

# Thinking Dialogically about Dialogue with Martin Buber and Daya Krishna<sup>1</sup>

## *Abstract*

The first half of the paper consists of a philosophical reflection upon a historical exchange. I discuss Buber's famous letter, and another (less known but not less interesting) letter by J. L. Magnes, to Mahatma Gandhi, both challenging the universality of the principle of *ahiṃsā* (non-violence). I also touch on Buber's interest and acquaintance with Indian philosophy, as an instance of dialogue de-facto (not just in theory) across cultures. Gandhi never answered these letters, but his grandson and philosopher extraordinaire Ramchandra Gandhi ›answers‹ Buber, not on the letter but about the ideal of dialogue at large, and the interconnection of dialogue and *ahiṃsā*.

The second half of the paper focuses on the work of Daya Krishna, another ›philosopher of dialogue.‹ from within Daya Krishna's vast philosophical corpus, I underscore one of his last projects, in which he sketches the outlines of what he refers to as ›knowledge without certainty,‹ contrary to common and traditional ways of perceiving the concept of knowledge. I argue that the *pramāṇa*, means and measure of knowledge, in the intriguing case of ›knowledge without certainty,‹ depicted by Daya Krishna as open-ended, dynamic, constantly evolving, is inevitably dialogue, and I aim to disclose the meaning and salience of dialogue in Daya Krishna's oeuvre.

However, not just the content, but also the form, or the ›how,‹ matters in my paper. I use different materials across genres and disciplines to rethink, in dialogue with Buber and Daya Krishna, the possibilities and impossibilities (with emphasis on the possibilities) of dialogue. These ›materials‹ include Milan Kundera and Richard Rorty, Krishna and Arjuna (of the *Bhagavadgītā*), Vrinda Dalmiya who works with the notion of care as bridging between epistemology and ethics, Wes Anderson on seeing through the eyes of the other,

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is dedicated with love to Chava Magnes.

and Ben Okri on hospitality in the realm of ideas. As author of the present paper I am moderating an imagined a multi-vocal dialogue between these ›participants‹ on dialogue as concept, as craft and especially, as a great necessity in the world in which we live.

### Keywords

Martin Buber, Daya Krishna, Ramchandra Gandhi, Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya, dialogue, »knowledge without certainty,« *ahimsā* (non-violence).

The young chevalier looks at the stranger.

[...]

›You're from the eighteenth century?‹

The question is peculiar, absurd, but the way the man asks it is even more so, with a strange intonation, as if he were a messenger come from a foreign kingdom and had learned his French at court without knowing France. It is that intonation, that unbelievable pronunciation, which made the chevalier think this man really might belong to some other period.

›Yes, and you?‹ he asks.

›Me? The twentieth.‹ Then he adds: ›The end of the twentieth.‹

[...]

The chevalier sees in his stare the stubborn urge to speak. Something in that stubbornness disturbs him. He understands that that impatience to speak is also an implacable uninterest in listening. [...] He instantly loses the taste for saying anything at all, and at once he ceases to see any reason to prolong the encounter (Kundera 1995: 127–129).<sup>2</sup>

## 1 Overture

Everyone today speaks about dialogue. Everyone aspires to be in dialogue, or at least this is what everyone says; dialogue between friends, enemies, states, religions, ›east and west,‹ ›north and south.‹ Everyone speaks of the necessity of dialogue, but very few engage in a dialogue, since dialogue is not an easy undertaking. To be in dialogue is to see the other, which is a difficult challenge, as one usually concentrates on oneself, and is used to thinking in terms of ›I‹ and ›my.‹ Here *Bhagavadgītā* (BG) 2.71 comes to mind: »Having abandoned all his desires,

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<sup>2</sup> M. Kundera, *Slowness*, L. Asher (trans.), London: Faber and Faber, 1995.

roaming about without desires, without ›mine‹ and without ›I‹, the human person reaches the sublime (vihāya kāmān yaḥ sarvān, pu-māmś carati niḥspṛhaḥ, nirmamo nirahaṅkāraḥ, sa śāntim adhigac-chati).«

The *Bhagavadgītā* itself is a dialogue, one of the most famous dialogues ever composed. The śloka quoted here prescribes the yogic path to the sublime (śānti). However, the same procedure, namely suspending (not one's desires, but) the ›I‹ and ›my,‹ which are not different from one another, can also be taken as a ›path‹ toward you, ›the sublime you‹ (as the antonym of Sartre's ›L'enfer, c'est les autres‹). Vrinda Dalmiya speaks of this ›selflessness‹ in terms of ›care.‹ Her argument is that ›the heart of the cognitive moment lies in selflessness (what is sometimes termed ›objectivity‹) – where we, along with our biases and expectations, recede so that the object of knowledge can present itself‹ (Dalmiya 2002: 47).<sup>3</sup>

This is to say that Dalmiya notices the same ›movement‹ of the self, from foreground to background, both in the ›cognitive moment‹ and in the act of reaching out to the other, which she refers to as ›care.‹ ›Both entail,‹ she says, ›a backgrounding of the subject, to create a space for the other – be it another person or the object of knowledge‹ (*ibid.*).

The same point, about ›knowledge as care,‹ and ›care‹ as consisting of a noetic dimension, is also raised by Ben Okri, the Nigerian poet and novelist, in a short essay titled ›Hospitality.‹ Here he writes: ›There is also intellectual hospitality, the hospitality to ideas, to dreams, to ways of seeing, to perception, to cultures. We will call this invisible hospitality. This is the most important hospitality of all, and it includes all other hospitalities‹ (Okri 2011: 55).<sup>4</sup>

Dalmiya's attempt, in my reading, is to reveal, or even to restore, the ethical foundation of every epistemological episode. Her epistemo-ethical ideal is not unrelated to the picture of dialogue to be sketched here as we move on.

Moreover, Dalmiya's argument, as far as the ›cognitive moment‹ is concerned, sits well with the picture of consciousness, as depicted by Patañjali of the *Yogasūtra* (YS), a philosopher of mind (among other things) who thought and wrote sometime around the second

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<sup>3</sup> V. Dalmiya, ›Why Should a Knower Care?‹ *Hypatia*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2002, pp. 34–52.

<sup>4</sup> B. Okri *A Time for New Dreams*, London: Rider, 2011.

or third century CE. In his discussion of object-centered meditation (which paves the way to objectless-meditation), he suggests that here, »consciousness is as-if emptied of its [subjective] nature, and the object [of meditation] alone shines forth« (YS 1.43).<sup>5</sup>

Like in Dalmiya, one's subjectivity »recedes,« as it were, to clear a space for »the other,« object in Patañjali's case, or another subject, the »you« which »care ethics« speaks of.

However a dialogue is not just about seeing the other, but also about seeing through the other's eyes, even if just for an instance. This is to say that for the sake of a dialogue (not the usual pseudo-dialogue, or non-dialogue in the name of a dialogue), one has to »leave his body,« and to »enter the body,« or »head,« or mind of the other.

Take for example Wes Anderson's movie *Darjeeling Limited* (2007), that tells the story of three American brothers, who travel to India after their father's death, following the oriental fantasy, »in search of themselves.« One of them, Peter (played by Adrian Brody), wears heavy glasses, but whenever he wants to see something, he has to take them off. These are his father's glasses, with his prescription. Peter tries to understand his dead father, to see through his eyes, through his glasses. These glasses, as a metaphor, express the impossible desire to see through the eyes of the other. Only a dialogue has the capacity to make the impossible possible.

## 2 Martin Buber and Indian Philosophy

Martin Buber (1878–1965) is one of the few who does not merely speak, but who also engages in a dialogue. And one of Buber's least known dialogues is his dialogue with Indian philosophy. Western philosophy, past and present, is hardly open to other thinking traditions. There are of course exceptions, but by and large, Western philosophy (like the West in general) is »Eurocentric,« i. e. believes that the sun

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<sup>5</sup> The full sūtra says that, »nirvitarkā (samāpatti) [which is the higher level of meditation on »concrete objects,« as against the next level of meditation which concentrates on subtle, or abstract, or in Sanskrit sūkṣma, objects] occurs when memory is »purified« [i. e. »deleted,« or emptied of its contents], consciousness is as-if emptied of its [subjective] nature, and the object [of meditation] alone shines forth (smṛti-pariśuddhau sva-rūpa-śūnyā-iva-artha-mātra-nirbhāsā nirvitarkā)«; I work with the *Yogasūtra* text as it occurs in Swami Hariharananda Aranya's *Yoga Philosophy of Patañjali* (Kolkata: University of Calcutta, 2012). The translation is mine.

risers in West Europe and sets in North America. Everything else is marginal, or peripheral, and cannot be considered as ›really‹ philosophical.

Here I recall Daya Krishna's introduction to *The Art of the Conceptual*, a collection of his essays.<sup>6</sup> A staunch believer in the power of dialogue, he writes here that,

The story of Western thinkers' response to a basic criticism of their work is interesting, as it reveals a strange sort of resistance to come to terms with a fundamental critique of their work, particularly from persons belonging to other cultures. [...] Until and unless the West becomes an object of study of non-Western social scientists to the same extent, and in the same manner, as the non-Western world has been studied by the Western students of those societies and cultures, not only no balance will be achieved in the comparative study of societies and cultures, but the puerility and perversity of much of what is being done shall not be exposed. [...] The West of course is not prepared to welcome such a reciprocal enterprise to redress the balance, or even to admit its feasibility or desirability. [...] It is being asserted that it is only those who are superior in power may study those who are inferior to them (*ibid.*: xiii, xv and xvi).

Daya Krishna speaks of the politics of ›comparative studies.‹ Political and economic power sets the tone of intellectual interactions between India and the West. It is an illustration of the Buberian »I-It« relationship, as against his dialogic »I-Thou« confluence. Daya Krishna pleads for reciprocity, and the classical ideal of ānṛṣaṃsya,<sup>7</sup> interweaving non-violence with a sense of fairness and equality, comes to mind. Moreover he speaks of the one-sidedness of ›comparative studies,‹ that are not merely based on Western standards alone, but which make a clear-cut distinction between the Western subject and the non-Western object. His fury at the colonial overtones of »much of what is being done« is transparent. And finally, when speaking of sheer refusal to listen to any fundamental critique by an ›outsider,‹ Daya Krishna hints – or so I read him – at the siddhāntin-pūrvapakṣin equation. In classical Indian philosophy, the philosopher (or siddhāntin) is required to formulate his position in a dialogue (and often a

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<sup>6</sup> D. Krishna, *The Art of the Conceptual: Explorations in a Conceptual Maze over Three Decades*, Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research and Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1989.

<sup>7</sup> On ānṛṣaṃsya as notion and ideal, see Mukund Lath's paper: »The Concept of ānṛṣaṃsya in the Mahābhārata,« in R. N. Dandekar (ed.), *The Mahābhārata Revisited*, Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2011, pp. 113–119.

harsh debate) with the pūrvapakṣin, his ›philosophical opponent.‹ This is to say that the philosopher has to write his opponent's objections and to provide answers to them, to the best of his creativity. It is one thing to be acquainted with different positions and to refer to them, to agree or take issue, as every scholar does. It is altogether another thing to actually write the position of my opponent (to which I strongly oppose) to the best of my philosophical capacity. It is like playing chess against oneself. One has to play his best with both the black and the white pieces. One needs at least a quantum of imagination, to play the role of the pūrvapakṣin.

Martin Buber was not deaf to philosophies of the non-West. His interaction with the so-called ›East‹ echoes in his numerous writings. In his paper ›Martin Buber and Asia,‹ Maurice Friedman – Buber's biographer and the English translator of many of his writings – spotlights Buber's deep interest in Asian philosophies, especially Daoism and Zen Buddhism.<sup>8</sup>

According to Friedman,

We cannot understand Buber's central work to which his thought led, and from which the rest came, namely, *Ich und Du*, *I and Thou*, unless we understand the Taoist concept of wu wei. If we look at Part Two of *I and Thou*, we discover that everything that Buber says about the free man who wills without arbitrariness is, in fact, the direct application in almost the same words of what he wrote in ›The Teaching of the Tao‹ about the perfected man of the Tao (1976: 419).<sup>9</sup>

India, however, is hardly referred to in Friedman's account on Buber and ›the East.‹ He does mention a meeting between Buber and Rabin-drānath Tagore (in 1926), and Buber's ambivalent approach to Advaita Vedānta (in ›Daniel: Dialogues on Realization,‹ and later in *I and Thou*). This ambivalence is twofold: first, with regard to the primacy of a ›beyond‹ over the ›here and now‹ in Advaita philosophy as read

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<sup>8</sup> In this respect, he mentions Buber's essays ›The Teaching of the Tao‹ (1911), ›Daniel: Dialogues on Realization‹ (1913), ›The Spirit of Orient and Judaism‹ (1916), and ›China and Us‹ (1928), and his later book *The Place of Hasidism in the History of Religions* (*The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, 1960). Friedman further highlights the Daoist influence on Buber's Magnum Opus *I and Thou* (1923). M. Buber, *I and Thou*, R. G. Smith (trans.), Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937 [*Ich und Du*, Leipzig: Inselverlag, 1923] (<http://www.bahaistudies.net/asma/iandthou.pdf>; last accessed on 24 November 2015).

<sup>9</sup> M. Friedman, ›Martin Buber and Asia,‹ *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 26, No. 4, 1976, pp. 411–426.

by Buber; and second, with regard to the question of dualism (I-Thou) versus non-dualism (a-dvaita). I will come back to this question as we move on.

In the following paragraphs, I want to focus on Buber's dialogue with Indian philosophy, through two of his texts: *I and Thou*, apropos the question of (non-) dualism, and his letter to Gandhi, the famous Indian Mahatma, in which he argues against the universality of the principle of non-violence. I will start with the latter, namely with the letter.

Buber's letter to Gandhi, composed in 1939, is a response to an article published by the Mahatma in his journal *Harijan* toward the end of 1938, where he expresses his views with regard to the Jews in Germany under the Nazi regime, and speaks of the possibility of a »national home« for the Jewish people in Palestine-Israel. In a nutshell, Gandhi argues that the Jews in Europe should adopt his own satyagraha (truthfulness in action) approach, rooted in ahimsā (non-violence). And he rejects their yearning for a »national home,« stating that,

like other peoples of the earth, [the Jews should] make that country their home where they are born and where they earn their livelihood. [...] Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French.<sup>10</sup>

My focus here is neither on Gandhi's controversial comments, nor on Buber's furious reaction (he refers to these comments as »tragic-comic«), but the universality of non-violence, which Buber challenges. Buber's letter reveals close acquaintance with Gandhian terminology. He freely uses terms such as ahimsā and satyagraha, and argues that even though non-violence is indeed preferable in most cases, there are still borderline cases, in which it is hardly effective. Such a case, he argues, is the Nazi regime. »Are you not aware,« Buber asks Gandhi sharply,

of the burning of synagogues and scrolls of the Law? [...] Do you know or do you not know, Mahatma, what a concentration camp is like and what goes on there? Do you know of the torments in the concentration camp, of

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<sup>10</sup> Gandhi's article, and the letters sent to him in response by Buber and Magnes, from which I quote here, can be found in Arvind Sharma's book *Modern Hindu Thought: The Essential Texts* (Delhi: Oxford University Press 2002), as appendix to the chapter on M. K. Gandhi. The quote from Gandhi occurs on p. 287 in Sharma's anthology.

its methods of slow and quick slaughter? I cannot assume that you know of this (Sharma 2002: 291).

Drawing on the *Bhagavadgītā*, the classic yoga text, thus displaying again his acquaintance with Gandhi's world, Buber further writes:

The Mahabharata is an epos of warlike, disciplined force. In the greatest of its poems, the *Bhagavad Gita*, it is told how Arjuna decides on the battle-field that he will not commit the sin of killing his relations who are opposed to him, and he lets fall his bow and arrow. But the god reproaches him, saying that such action is unmanly and shameful; there is nothing better for a knight in arms than a just fight (*ibid.*: 301).

Buber evokes the same dilemma, raised in the *Mahābhārata* by Krishna, the »devious divinity« (I borrow the phrase from B. K. Matilal)<sup>11</sup> of the great epic: does the protection of dharma (»morality«) necessitate, even if just in rare cases, instances of adharmā (»immorality«)? Does adharmā in the service of dharma, or immorality for the protection of morality, or war for the restoration of peace, become »legitimate«?

It is worth noting here that not only Buber wrote to Gandhi in reply to his Jews/Palestine article, but also J. L. Magnes, another Israeli philosopher and humanist. Like Buber, Magnes challenges the universality of non-violence as a mahāvratā, »great vow,« which according to Patañjali of the *Yogasūtra* should be observed »irrespective of birth« (or »caste«), place, time, circumstances, and even the »call of duty« (namely sacrificing animals in the case of a Brahmin, or fighting a war in the case of a Kṣatriya).<sup>12</sup> According to Magnes, satyagraha, or »truthfulness in action« rooted in non-violence, is not universal, because it does not suit everyone. »The Jews,« he explains, »are a people who exalt life, and they can hardly be said to disdain death. [...] For this reason I have often wondered if we are fit subjects for Satyagraha« (*ibid.*: 305).

Acquainted with Gandhian terminology not less than Buber, Magnes suggests that the effectiveness of non-violence as a »weapon« relies on disdain for death. Gandhi, who treated plague patients, when there was no cure to this fatal disease, and whose numerous »fasts to death« demonstrate his uncompromised willingness »to go all the

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<sup>11</sup> B. K. Matilal, »Kṛṣṇa – In Defense of a Devious Divinity,« in J. Ganeri (ed.), *Ethics and Epics: The Collected Essays of Bimal Krishna Matilal*, Vol. 2, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 91–108.

<sup>12</sup> YS 2.31: jāti-deśa-kāla-samaya-anavacchinnāḥ sārva-bhaumā mahā-vratam.



way« for the sake of his principles, is the paradigm of this »disdain.« This is the reason that non-violence served him so efficiently, at least according to Magnes. But whoever exalts life, as the Jews do, or are supposed to do in accordance with their tradition, »is not fit for satyagraha,« and needs to find, or create for himself, other ways of action. Magnes sees Gandhi as totally indifferent to life and death alike, striving to transcend both, whereas the Judaic tradition as he understands it does not allow such indifference. It sanctifies *rāga* (attachment) to life, and *dveṣa* (aversion) to death, if I may use Pātāñjala-yoga terms once again.

### 3 Ramchandra Gandhi In Dialogue With Buber

Gandhi never replied. The letters probably never reached their destination. But Buber did receive an answer, not in a letter for a letter, but in a book for a book. This is to say that a whole book was written in reply, or response, to Buber's *I and Thou* by Ramchandra Gandhi, the grandson of the Mahatma and a unique philosopher in his own right. Ramchandra Gandhi (RCG) »answered« Buber in a collection of essays titled *I am Thou* (1984).<sup>13</sup> If Buber advocates the transformation from the third person to the second person, as far as »the other« is concerned, namely from »it« (consisting of »he« and »she«) to »thou« or »you«; then RCG suggests taking the next logical step, through the act of transforming the second person to a first person, thus replacing Buber's dualistic »I and Thou« with the advaitic formulation »I am thou.« Here I recall Ramana Maharshi's – RCG's inspiration in *I am Thou* – famous couplet which comprises of his advaitic, or non-dualistic teaching:

Aruṇācala Śiva, Aruṇācala Śiva, Aruṇācala Śiva, Śiva Aruṇācala |  
Aruṇācala Śiva, Aruṇācala Śiva, Aruṇācala Śiva, Śiva Aruṇācala ||

The couplet is made of two identical stanzas, two that are one. Each stanza consists of two words, Aruṇācala and Śiva, two words with a single reference, god Śiva, or mount Aruṇācala as his »physical« manifestation, or even Ramana Maharshi himself as a human avatar of a »beyond« which the words Aruṇācala and Śiva point at. The couplet is

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<sup>13</sup> R. Gandhi, *I am Thou: Meditations on the Truth of India*, Pune: Indian Philosophical Quarterly Publications, 1984.

›dualistic,‹ but is all about ›non-dualism.‹ In the same way, I read RCG as conceiving of the Buberian »I-Thou« dialogue as a step, or stage, toward the revealment of the common denominator, the ātman if you wish, which the two interlocutors share, and which makes them ›two,‹ but at another level ›one.‹ Love is the best illustration for advaita, Vivek Datta – thinker and poet from Binsar – once told me<sup>14</sup>. It has the power to transform and transcend the twoness of ›you‹ and ›I.‹ Another illustration is that of the saṅgam, or ›intersection‹ of three rivers/goddesses at Prayāg Raj, near Allahabad, namely Gaṅgā, Yamunā and Sarasvatī. The former two rivers are flowing with water. The latter is metaphoric, subtle, subterranean. I want to suggest that according to RCG, the dialogic saṅgam of Gaṅgā and Yamunā, ›you‹ and ›I,‹ is of the capacity to reveal Sarasvatī, not as a third party, but as the embodiment of advaita, the ›not-twoness‹ of Yamunā and Gaṅgā.

Martin Buber did not read RCG, but he does refer – in *I and Thou* – to classical Indian formulations on which RCG draws. »The doctrine of absorption,« Buber writes,

demands, and promises refuge in pure Subject. But in lived reality there is not something thinking without something thought, rather is the thinking no less dependent on the thing thought than the latter on the former. A subject deprived of its object is deprived of its reality [...] Concentration and outgoing [consciousness] are necessary, both in truth, at once the one and the other (Buber 1937: 89–90, 95).

According to him, the thinking subject »needs« objects and other subjects, as he claims his substantiality through them. Buber is hardly interested in the »pure subject,« such as the Upaniṣadic ātman, or the Sāṃkhya-Yoga notion of puruṣa. He is not interested in ›freedom as disengagement.‹ For him, introversive contemplation and world-facing intentionality are both »necessary,« »real,« complementing one another. This is to say that unlike RCG, who prefers oneness over twoness, and sees twoness as the »raw material« of alienation, racism and wars, Buber has something different to offer. He pleads for »free movement« between two modes of consciousness: on the one hand, introversion or »absorption,« an »I« which consists of – and is no other than the »you« – as in RCG, and on the other hand, a dialogic encounter, which reveals the twoness of »you« and »I«; twoness which creates the »lived reality«; twoness in a positive, creative sense.

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<sup>14</sup> Personal communication, September 2005.

Buber does not turn his back to the metaphysical, but refuses to accept its monopoly, or primacy. Moreover, he is not interested in the metaphysical unless it has an impact on the »lived reality,« namely on the ethical realm, the realm in which »you« and »I« can meet.

So immense was Buber's interest in Indian philosophy, that in part three of *I and Thou*, he offers a short narration followed by an analysis of the famous *Chāndogya–Upaniṣad* story about Indra, Vir-oana and Prajāpati.<sup>15</sup> In a nutshell, it is a story about self-identity and freedom, investigating three states or stages of consciousness: waking consciousness, dreaming consciousness, and consciousness during *suṣupti* or dreamless-sleep. Thereafter, the story introduces a »fourth state« (*caturtha/turīya*), which transcends the other three, or as Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya, »the father« of contemporary Indian philosophy, puts it, »It is not only a stage among stages; it is the truth of the other stages« (Bhattacharyya 2008: 29).<sup>16</sup>

Buber believed that the story culminates in dreamless-sleep as the highest stage of consciousness. His analysis shows that he was not aware of the fourth stage. His critique of the Upaniṣadic message, or more broadly of the advaitic (non-dualistic) position, is that it »forgets« and neglects the world and the worldly (»earthly affairs« in R. G. Smith's translation), for the sake of the metaphysical »beyond.« Buber writes:

What does it help my soul that it can be withdrawn from this world here into unity, when this world itself has of necessity no part in the unity? [...] [T]he reality of the everyday hour on earth, with a streak of sun on a maple twig and the glimpse of the eternal Thou, is greater for us [...] In so far as the [Upaniṣadic] doctrine contains guidance for absorption in true being, it leads not to lived reality but to »annihilation,« where no consciousness reigns and whence no memory leads [...] But we with holy care wish to foster the holy good of our reality [...] Absorption wishes to preserve only the »pure,« the real, the lasting, and to cast away everything else (Buber 1937: 87–89).

Buber confesses that unlike the Upaniṣadic author, he is interested in »the reality of the everyday hour on earth.« His outspoken yearning for »a streak of sun on a maple twig,« and his depiction of the »Upa-

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<sup>15</sup> *Chāndogya–Upaniṣad* (8.7.1–8.12.6). The story occurs in Patrick Olivelle (ed. and trans.), *The Early Upaniṣads*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, pp. 278–287.

<sup>16</sup> K. C. Bhattacharyya, *Studies in Philosophy*, G. Bhattacharyya (ed.), Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2008 [1958].

niṣadic doctrine« as leading »not to lived reality but to annihilation, where no consciousness reigns and whence no memory leads,« both refer to – and take issue with – dreamless-sleep as a mystic or spiritual ideal. »Death,« he adds, »can be replaced by its likeness of the deep-sleep, which is just as impenetrable« (*ibid.*: 90).

Death, or for that matter deathlike dreamless-sleep, does not suit Buber's vision. The Upaniṣadic message is not affirmative enough for him. He is in search not just of a »holy Nay,« as he (or R. G. Smith, his English translator) puts it, but of a »holy Yea,« in and for the world. But »the fourth state of consciousness« – which Buber seems to not have been aware of as he wrote his »commentary« of the Upaniṣad – consists of a measure of world-affirmation. Not exactly with the ethical edge that Buber pleads for, but nevertheless with a sense of »return« from the »withdrawal« conveyed by the inner-journey from waking to dreamless-sleep.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4 From Buber to Daya Krishna

From Buber, I want to move on to Daya Krishna (1924–2007), one of the most creative philosophers of the second half of the twentieth century. Dialogue, in theory and practice alike, is a central feature of his philosophy.

In the following paragraphs, I will touch on merely one angle of Daya Krishna's vast writings on and in dialogue, relating to one of his last projects. This philosophical project, elaborated in a series of articles, his »knowledge articles,«<sup>18</sup> composed between 2004 and 2007, aims at »deconstructing« the concept of knowledge, toward the formulation of what he refers to as »knowledge without certainty.« The transition from Buber to Daya Krishna (henceforth DK), as the fol-

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<sup>17</sup> On the affirmative aspects of »the fourth state of consciousness,« see my paper »Ayam aham asmīti: Self-consciousness and Identity in the Eighth Chapter of the *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad* vs. Śaṅkara's Bhāṣya,« *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2007, pp. 319–333.

<sup>18</sup> »Knowledge: Whose Is It, What Is It, and Why Has It to Be True?« *Indian Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2005, pp. 179–187; »Definition, Deception and the Enterprise of Knowledge,« *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 2005, pp. 75–89; »Chance, Probability, Indeterminacy and Knowledge,« *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2007, pp. 91–110; »Knowledge, Predictability and Truth« (2007; unpublished).

lowing lines will show, is a natural one. Like Buber, DK cherishes the metaphysical if and only if it has substantial impact on the vyavahāra, on »earthly affairs,« as Buber-Smith puts it. And like Buber, DK is more interested in the »I-You« interaction, than in the Upaniṣadic-Advaitic all pervasive (ātmanic) »I« which literally »devours« the »You.« I emphasize the proximity between the two, but like in every other comparison, there is also a difference.

To put it very directly, Buber is »religious,« DK »secular« (the quote marks on both words are essential); Buber is tradition-based, whereas DK is free of (or freed himself from) any religious or theological background, adhering merely to the kalpanā-pramāṇa, to imagination, or conceptual imagination as he used to put it, as means and method to transgress the borderlines of the »I,« and to establish a dialogue, or in fact dialogues in the plural, which for him are a necessary condition for the occurrence of knowledge; and DK, like every other philosopher, is deeply interested in knowledge. But the question is whether Buber's commitment to the tradition, and more specifically to the Jewish tradition, compared with DK's uncommitted situation, is necessarily a matter of bondage, and moreover what is the relation in a phrase such as »religious philosopher,« or »Jewish philosopher« (both phrases are used by Hilary Putnam, and many others, with reference to Buber)<sup>19</sup>, between these two components, or two hats. The same, of course, can be asked about Śaṅkara, for instance, in the Indian tradition. Is the ambivalence (or tension, as Putnam, a Jewish philosopher himself, puts it and writes about in the first person) between philosophy and religion (keeping in mind that the borderline between the two is often blurred) contributive and enriching, or paralyzing, philosophy-wise, and at the other end of the scale, religion-wise? Is religion a »conversation stopper,« as Richard Rorty provocatively argues,<sup>20</sup> dialogue included? Rorty, we will discover as we move on, is not an eager advocate for philosophy either. For him, the two variables of the equation »religious philosopher« are flawed and outdated.

<sup>19</sup> H. Putnam, *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life: Rosenzweig, Buber, Levinas, Wittgenstein*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2008.

<sup>20</sup> R. Rorty, »Religion as Conversation-stopper,« *Common Knowledge*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1994, pp. 1–6; I have taken the phrase out of its immediate context. In his paper, Rorty speaks of the politization of religion, of hypocrisy and fake righteousness, of private life versus public policy.

## 5 Knowledge without Certainty

DK ›felt‹ that old definitions of knowledge, and primarily the famous ›justified true belief,‹ have become axioms, intended to ›satisfy‹ or ›pacify‹ psychological insecurity and craving for stability and endurance, rather than questionable ›tools,‹ with which one ›measures,‹ or ›creates‹ the so-called ›reality.‹ In place of these old definitions, DK ›plays,‹ or begins ›to play,‹ with a new concept, the concept of ›knowledge without certainty‹ (KWC).

How are we to even start thinking about a concept of knowledge which embraces, rather than rejects uncertainty, ambiguity, probability, even chance? Such a concept of knowledge stands in sheer contrast to everything which we have become used to thinking about knowledge. DK's concept of KWC is rooted in dialogue.

›Knowledge,‹ he writes,

Does not belong to anybody, even though one says, ›I know‹ [...] knowledge is collective, cumulative affair of humankind, and if it had to be regarded as ›belonging‹ to anybody, it would be to the humankind as such, and not to this or that ›I.‹ But humankind includes not only those who lived in the past, but those who will live in the future also. [...] knowledge is an ongoing human enterprise, a collective puruṣārtha of humankind. [...] A puruṣārtha is a matter of seeking, perennial seeking, as perennial as time itself, and hence not something that can be possessed, or meant to be possessed (Krishna 2005: 185).

The dialogue depicted here is multilayered. First, knowledge is a collective puruṣārtha, or ›human seeking,‹ not ›personal‹ or ›private‹ in any way. As such, it necessitates a dialogue between the ›members‹ of ›the interrelated and interacting community, both visible and invisible,‹ as DK puts it (Krishna 2007: 9). Second, as a ›seeking,‹ KWC is an open-ended, tentative, continuous, and dynamic process. In this respect, it is based on a ›trikāla-dialogue‹: a dialogue with the past, with history, with one's intellectual heritage; a dialogue here and now, with the manifold ›you‹; and a dialogue with the future as the ultimate unknown. DK's KWC is the ›antonym‹ of Śaṅkara's brahmavidyā, ›knowledge‹ which is all about certainty. For the famous (approximately) eighth century Advaita philosopher, ›real knowledge‹ (as against avidyā, which amounts to the shadows of the Platonic cave) pertains solely to the Brahman, an ›eternal beyond‹ which is supposed to be the crux of ›me,‹ i. e. selfhood without I-ness, or ātman surpassing asmadpratyaya. Śaṅkara refers to brahmavidyā as

trikālābādhita, »unrefuted and irrefutable in any of the three times,« namely past, present and future. For him, »knowledge« (and his »grand project« is about the »knowledgefication« of the advaitic, non-dual, metaphysic experience) is unchangeable by definition. The future, absolutely irrelevant for Śaṅkara's brahmavidyā, transcending time and temporality, is present in DK's KWC as inherent uncertainty. »What is known,« he writes, »is not only incomplete, but full of inaccuracies, inadequacies and errors, about which one knows nothing, except that they must be there, if the enterprise of knowledge has to go on, as it must« (Krishna 2005: 88).

The future will »fill the gaps« of knowledge in its present phase, and will have its own new, unseen at present »gaps,« to be again filled in the future's future, and so on. The future will not bring about the certainty which DK's concept of knowledge sobered up from. It is knowledge aware of its limitations and unavoidable lacunas. Contrary to Śaṅkara's unchangeable brahmavidyā, DK's KWC anticipates and invites change.

In a paraphrase on Leibniz's famous maxim, KWC is »pregnant with the future.« On knowledge as allegedly »final« and »conclusive,« DK writes sarcastically: »If knowledge and truth were what they are said to be [final, indubitable], the game of knowledge would have ended long ago« (Krishna 2007: 10).

## 6 The End of Philosophy?

Some indeed believe that »the game is over.« I am not talking of Śaṅkara, or those who accept the authority of »revelation« in the monotheistic traditions. For them, it is no »game.« For them, the human person can only strive, hope, and pray to be »granted entry« to »knowledge that is already there, given in all its finality and completion once and for all, and that nothing could be added to it in principle ever after« (*ibid.*: 12).

I am talking of those, who believe, as Whitehead did, that: »the safest general characterization of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists of a series of footnotes to Plato« (Whitehead 1979: 39).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, New York: Free Press, 1979 [1929].

Whitehead's statement is famous, but the exact quote is interesting. He speaks of »the European philosophical tradition.« Is it an acknowledgement of other philosophical traditions?

A different »the game is over« position is taken by those who speak of »the end of philosophy.« Take for example Richard Rorty. »I hope,« he writes,

that the twenty-first century may complete a process which began in the nineteenth – the gradual replacement of philosophy by art and concrete, albeit utopian, politics. The creation of imaginary significations which enable us to tell each other new stories about who we are, why we are good, and how we can become better, has gradually become, between Kant's time and ours, the province of narrative rather than theory. Theories about the nature of Humanity have been gradually displaced by narratives about how we, we Europeans, came to be what we are, of how we live now, and how we might some day live. Already in Hegel's partial historicization of philosophy we see the beginnings of a turn from theorizing to story-telling (Rorty 1989: 26).<sup>22</sup>

Philosophy, in Rorty's depiction, sounds »outdated.« It played a significant historical role, and brought »us« (»we Europeans,« he writes) to where we are today, »mature,« »sober,« »post-philosophical« as he puts it. »Philosophy in the Kantian sense,« Rorty further writes,

would end if people no longer took seriously the idea that they had a True Self, a Real Human Nature, deep within them. It would end when they ceased to think of themselves as »born free,« and instead saw freedom as simply a relatively recent, glorious, European invention – and none the worse for having been invented rather than discovered. [...] In such a post-philosophical period, we might not look back on Plato as »the greatest philosopher of all« [...] We might view him instead as one of the first great writers of fiction, a man who helped open up the potentialities of dramatic narrative as well as those of irony. [...] What is important about the canon of great philosophers is neither the questions these men asked, nor the »results« they offered, but simply their assistance in keeping culture from freezing over by proposing novel vocabularies, novel perspectives, novel recontextualizations of familiar material (*ibid.*: 26–27, 29).

There is something playful, even seductive, in Rorty's »game over« articulation: Plato as a fiction-writer, metaphysics as an expired product in the supermarket of ideas, and »great philosophers« as contri-

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<sup>22</sup> R. Rorty, »Comments on Castoriadis's *The End of Philosophy?*« *Salmagundi*, Vol. 82/83, 1989, pp. 24–30.



buting vocabularies and recontextualizations, the word recontextualization itself demonstrating what a philosophical »vocabulary« is all about. What are we left with, then? »We would view the novel,« Rorty says, »rather than the treatise as the genre in which the European intellect comes to fruition« (*ibid.*: 27).

Implied is cultural relativism. The »European intellect« takes us back to the aforementioned »we Europeans.« With regard to his preference of the novel over the (philosophical) treatise, Rorty draws on Milan Kundera, who promises in his essay »The Novel and Europe« (later republished as »The Depreciated Legacy of Cervantes«) that, »the precious essence of the European spirit is being held safe as in a treasure chest inside the history of the novel, the wisdom of the novel« (as quoted by Rorty, *ibid.*).

But in the very same essay, Rorty omits to note, Kundera further writes: »To what am I attached, then? To god? Country? The people? The individual? My answer is as ridiculous as it is sincere. I am attached to nothing but the depreciated legacy of Cervantes.«<sup>23</sup>

## 7 »To Comprehend the World as a Question«

Kundera refuses to take refuge in »usual suspects« such as »god« or »the people.« He cannot even accept the individual as his *Punctum Archimedis*. Such a move will strip the individual of his individuality. As his »last resort,« Kundera opts for Cervantes. In an interview appended to *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, he explains this »ridiculous« choice:

When Don Quixote went out into the world, that world turned into a mystery before his eyes. That is the legacy of the first European novel to the entire subsequent history of the novel. The novel teaches us to comprehend the world as a question. There is wisdom and tolerance in that attitude (Kundera 1983: 237).<sup>24</sup>

Kundera sees in Cervantes a sense of open-endedness, which Richard Rorty (with reference to Kundera) depicts as »an ongoing suspenseful

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<sup>23</sup> M. Kundera, »The Depreciated Legacy of Cervantes,« 1984 (<http://lazenby.tumblr.com/post/2595964796/the-depreciated-legacy-of-cervantes>; last accessed on 24 November 2015).

<sup>24</sup> M. Kundera, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, M. H. Heim (transl.), Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983.

adventure in which we are participating» (Rorty 1991: 67),<sup>25</sup> as against what he refers to as »structure« (the antonym of »process«), creating the false impression of »finality« and »objectivity.«

Kundera takes me back to Daya Krishna (DK). There is something Don Quixotic in DK's philosophic approach. First in the sense that he constantly – paper after paper and book after book – »tilts at windmills,« namely questions, challenges and takes issue with conventional readings and conceptions, especially in Indian philosophy, with what he himself used to refer to as »myths.« The examples are numerous. DK was a myth-breaker (Rorty thought that philosophers are myth-makers). Take for instance DK's paper titled »The Shock-Proof, Evidence-Proof, Argument-Proof World of Sāṃpradāyika Scholarship in Indian Philosophy.«<sup>26</sup> The title challenges the conventional reading of Indian philosophy through what DK refers to as »sāṃpradāyika scholarship,« namely thinking rigidly in terms of »philosophical schools.« »The ghost of the schools,« DK writes,

seems to overpower us so much that we forget the »problem,« and talk only of what Nyāya said, or the Sāṃkhya, or the Buddhist, or the Advaitin. It is reporting of the worst kind. It may show knowledge of the text, but not that one has philosophically thought about it.<sup>27</sup>

DK refers to what usually goes under the name of »philosophy« as »reporting.« The antonym of »reporting,« in his formulation, is »thinking.« DK is similarly impatient about the common reading of Indian philosophy as a »highway« leading from duḥkha (»suffering«) to mokṣa (»release from suffering,« »freedom«). In this respect he writes (in a review article on his friend K. Satchidananda Murty's book *The Realm of Between*)<sup>28</sup>:

[T]he dazzling brilliance of the book hides a deep yawning deficiency, which to my mind, emanates from the brilliance itself and is its darker shadow [...]. The structure of the book shows an uncritical acceptance of the usual moves made in the philosophy of religion, which have been accepted so often that

<sup>25</sup> R. Rorty, »Heidegger, Kundera and Dickens,« in R. Rorty, *Essays in Heidegger and Others: Philosophical Papers, Volume 2*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991 pp. 66–82.

<sup>26</sup> D. Krishna, »The Shock-Proof, Evidence-Proof, Argument-Proof World of Sāṃpradāyika Scholarship in Indian Philosophy,« *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2000, pp. 143–159.

<sup>27</sup> I quote from a letter, written by DK to a close friend on January 4<sup>th</sup>. 2005.

<sup>28</sup> K. S. Murty, *The Realm of Between*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1973.

they have begun to be taken as axiomatic truths by everyone who thinks or writes on the subject. Murty opens his book by talking of suffering (what else did you expect?) and then, as I am sure you will expect, there is salvation. [...] What is more disturbing is Murty's unquestioning acceptance of the equation of suffering with the transience of phenomena. [...] Murty's discussion of suffering and salvation is limited to traditional formulations. [...] He forgets, as so many others, that if transience, temporality and cessation produce a feeling of terror and meaninglessness in many, so may a state where there is immortality implying no change whatsoever. Even the Lord himself is supposed to have been ›tired‹ of his ›lonely‹ state and is supposed to have said, ›I am one, let me be many‹ (eko'ham, bahu syām) (Krishna 1995: 169–171, 175).<sup>29</sup>

DK is not merely ›tired‹ of the traditional duḥkha/mokṣa binary, which has become ›axiomatic,‹ but moreover pleads for a critical analysis of the concepts of ›suffering‹ and ›salvation.‹ Such an analysis is the crux of his paper. Also conveyed here is DK's constant appeal for newness and creativity (instead of ›reporting,‹ repeating, or writing footnotes to Plato, or to the Upaniṣads, or to Śāṅkara) in philosophical thinking<sup>30</sup>. He sees the abiding to old formulations, whether in Murty's work discussed here, or elsewhere (DK's biting paper with the biting title ›Rasa: The Bane of Indian Aesthetics‹ comes to mind)<sup>31</sup>, as nothing less than a ›dark shadow.‹

DK was never exhausted of ›fighting‹ (questioning, refuting) the conventional picture of Indian philosophy. ›The picture of Indian philosophy,‹ he says,

that has been presented by Radhakrishnan, Hiriya and others [...] is not the story of Indian philosophy. We have been fed on the Western presentation of Indian philosophy, which hardly captures the spirit and history of Indian philosophy. [...] If I were not to know Indian philosophy myself, I would say that [their presentation] is wonderful, that it presents it clearly,

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<sup>29</sup> D. Krishna, ›The Realms of Between: Some Reflections on Murty's *The Realm of Between*,‹ in *The Philosophy of K. Satchidananda Murty*, S. Bhattacharyya and A. Vohra (eds.), Delhi: Indian Council of Philosophical Research, 1995, pp. 169–176; DK quotes from *Chāṇḍogya-Upaniṣad* (6.2.3).

<sup>30</sup> On newness and creativity in philosophical thinking apropos Daya Krishna see A. Chakrabarti's paper ›New Stuff: On the Very Idea of Creativity in Philosophical Thinking,‹ in N. Bhushan et al., *Contrary Thinking: Selected Essays of Daya Krishna*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 3–12; and my paper ›Philosophical Miscellanea: Excerpts from an Ongoing Dialogue with Daya Krishna,‹ *Philosophy East and West*, Vol. 63, No. 4, 2013, pp. 491–512.

<sup>31</sup> D. Krishna, ›Rasa – The Bane of Indian Aesthetics,‹ *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 2004, pp. 119–135.

with great insight and understanding. Now that I know a little Indian philosophy, I say that they are not concerned with the problems that Indian philosophers were concerned with.<sup>32</sup>

DK suggests that the prevalent picture of Indian philosophy is anachronistic, and is to a large extent »Western« in nature. In this respect, the main »windmill« that Don Daya fights against is the equation of Indian philosophy with mokṣa, which he sees a sign of »exotification,« or »spiritualization,« extraordinarily adopted, or internalized by Indian scholars, even of the stature of Radhakrishnan and Hiriyana. The problem with the »myth« about Indian philosophy as mokṣa-centered is that it is projected as monolithic, and moreover as »instrumental« and harnessed for the sake of a »trans-philosophical end,« as DK puts it, with religious overtones. His pertinacious effort to counter-project Indian philosophy as argumentative and manifold, as much as its Western sister, and sheer refusal to privilege the metaphysic horizon of mokṣa, »earned« him an article by Karl Potter, titled »Are all Indian philosophers Indian philosophers?.« Potter writes passionately that,

Daya doesn't give a fig for mokṣa. He would like Indian philosophy not to be tied to mokṣa, and he is irritated that these darśana-wallahs have presumed to take over the mantle of philosophy which, he thinks, belongs to those who do the kinds of things he and other professional philosophers do. So, since he feels strongly that Indian philosophy ought not to be confined to mokṣa-seeking inquiries, he argues that it isn't. [...] »American philosophy« meaning pragmatism, transcendentalism and other peculiarly American contributions is different from »American philosophy« meaning anything philosophical carried out by an American. I am an American philosopher, but probably not an American philosopher! Can't Daya be happy being an Indian philosopher who is not an Indian philosopher? (Potter 1985: 147)<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Personal communication with Jay Garfield and Nalini Bhushan, as quoted in the introduction of their anthology *Indian Philosophy in English: From Renaissance to Independence*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. xiii-xiv); also see D. Krishna's papers: »A Plea For a New History of Philosophy in India,« in his *New Perspectives in Indian Philosophy*, Delhi and Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2001, pp. 1-9; »Emerging New Approaches in the Study of Classical Indian Philosophy,« in G. Floistad (ed.), *Contemporary Philosophy: A New Survey*, Vol. 7, Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993, pp. 69-72; and »Towards a Field Theory of Indian Philosophy: Suggestions for a New Way of Looking at Indian Philosophy,« *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1998, pp. 81-87.

<sup>33</sup> K. Potter, »Are All Indian Philosophers Indian Philosophers?« *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 1985, pp. 145-149.

Potter insists on the mokṣa-centeredness of Indian philosophy, and implies that everyone uninterested in mokṣa is not an »Indian philosopher.« DK is not uninterested in the concept of freedom, mokṣa included. As with other concepts, DK plays with the concept at hand, disconnecting and reconnecting it to other concepts near and far, and stripping its traditional formulations of any authority. He neither accepts mokṣa as a parama-puruṣārtha, i.e. as the highest »human end,« nor perceives his philosophical work as a parikramā around mokṣa as a center of (philosophical?) devotion, or for that matter, around any other singular concept or agenda. He declares (in »The Shock-Proof« article) that his only loyalty is to niḥsaṅga-buddhi, »disloyal« or »unattached« consciousness, analogous – he explains – to the *Bhagavadgītā*'s niṣkāma-karma, an action which is not intended to fulfill any end besides, or beyond, the action itself.

But DK, for me, is a »philosophical avatar« of Don Quixote, not merely because of his aptitude for tilting at »shock-proof« windmills, but also, in fact primarily, owing to the fact that like Cervantes' anti-hero, in Kundera's interpretation, he »comprehend[s] the world as a question.« Take for instance his paper »The Undeciphered Text: Anomalies, Problems and paradoxes in the *Yogasūtra*.«<sup>34</sup> The title says it all. So much has been written on the *Yogasūtra*, traditionally as also contemporarily, and yet for DK it is an »undeciphered text.« In this respect, he argues that, »One cannot understand any work, unless one ceases to see it as a finished product« (Krishna 1999: 20).<sup>35</sup>

DK further explains his »working method,« which »opens the text,« any text:

I understand a text better when I ask myself what does the author try to do. I make the text my own and then see which questions arise in my mind, and whether the author's thoughts moved in the same way as mine or not. Thus I get into his work, into his thought process, taking it up and carrying it in a direction it was not taken before (*ibid.*: 21).

In this paragraph, newness, creativity and dialogue interconnect. It is a dialogue with the text, including »the hidden text,« namely think-

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<sup>34</sup> D. Krishna, »The Undeciphered Text: Anomalies, Problems and Paradoxes in the *Yogasūtra*,« in his *Indian Philosophy: A Counter Perspective*, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 2006, pp. 204–223 [Enlarged and revised edition].

<sup>35</sup> D. Krishna, »Thinking Creatively about the Creative Act,« *Punjab University Research Bulletin*, Vol. 30, Nos. 1–2, 1999, pp. 18–26.

ing-directions which the author has not pursued, and which are waiting to be explored.

I want to take a few steps back, to Rorty. For him, we saw, »what is important about the canon of great philosophers,« is neither the questions they raised, nor the answers offered by them, but their »assistance in keeping culture from freezing.« For DK, »what is important« in the work of everyone engaged in philosophy, are the questions, or the act (and art) of asking questions. For him, questions are the fuel of philosophy. Answers are merely tentative, but they too are important in the sense that they give birth to new questions. »Philosophy, DK had decided early on in his career,« Arindam Chakrabarti suggests,

is an act of desire, raising of questions, discovery of problems, getting into and out of confusions. So, to be creative in philosophical thinking is to come up with new desires, hitherto un-raised problems, to detect and disentangle confusions never suspected before (Chakrabarti 2011: 5).

DK was well-aware of the political overtones of questioning. »The arrogance of knowledge,« he writes,

is as much an arrogance as the arrogance of power, and both lead to essential asymmetries which, however real, militate against innovation and creativity. A questioning attitude may prick the pretensions of both, as neither is as certain or secure as it usually proclaims itself to be (Krishna 1988: 48).<sup>36</sup>

Here he speaks of »a questioning approach« as an effective *ahimsāic* »weapon« against the arrogance of power and knowledge, or even knowledge as power. DK's deep belief in the transformative power of philosophy, of thinking, of the *logos* is thus revealed, as well as the socio-political *r̥ṇa* – »debt,« or »responsibility« – that the intellectual community, according to him, has to pay, or to undertake. Like Rorty, DK is hardly taken by nostalgia. But unlike his American contemporary, who speaks of »the end of philosophy,« DK believes that philosophy has an important role to play in the »post-everything« world in which we live. In this respect, knowledge – as concept, ideal, even »commodity« or »manufactured product« – has to be perceived and worked with in a »new« way. Otherwise, DK fears, philosophy will be left »far behind« science and technology which »move forward« in

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<sup>36</sup> D. Krishna, »Thinking vs. Thought: Strategies for Conceptual Creativity,« *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1988, pp. 47–57.

giant steps, and will become »irrelevant,« or come to what Rorty calls its »end« (in the terminatory, not purposeful sense of the word). »Today,« he writes to a close friend (in a letter dated July 8th 2005),

we have reached a position which I would like to call ›postmodern modernity.‹ Philosophy functions as the ›cognitive conscience‹ of all the realms of ›knowing,‹ ›feeling‹ and ›action,‹ and has to come to terms with it. The challenge which we have to address ourselves to, if we are to relate ourselves to contemporary concerns, is how to deal with this situation. To put the same thing differently, philosophy as it has developed up till now has become irrelevant to the emerging situation where ›engineered transformation‹ of all reality, including man himself, life in general, along with the exploration in space are questioning everything. The ›earth-centricity‹ and ›bio-centricity‹ of man has determined his thinking. In the realm of nuclear physics, new forms of matter are being created, with properties which question the old notions of matter, space, time and causality. In the field of economics, and to some extent of politics, the situation is even more alarming. The basic parameters on which the science of economics and sociology were based are in jeopardy, as the notions of land, labour, capital and organization have gone a sea-change as they are not there as something ›given,‹ or as a constraint, but instead as something which can be overcome by human ingenuity and effort. This is the challenge to philosophers, as I see it. Whether we can come to terms with it in any meaningful way is difficult to say, but we must become aware of it and try to deal with it so that our thinking may be relevant to the incoming generation which increasingly finds all past knowledge irrelevant to their ›living‹ concerns.

DK's concern was not about philosophy as a ›professional guild,‹ or an academic discipline among other disciplines. A world without conceptual analytic reflection was for him »flat« and »dull.« His concern was about the future of humanity, nothing less. He was interested in knowledge in the age of robotics. In this respect he was not afraid of thinking, for instance, of knowledge without body, senses, and even consciousness, if »machines« are supposed »to know« (Krishna 2005: 181). Elsewhere, DK intimates that, »There is just no such thing as ›knowledge‹ but only ›knowledge‹ in the plural« (Krishna 2007: 10).

Despite the abyss between them on the role and value of philosophy and philosophizing, DK – like Rorty – did not believe in »ultimate truths,« and certainly not in an »Ultimate Truth.« He also did not believe – again like Rorty – in »philosophical systems,« or »Omnibuses« (I draw on Kierkegaard's sarcastic remark at the end of his preface to *Fear and Trembling*). The Indian scholar and cultural historian Mukund Lath explains that DK was a »refutation specialist,« or

as he puts it in Hindi, »vo khaṇḍan kiya«<sup>37</sup>. I always imagine DK as a »sādhū,« wandering and wondering between systems and texts. He used to arrive (in a system, or a text), leave the darśana-wallahs (the articulation is Potter's, but for me, darśana as »system« applies as much to Śaṅkara's corpus as to Kant's) a pile of questions for consideration, and move on, to the next system, text, discipline.

I opened with Kundera's imagined dialogue between an eighteenth-century chevalier and Vincent, a twentieth century »philosopher in residence« of a trendy Parisian café, a dialogue which fails, owing to the latter's »stubborn urge to speak« which is also an »implacable uninterest in listening.« The problem is that every dialogue, not just imagined dialogues across eras, is »infected« by the same virus, the virus of »I-centricity.« It is like driving down a two-way street, without noticing that your »brights« are on. It happens all the time. The question is what would make me »dim the lights,« or overcome the »stubborn urge« to speak at the expense of listening to the other. DK writes:

Strangely, the »you« to whom »I« talk, talks of himself or herself as »I,« and addresses me as »you.« It is this that makes me realize that it is as much an »I« as I think myself to be (Krishna 2005: 181).

I quoted this paragraph because of the word »strangely.« The acknowledgement of the other, which may suddenly occur, or alas, never happen, makes one realize that »strangely,« one is not the only »subject« on the road. In a famous argument, in his famous essay »The Subject as Freedom«<sup>38</sup>, Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya (KCB) suggests that since I never perceive my body fully (»one's body is only half-perceived,« he says) in a direct manner – for example, I never saw my back or my face (a mirror is indirect) – I count on the perception of other people (or of »another observing body,« as KCB puts it). The fact that you see my back, which I do not, validates – so to say – my »full« existence. My body is non-solipsistic, in the sense

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<sup>37</sup> Personal communication, July 2015.

<sup>38</sup> Krishnachandra Bhattacharyya, »The Subject as Freedom,« in his *Search for the Absolute in Neo-Vedānta*, G. B. Burch (ed.), Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1976, pp. 87–174; I draw here on Chapters 3 and 4 of KCB's essay, »Bodily Subjectivity« and »Bodily Subjectivity (cont.).« Also see A. Chakrabarti's paper »Indian Philosophy of the Body and the Senses,« *Bulletin of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture*, 2010, pp. 66–73, in which he offers his own bhāṣya to KCB's argument.



that I depend on the other's gaze. Therefore, to be (in) a body is to imply the existence of the other. This is to say that if Descartes, for example, needed god to save one from the »prison-house« of »I-am-ness,« which does not entail a »you-areness«; then KCB does not need god. He can do well with you, the YOU who are implied by my own embodied perception. In KCB's move, you make me »complete.« For DK, you are not enough. »Much has been said,« he writes,

about the dialogical interchange between the ›I‹ and the ›You‹ or the ›Thou‹, or the other potential ›I‹ to whom one is a ›You‹ or ›Thou‹; but little, very little, about what the ›he‹ or the ›she‹ does to a ›conversation‹ or ›discussion‹ that occurs all the time. The interaction and the interplay become more complex. [...] The problem created by the increase in number of the ›interacting‹ variables is well known in physics, but here the ›interaction‹ is between beings who are ›trying‹ to ›think‹ in the context of what someone else has ›thought‹ and ›said.‹ Surprise is the heart of this interaction, surprise at the ›unthought-of‹ possibility that suggests ›new‹ directions of thought, when one felt one was ›stuck‹ with the ›old‹ alternatives (Krishna 2007: 5).

DK is interested in a multi-vocal interaction. The analogy to the world of physics is interesting, as well as his emphasis on »surprise,« interconnected with the unthought-of possibilities that such an interaction is of the capacity of opening.

For DK, you, and even the manifold you, does not make me »complete.« DK is a master of the incomplete. Knowledge, we saw above, is according to him a matter of perennial seeking. This seeking takes place through thinking, which DK differentiates from »thought.« The latter is just a tentative »product« of thinking as a collective process; a process that is both anādi and ananta, beginning-less and endless. But dialogue, or »conversation, dialogue, debate and discussion,« as DK unpacks the interaction-toolbox, »are everywhere; not just in knowledge, but in all that man does or seeks, as in these man finds and feels and discovers what ›being human‹ is« (*ibid.*: 34).

For Daya Krishna, man is a dialogical animal.

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