally shared as reigning presuppositions of self, culture and society. For example, in the *Srimad Bhagavadgita*, a text in spiritual traditions of India, it is written, "*Sradhha Maya Ayam Purusha Jo Jat Sradhha Sa Ebasa: This Purusha* [the human person] is characterized by *sradhha*-capacity for love and reverence--; one is what one loves or reveres." These lines also offer some presuppositions about self, culture and society and urge us to realize that it is not only power but also *sradhha* (reverence or love) which characterizes being human in the fields of self, culture and society. For a fuller realization of social theory there needs to be dialogues between presuppositions of power and *sradhha* as important elements in the dynamic of self, culture and society rather than one-sided assertion and exclusion.

Rethinking Theory

Theory is not only a noun but also a multiplex verb and it is not only activistic but also meditative. The practical turns in social theory, such as the linguistic, feminist and ecological, do help us realize that theory is not only a noun but also a verb. But these turns do not sufficiently cultivate theory as fields of meditative verbs as their notion of practice is mostly activistic and is not related to processes of meditative co-realizations (see Giri 2010). In Asian countries the majority of people are still walking on foot and we can cultivate the notion of theory as walking meditations. Many people in Asian societies such as our indigenous peoples have a propensity to dance and we can also cultivate theory as dancing meditations. Theory is not just an unconditional system; it is a conditional journey. We are invited to reflect upon and realize theories as walking and dancing meditations starting from our own locations and dialogue with insights from our homes and the worlds.

Social Theory and Asian Dialogues: Cultivating Planetary Conversations

We need to open classical and contemporary social theories which are predominantly Euro-American to multiple dialogues such as Asian dialogues which then become part of planetary conversations. In planetary

conversations, we take part in dialogues without privileging our *apriori* ethnocentric points of view and open ourselves, our locational insights and presuppositions, to mutual interpenetration, sharing, questioning and transformations. While much of the East-West dialogue is still imprisoned within the existing logic of *apriori* fixation and unconscious colonial constitution of our globe, planetary conversations seek to transform these to conditions of mutual dialogues and interpenetration of presuppositions.

With this brief prelude, we can begin this dialogue with the concept of the self. In Asian countries, there is a notion of self as a field (cf. Clammer 2008). This field is not static but dynamic. It is a field of flows, of many rivers and streams. Our self is like the rice field. It is a field where chi, dynamic energy, flows. From both the Confucian traditions as well as Kashmiri Saivism we get a view of dynamic energy and consciousness. Recent social theory coming from scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu also emphasize the significance of field in understanding society. At the same time, *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* also talks about the yoga of the field and the knower of the field. While Bourdieu's conception of field is primarily socio-political in the Gita the concept of the field, as well as the knower of the field, is socio-psychological as well as socio-spiritual. It is enriching here to have mutually transforming dialogues between these conceptions of the field and thus deepen our conceptions and realizations of self, culture and society as fields (see Das 2010).¹

Self is neither a peak nor a cliff.² In individualism self is looked at as a cliff. But in Asian traditions and cultures there is a relational view of self which is, at the same time, ecological and transcendental. Self is the meeting point of the horizontal and the vertical.

Individualism is at the root of modern social theory and society. But dialogues with Asian traditions help us realize the transindividual dimension of individual as also a trans-social dimension of society. In his discussion of the work of Thai social thinker and Buddhist social theorist Sulak Sivaraksha John Clammer (2008) tells us that Sivaraksha helps us in understanding that individuals have a transindividual dimension. In the words of Clammer: "In much the same way that Louis Dumont has argued that Western individualism has its roots in Christianity and that the consequences of this individualism are profound for the arrangement of society and assumptions about how relationships within it work, so Sulak is arguing for a 'trans-individualism' that arises from Buddhist roots, and which has profound implications for the ordering of society" (2008: 190) In modern Western society and modern sociology both individuals and society are conceptualized and realized in isolation of Nature and transcendence, they are imprisoned in isolated black boxes; what Dallmayr (1998) calls

"Enlightenment black boxes." Dialogues with Asian traditions enable social theory to conceptualize and realize individuals and societies as at the same time part of Nature and transcendence. There are also streams in Western traditions which look at individuals and societies in relationship with Nature and Transcendence but modern social theory has not nurtured itself with such streams of vision and practice. For example, in Goethe, we would find ways of going beyond modern Enlightenment black box and realize self and society as part of Nature and Transcendence but modern sociology has followed Newton rather than Goethe (cf. Uberoi 1984). But border-crossing dialogues can contribute to memory work, for example, dialogue between modern social theory and Asian traditions of practices and reflections can contribute to creative memory work and retrieval of traditions of non-dualistic relationships between individual / society and nature and transcendence.

Social Theory and Asian Dialogues: Beyond the Two Predicaments of Socio-Centrism and Self-Centrism

Daya Krishna, the pre-eminent philosopher from India, tells us: "Society need not be considered the last term of human thought. The centrality may be restored to the human individual who, then, may be viewed as the nucleus of the social cell from what all creativity emanates or originates. In this perspective, then, society would be conceived as a facilitating mechanism so that the individual may pursue his trans-social ends. Instead of art, or religion, friendship or love being seen as the lubricating oil for the functioning of the social machine, the machine itself would be seen as facilitating the emergence and pursuit of various values [..]" (Krishna 1993: 11). In many cultures, including the Indian, the social does not have the same ultimate status as it has in modern Western society and socio-religious thought. The social in Indian thought does not have a primal significance and it is considered an intermediate field and an ideal society is one which facilitates our realization of potential as *Atman*, soul. Daya Krishna calls it *Atman*-centric approach and contrasts this with the socio-centric approach in not only modern West but also in religious traditions such as Christianity. But one also finds socio-centric approach in certain aspects of Confucianism which accords primary significance to social relations and not, to the same extent, to processes of self-realization. Both *Atman*-centric and socio-centric approaches have their own limitations what Daya Krishna calls the "two predicaments"-- the *Atman*-centric predicament and the socio-centric predicament. The socio-centric predicament does not give enough space to self-realization while "Atman centrality leads a people's attention away from an active concern with society and its betterment" (*ibid*: 23). In order to overcome the one-sidedness of an *Atman*-centric approach and socio-centric approach Daya Krishna links it to a new realization of freedom and

Sri Aurobindo (1962) to evolutionary transformations. For Daya Krishna, a new realization of freedom would help us to go beyond the either/or condition of society and self. For Sri Aurobindo, we need to transform the very constitution of the individual and the social beyond their present-day dualistic constitutions.³

From the point of view of this aspiration to overcome *Atman*-centeredness or self-centrality and socio-centeredness we can look at Asian traditions in new ways. We can here take, for example, the case of Buddhism and Confucianism—two major traditions of discourse and practice from Asia. In its reflections on humanity while Confucianism focuses on webs of relationships Buddhism emphasizes the need to transcend the limits of social relationships, particularly anthropocentrism. But both the traditions have gone through many inner debates as well as contestations among them giving rise to movements such as Neo-Confucianism which urges us to pay simultaneous attention to webs of relationships as well as nurturance of self-realization in our quest of human realization (cf. Dallmayr 2004: 152-171). According to Tu Wei-ming, Neo-Confucianism involves a "continuous deepening of one's subjectivity and an uninterrupted broadening of one's sensitivity" (quoted in Dallmayr *ibid*). It also involves a "dynamic interplay between contextualization and decontextualization. Hence, the self as a 'center of relationships' finds itself simultaneously in the grip of an ongoing decentering or displacement [...] Just as self-cultivation requires self-overcoming, so cultivation of family and other relationships demands a transgression of parochial attachments such as 'nepotism, racism and chauvinism' and ultimately a transgression of narrow 'anthropocentrism' in the direction of the 'mutuality of Heaven and man and the unity of all things'" (*ibid*: 164).

Thus in neo-Confucianism there is a simultaneous attention to social relationship as well as a deepening of subjectivity which helps us go beyond the one-sided emphasis on either society or self. We find a similar emphasis on emergent sociality and self-realizations in neo-Vedantins such as Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo who urge us to cultivate transformative relationships between self and society with additional complimentary concern for the cultivation of the divine along with and in between self and society. We can also find the resonance of similar concerns in Gandhi and Tagore. So it is helpful to cultivate further dialogues between neo-Confucianism and neo-Vedanta. This, in turn, calls for dialogues between Confucianism and Vedanta and also between Confucianism and Buddhism.

Confucianism and the Calling of Planetary Conversations

Confucianism is a major influence in Asia, especially in China, Japan,

Korea and many parts of South East Asia. Confucianism has been used in various ways in South East Asia as it is in China in histories and contemporary societies. Many a time it has been used to justify authoritarianism. But there is a new democratic consciousness brewing in South East Asia as well as in China which calls for rethinking Confucianism beyond the prism of authoritarian justification (Han 1998). Another issue is the issue of pluralism. Confucianism has existed in societies which have not valued pluralism as a way of life. Most of the societies where Confucianism is present are monological and characterized by the dominance of one ethnic group, for example that of Han Chinese in China, Japanese in Japan and Korean in Korea. In this context we have to link Confucianism to pluralism. This in turn calls for dialogues across borders and making Confucianism part of varieties of planetary conversations.⁴

Such planetary conversations can begin at home, for example, with noted pluralities in China. Thus, Tu Wei-ming, a creative interpreter of Confucianism, now talks about five teachings of China-Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. In Chinese histories and intellectual streams there have been visible and invisible dialogues among these teachings. During a visit to a Muslim town, Nagu Town, in Yunnan province (in July 2009), I asked an interpreter what has been the mutual influence between Islam and Confucianism. She said while Confucianism has made Islam much more this worldly, Islam has made Confucianism have new understanding of the meaning of Heaven. Though scholars such as Tu Wei-ming have carried out dialogue between Confucianism and Christianity they have not done so with Islam. But there is now an urgent need for dialogues between Confucianism and Islam as between Confucianism and other religious, philosophical and spiritual traditions of the world. This is especially needed when the present day Chinese Government is promoting Confucian Institutes all over the world. Such Institutes should give rise to mutually transforming dialogues in China, India, Middle East and the world rather than be a center of promotion of official Chinese nationalism.

Dynamic Harmony and Dynamic Emptiness

Harmony is a key concern in Confucianism as well as in many Asian traditions. But usually this is taken as static and has been used to justify authoritarianism. We need to rethink harmony and here we can build upon traditions such as dynamic harmony.⁵ In his study of Japanese religion, where Buddhism has interacted with Shintoism and Confucianism sociologist of religion, Robert Bellah tells us that while Japanese religion is concerned with harmony-harmony among persons and harmony with nature-this is not static harmony but dynamic. For Bellah (1985: 62-63),

What has been said about the unity of man, nature and divinity should not be interpreted as a static identity. Rather it is a harmony in tension. The gratitude one owes to superordinate benevolent entities is not an easy obligation but may involve the instant sacrifice of one's deepest interests or even of one's life. Union with the ground of being is not attained in a state of coma but very often as the result of some sudden shock in daily living. Something unexpected, some seeming disharmony, is more apt to reveal the Truth than any formal orderly teaching. Japanese art and aesthetic attitude toward nature are also concerned with the unexpected [...]

Compassion here is not imprisoned in the logic of status-quo rather but is animated by a spirit to unsettle the existing harmony and invite the unexpected in a spirit of dynamic harmony. Realization of dynamic harmony is also an animated aspiration in paths of Kashmir Saivism. As Harish Deheja (2006: 422; emphasis added) writes about it:

Kashmir Saivism postulates that *Parama Shiva* contains the entire universe, pulsating within it, just as the seed of the mighty *nyagrodha* potentially contains the entire tree. At the immanent level, the transcendent *prakashavimarshamaya* splits into *prakasha* and *vimarsha*, Shiva and Shakti, *aham* and *idam*, I and this, subject and object, held together in pulsating, *dynamic harmony* [...] At every level there is differentiation into subject and object, *aham* and *idam*, but the differentiation is based in, and unified by the non-duality of consciousness.

Kashmir Saivism seeks to realize dynamic harmony by realizing differentiation without dualism. Realization of non-duality is also an animated goal in the paths of Buddha and Kashmiri Saivism possibly has contributed to this pursuit of non-duality in the working of dynamic consciousness. There is an occasion for mutual learning on the part of Buddhism and Kashmiri Saivism as all concerned can learn from experiments in these traditions.⁶

Dynamic harmony can be accompanied by dynamic emptiness. Emptiness is an important concern in Buddhism but this emptiness is not static but dynamic. Emptiness is not there only in the beginning, we are perpetually invited to realize emptiness in all our modes of thinking and being. As the Dalai Lama tells us: "Things and events are 'empty' in that they do not possess any immutable essence or absolute 'being [...]" (The Dalai Lama 2005: 49).

Both dynamic harmony and dynamic emptiness are important contributions from Asian traditions to revitalize modern social theory.

Similarly, dialogues with modern Western social theory can help to make both these concepts more transformationally dynamic as Asian traditions have a tendency to conserve the status quo in the name of either harmony or emptiness.

Meditative Verbs of Pluralizations

Dialogues help us realize pluralities in our singularly conceptualized and constructed identities. There are pluralities in Europe as there are in Asia, and each of the countries, cultures and civilizations in both these spheres. We need to build our understanding upon these pluralities. But in order to understand this we need to have a dynamic view of pluralism by contributing to the process of creating a more plural understanding as well as society. But here our activities of pluralizations are not only activist but also meditative. There is a need to cultivate meditative pluralizations in thinking about and realizing our identities as well as reflecting upon themes in social theories.

Social Theory and Asian Dialogues: From Judgmental Comparison to Generous Comparison of Comparisons

When we think about any two units together it is easy to be engaged in judgmental comparison. This is much more so in thinking about valorized units such as modernity and traditions, Asia and Europe, India and the West, East and West etc. Here a challenge before us is to acknowledge our propensity for judgmental comparison and through labor and a love of learning move towards generous and more capacious understandings and realizations. While we talk about Europe and India it is easy to state that Europe is material and India is spiritual but there are vibrant streams of spiritualities in Europe and materialisms in India. So a more worthwhile comparison is between the materialism of Europe and materialism of India as well as between the spiritualism of Europe as well as spiritualism of India.

Another aspect of this comparative engagement is that instead of comparing systems and units in a totalizing way we are engaged in partial comparisons. This builds upon plural understanding of each of these systems and exploring partial connections in between and across them and being engaged in partial comparisons rather than wholesale comparison of systems. Here we have to move beyond systemic comparisons and attend to complexities that lie in between and beyond. As Beteille (1983) tells us, the whole scale comparison of civilizations such as India as "*Homo Hierarchicus*" and the West as "*Homo Equalis*", as it happens in the comparative sociology of Louis Dumont, is not only unhelpful but perpetuates Western ethnocentrism (see also Giri 1998). Similar is also the perspective of Touraine who argues that the distinction between modernity

and tradition in terms of individualism and hierarchy - à la Louis Dumont-is not helpful to understand either of them. As he (Touraine 2000: 86; emphasis added) writes:

The distinction between social and non-social definitions of the individual seems to me to be even more important than that between the holistic societies of old and modern individualistic societies. Both types of society are Janus-faced, because there is no fundamental difference between an individual who is trapped in the roles imposed on him by the community and an individual whose actions are determined by his social situation and the highly effective blandishments of the market. At the same time, there is a similarity between the renouncer and the modern individual who appeals to the universal rights of man and in particular the dissident or resister who risks his life by challenging a social order which, in his view, is an affront to human dignity.

Thus we need a comparative global and even planetary engagement which is interested in exploring pathways of partial connections rather than the whole sale comparison of civilizations and systems: "Partial connections require images other than those taxonomies or configurations that compel one to look for overarching principles or for some core or central features [...]" (Strathern 1991: xviii). Based on her work in New Guinea, Marilyn Strathern writes: "[...] attempts to produce a typology of societies from the application of constant principles may also evaporate. For instance, principles of reciprocity as they affect the organization of transactions and the role of leaders as Great Men or Big Men may well appear to discriminate effectively between a handful of cases; but the discrimination cannot be necessarily sustained at that level-an expanded version reveals that principles radically distinguishing whole cluster of societies are also replicated within them" (Strathern 1994: xviii; also see Strathern 2002).

Social Theory and Asian Dialogues: Genealogy, Generosity and the Calling of a Postcolonial Cosmopolis

Many Asian societies were subjected to colonial domination and the struggle for liberation and freedom constitutes an important part of the historical experience of Asian societies. Social theories in Asia build upon such anti-colonial and post-colonial struggles for freedom (Mohanty 1994). Post-colonialism has been an important intellectual movement in our recent past. Postcolonial critics and social theorists however very rarely take part in continued liberation struggles in their own societies. Most of them write only in English and teach in elite academic institutions in the Euro-American world. They very rarely write in the mother languages of the people in a

country such as India. Their theoretical discourse is very much part of global metropolitan discourse. These critics very rarely enter into dialogues with traditions of thinking and reflections in their cultures and societies. Though they operate in the Euro-American world they have a monolithic view of Europe and Asia. Moreover they very rarely pluralize the colonial experience itself. Postcolonial critics from Asia mostly work within the framework of British colonialism in India and there is very little work on the comparison between Japanese colonialism in Korea and China and British colonialism in India. Postcolonial criticism itself needs to be part of planetary conversations doing comparative historical work on varieties of colonialism and struggles for liberation in these conditions.

In this context, it is enriching here to think about Partha Chatterjee's recent genealogical investigation of modern normative political theory; what he calls "Lineages of Political Society" (2009). Chatterjee uses lineage as a method in Foucault's genealogical sense but like Foucault presents a unitary view of modern knowledge, in this case, modern normative political theory without exploring the plurality of streams of contestation within this constructed single field of normative theory. For example, in this normative space everybody did not justify colonialism as an exception to the norm of normative political theory. Chatterjee seems to have a singular notion of norms, such as representative democracy, but this single theme itself hides a plurality of streams, not to speak of the well-known tension among equality, liberty and fraternity. In modern Europe the Scandinavian experiments with people's enlightenment and democratic transformations are not just a variation of the Anglo-Saxon experience and here there has been much more attention to education, participatory democracy and people's enlightenment (cf. Das 2007). Chatterjee uses lineage as an approach supposedly to go beyond linearity, but this is deployed much more to tell multiples stories from "most of the world" rather than multiple streams of normative struggles, social mobilizations and contestations from the Euro-American world. The language of lineage is used to construct a linear and one-dimensional object of critique, in this case the "mythical space of" normative political theory but the object of critique has also a lineage of plurality as the historical experience of "most of the world" from which such a critique is being launched. Probably we need a new genealogical method which is equally generous to the lineages of plurality in all parts of the world and not only in colonized and post-colonial societies.

For Chatterjee, the challenge before "postcolonial political theory" is "to break the abstract homogeneity of the mythical time-space of Western normative theory [..]"

"The second is the even greater challenge to redefine the normative standards of modern politics in the light of the considerable accumulation of new practices [from colonial, post-colonial societies as well as from Euro-American world] (2009: 23). But this project does not explicitly realize the need for cross-cultural dialogue. Furthermore, this does not include the challenge of understanding and learning the languages of normative thinking in traditions such as India. For example it is said that King Janaka, father of Sita, nurtured his people as a mother. Learning much more about such languages of governance would bring new enrichment and imagination to postcolonial political and social theorizing. But how is it possible when our postcolonial advocates mostly interact with knowledge emerging from the Euro-American world and rarely go inside other traditions of thinking and realizations? The possible significance of nurturing one's subjects as a mother is explored in the following poem:

King Janaka nurtured
His People as a mother
And Could not our Janakas-
Our fathers in politics, family and religion
Nurture us as mothers?
Could not God and His arrogant servants
Be a Manifestation of Creative Motherhood
And our state and society
A Flow of Motherhood?

(a poem originally written by the author in Oriya)

Theorizing as Walking and Dancing Meditations: The Calling of Cultivating New Words and Worlds

Cultivating social theory and Asian dialogues calls for us to be engaged in varieties of creative learning and memory work; going deeper in our multiple traditions and border-crossing conversations. It calls for us to learn across borders and create new fields of mutual learning and responsibility. We learn by walking and dancing together not only by sitting in libraries and looking at the old manuscripts as documents of truth or doing field work in an alienated way. Theorizing is not only an abstract, deductive and discursive activity; it is a multidimensional practice involving dancing and walking together, cultivating dialogues across borders and taking part in planetary conversations. Such practices of theorizing call for new languages of learning, inquiry and communities of seeking. In this work we are invited to go beyond the available discourses and practices of theory, Asia, Europe, West, East, India and the world and contribute to new journeys of self, social and planetary realizations.

Notes

- ¹ Self is a process and here it is possible to make a dialogue between semiotic traditions and Buddhist traditions. As Bakker (2010) writes:

In the combined Peirce-Mead model of the "semiotic self" the Neo-Darwinian ideas of Charles Sanders Peirce and George Herbert Mead are synthesized to establish a kind of Global adaptation of the Buddhist notion of the flow of the self. The self is not a static thing. The self is not like an apple or a billiard ball. The self is process. The process consists of one's "mind" continually sifting through experiences and making plans. At any one stage of our lives we are "me-I-thou." Then, only a few seconds later, we are again a new "me-I-thou."

- ² Here the following poem about peak and peak experience may be of interest:

I am a peak
I am not only a peak
I am also a plane
A plane seeking embrace
Experience of the peak
Is not confined only to the peak
It is there in all planes of life
Circles of relationships

(extracts of a poem written by the author originally in Oriya).

- ³ For SriAurobindo:

In the relations between the individual and the group, this constant tendency of Nature appears as the strife between two equally deep-rooted human tendencies, individualism and collectivism. On one side is the engrossing authority, perfection and development of the State, on the other the distinctive freedom, perfection and development of individual man. The State idea, the small or the vast living machine, and the human idea, the more and more distinct and luminous Person, the increasing God, stand in perpetual opposition. The size of the State makes no difference to the essence of the struggle and need make none to its characteristic circumstances. It was the family, the tribe or the city, the polis; it became the clan, the caste and the class, the kula, the gens. It is now the nation. Tomorrow or day after it may be all mankind. But even then the question will remain poised between man and humanity, between self-liberating Person and the engrossing collectivity (1962: 272-273).

- ⁴ In this context the work of Dallmayr is enriching. He tells us about the affinity among these different streams of thought and practice-pragmatism, Confucianism, Gandhi's experiment with truth and paths of Swaraj. First Dallmayr (2007) writes the following about Gandhi and the pragmatists like William James and John Dewey:

In speaking of interconnectedness and the 'play of mutual forces' Gandhi displays an affinity with the spirit of Jamesian and Deweyan pragmatism. But the parallel can be carried further. Like William James and Dewey, and perhaps even more emphatically, Gandhi was an ethical and spiritual pragmatist, in the great tradition of Indian spirituality. [...] Gandhi deliberately chose the path of action or praxis (karma yoga) demanding continuous ethical engagement in the affairs of the world. Again like Dewey he did not assume that human beings are free and equal by nature

(or in an original 'state of nature'); rather freedom and equality for him were achievements requiring steady practice—a practice involving not only change of outward conditions but primarily self-transformation (2007: 10).

Then Dallmayr writes the following about Confucius, Dewey and Gandhi:

Despite his deep modesty, Confucius himself can be seen and was seen, as an 'exemplar' or 'exemplary person' (chun-tzu) who taught the 'way' not through abstract doctrines but through the testimony of daily living. At this point, the affinity with the Deweyan philosophy comes clearly into view—a fact perhaps not surprising given Dewey's extended visit to China after World War I. As in the case of Gandhian swaraj, leading a responsible life in society involves self-restraint and the abandonment of domineering impulses. In Confucius's own words, humanness or to be properly human (jen) means to 'conquer oneself (ke-chi) and to return to propriety (fu-li) (ibid: 15). The above reflections of Dallmayr can help us to probe further the affinities among paths of Confucius, Gandhi and the pragmatists like Dewey as part of planetary conversations.

⁵ Dynamic harmony has a dimension of harmonization: it is dynamic harmonization.

⁷ It must be noted here that differentiation and integration are perennial human concerns and these also have been key themes in social and political theory in the last three or four hundred years. In our recent theoretical discourses, Niklas Luhman urges us to realize the need for distinction, for example, between system and its environment, Derrida urges us to understand the work of difference which is just not mere difference but has the capacity to resist temporal and spatial incorporation and Parsons and Habermas in their own different ways the need for integration and communication. All these attempts can be enriched by the quest from Kashmiri Saivism to realize differentiation without dualism. Buddhist quest for non-duality (see Loy 1988) can also be enriched by it. It can also help us to rethink identity and difference in contemporary social and political theory.

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